

Mousehole Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111796
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	289052
Inspection date	18 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Wakeham
Headteacher	B Dyer
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002
School address	Foxes Lane Mousehole Penzance TR19 6QQ
Telephone number	01736 731427
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school consisting of four classes. Pupils are taught in mixed age groups within each key stage. Nearly all pupils are White British. There are a very small number of pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils' attainment on entry varies considerably, but for the current year it was just below average.

The school has gone through a period of considerable disruption and has been without a substantive headteacher since November 2006. The present acting headteacher has been in post since February 2007 and the substantive headteacher is due to return towards the end of June.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Mousehole Primary School provides an unsatisfactory education for its pupils. This is because of weaknesses in leadership and management. The local authority has been aware of these and has taken various actions since March 2006, including the appointment of temporary leaders in the substantive headteacher's absence. Staff morale has been low but the current acting headteacher has done much to raise their confidence and provide effective support. Teachers have risen to the challenge and have worked hard to raise pupils' achievement. Secure evidence from the acting headteacher confirms the judgement of the inspectors in that standards are broadly average throughout the school; children are doing well in the Foundation Stage and pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Until very recently, the school had no effective systems for assessing pupils' progress or using this information to help it identify areas for improvement. This has meant that, although teachers know their pupils well, they have not ensured that work is matched to pupils' differing ages and abilities. As a result, whilst teaching is satisfactory, it is not always effective.

The acting headteacher quickly recognised areas for development and put in place or updated a number of policies. Teachers now have a better understanding of what they are good at and what needs to be improved in lessons. In spite of recent improvements, however, the lack of effective monitoring in the past has meant that the school has insufficient evidence on which to assess its strengths and weaknesses. There has been no formal process for self-evaluation that could be shared with staff and governors and this has had an impact on the school's development planning. Whilst the acting headteacher has established an appropriate action plan for the current year, the previous plan did not focus sufficiently on pupils' overall achievements.

The quality of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. A suitable programme of topics is planned, but there is no system to ensure that these are taught across the key stages in such a way that pupils' skills are built upon systematically. The lack of clarity is reflected in pupils' comments that they do not always know what lessons they will have in the afternoons or after assemblies; some were unsure whether they even studied subjects such as geography or information and communication technology. Pupils did, though, say how much they liked school, particularly in being able to talk to their friends. They attend well and feel safe in school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their personal development and this is supported by satisfactory care, guidance and support procedures. Targets to enable pupils to improve have recently been established but not all pupils are yet fully aware of them.

The new chair of governors is having a very positive impact on improving governors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As yet, though, despite this very good leadership, governors do not fulfil their role effectively in calling the school to account for its actions. As a result of this and the other weaknesses in leadership and management, improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate and the school does not have the capacity to improve without external help.

In accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 2005 HMIC is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading and managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve systems for assessing pupils' progress and ensure that teachers use the information gained to plan for the range of different abilities and ages in their classes.
- Improve monitoring so the school has a better understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.
- Develop the governing body to ensure that governors fulfil their roles effectively.
- Improve curricular planning to ensure that pupils' skills are developed systematically as they move through the school, and pupils know what they will be doing each day.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's systems for checking on the progress of pupils have not been effective until very recently. It is only now, through good use of the available information, that the school has an accurate picture of pupils' standards. Children start in the Foundation Stage with skills slightly below those expected. They make good progress and, as a result, their attainment on entry to Year 1 is average. Achievement is satisfactory throughout Years 1 to 6, and standards are broadly average. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties has been less than satisfactory in the past but, with the support of the local authority, this has now been addressed and they are making satisfactory progress.

The recent good analysis of information concerning pupils' progress identified that progress in Years 3 and 4 in reading had dropped. Effective action has already been initiated to address this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are unanimous in their liking of school. They enjoy many aspects, particularly after-school clubs and the opportunities to be involved in the community, such as Maisy Day. Practical lessons, including mathematics, science and physical education, are particular favourites, along with topic work. Pupils' social and moral development is good. They get on well and explain carefully how effective the buddy system is at playtimes in supporting each other. They consider there is very little bullying and know who to talk to if there is a problem. Behaviour is good; playtimes are active and friendly and reflect how well pupils get on together. In lessons, pupils behave well and, even when they lose interest in a lesson, they do not become disruptive but sit quietly. They make good use of the drinks they have in lessons and show a satisfactory understanding of healthy eating. Many recognise that fruit and vegetables are important but several also think crisps and biscuits are healthy! Pupils enjoy the range of the responsibilities they are given and the school council takes an active role in the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Whilst pupils make good progress in their moral and social development, planning for improving pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is limited. However, a satisfactory grounding in basic skills means that pupils are appropriately prepared to meet the challenges they will encounter as they grow older.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers now ensure that pupils know and understand what they are to learn in each lesson. Learning is further supported when lessons are summarised effectively. This was evident in a Year 1 and 2 class where the interactive whiteboard was used to extend pupils' skills and relate what they had learnt in counting to real life experiences. Pupils are keen to be involved and enjoy the practical aspects of learning. Many teachers use praise well and this encourages pupils to respond to questions and have confidence to ask when they are not sure.

Teachers' planning is not effective, however, in meeting the needs of the different ages and abilities in their classes. Pupils themselves commented that they all do the same work in lessons unless they are doing tests. As a result, more able pupils are not sufficiently stretched whilst less able pupils find tasks difficult. At times, teachers rely on teaching assistants to enable pupils to access the work rather than planning different tasks to enable pupils to achieve the same outcomes. Although pupils have learning targets, these are not always reflected in teachers' marking or responses and pupils are not clear how well they are doing. The marking of work is inconsistent and, although in English teachers give pupils a clear indication of how they can improve their work, this is not evident in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

There is no system for providing a clear overview of what will be taught as pupils move up through the school. Teachers have established a rolling programme of topics to ensure pupils cover the areas they should in each subject but there has been no checking of this to ensure that pupils build their skills in a consistent way and do not repeat aspects they have already covered. Class timetables show that pupils have appropriate opportunities to develop their numeracy and literacy skills.

The curriculum for Foundation Stage children is now good. The recent addition of new resources to enable a better range of activities to support learning has had a very positive impact. The lack of a covered outdoor area prevents these children from developing their physical skills as much as they could, although good use is made of facilities in the local area.

There are good links with the local community and this is particularly evident in the recent involvement of local people and groups in contributing to assemblies. Pupils enjoy the after-school activities and the opportunities to work with a range of artists from the local area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Systems to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are in place and teachers have recently developed a clear understanding of the expectations of risk assessments. The school is in the process of applying for healthy school validation and has appropriate plans to look at a system for supporting pupils' emotional development. Effective action by the local authority has supported staff in enabling pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to be included within their classes and work alongside their peers.

Systems for guiding and supporting pupils in their work have been inadequate. There is now a better understanding of the need to ensure that there are effective systems for recording and moderating pupils' achievements based on a secure evidence base. Whilst the work done under the acting headteacher shows good promise, there has been insufficient time for it to be embedded. Most pupils are aware of their targets but not all can recall them or even suggest what they might be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Most parents are positive about the school and several commented on the recent changes. One wrote that "Considerable progress has been made under the guidance of the current acting headteacher in recent months. There has been a marked improvement in the level of vision and leadership provided within the school." The school has benefited greatly from this leadership over the last four months. The acting headteacher has identified many of the areas that need developing and, together with staff, has worked extremely hard to start addressing these. Teachers have responded positively to the challenge of developing their roles. Staff have improved the organisation of their files and have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and what they should be doing in, for example, managing their subject areas. Checks on the quality of the school's provision, such as teaching, have been put in place and records maintained to ensure that areas for development can be monitored. However, these improvements are very recent and fragile, and there still remains a considerable amount to be done to bring the school up to standard. The previous lack of monitoring has significantly undermined the school's capacity to evaluate how effective it is. The lack of clarity about its strengths and areas for development has meant that planning for improvement has not been effective, and many of the areas identified as concerns at the time of the previous inspection have not been resolved.

The chair of governors has been very supportive of the acting headteacher and staff. She has brought about a number of changes which have heightened governors' awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Meetings are now held formally, minutes of meetings are kept and governors are beginning to recognise the need to hold the school to account. However, governors as a whole have not had the training necessary for them to develop a good understanding of the life of the school, and there is still some way to go before they can fulfil their role effectively.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mousehole Community Primary School, Mousehole TR19 6QQ

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me and my colleague. We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We particularly liked the fact that you enjoyed school so much.

Whilst we think there are some things in your school that are satisfactory, there are others that we have concerns about. We do not feel your school is giving you a good enough education. As a result, we have asked that your school is given extra help by the local authority and there will be extra visits from inspectors to make sure things are getting better.

- These are some of the things we liked about the school:
- The children in Reception make good progress.
- The acting headteacher has helped to improve things in school.
- The chair of governors has been very helpful in getting the governors to be more aware of what they should do.
- The school makes sure you are looked after and safe.
- However, the leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory and we have asked the school to do the following:
- The teachers need to keep a closer check on your progress so they can make sure the work you do is right for your age and ability.
- The adults who run the school need to put in place better systems for checking how well it is doing.
- Governors need to carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively.
- You told us that you were not sure about what you were going to learn next, and the school needs to have a better system for planning this so that your skills continue to build well as you move up the school.

You all seemed to understand the importance of staying fit and healthy, although you might want to think about your snacks and see if you can stop having crisps and biscuits, which are not so good!

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascal (Lead inspector)