

St Levan Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111803
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	289054
Inspection date	10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Julia Coop

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	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Brolly
Headteacher	Sue Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002
School address	The Bottoms St Buryan Penzance TR19 6HD
Telephone number	01736 810486
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Levan is a very small primary school serving a mixed rural area near Lands End. A significant number of pupils travel to the school from outside the immediate area. Since the last inspection the number on roll has fallen and the pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. Attainment on entry to the Reception class varies each year. Overall, it is broadly in line with what is expected, although some years it is below average. Currently, there are no pupils in Year 2. All pupils are White British. There are more boys than girls in some year groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average in some year groups. The number of pupils who start or leave the school part-way through their primary education is high. The school has been led by an acting headteacher for 18 months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Levan is a satisfactory school that has a warm, family atmosphere. Many parents say they choose to move their children to the school because of the way it 'focuses on the individual child', 'encourages creativity and imagination' and provides a 'nurturing environment'. Pupils say they are 'treated with respect' and 'value the opportunities to work in small groups'. As a result, a number of pupils who have been unhappy in larger schools or who have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties have settled down successfully to learning. Through the provision of a satisfactory curriculum, with some exciting international and community links and good pastoral care the pupils enjoy school, behave well, develop mature attitudes and cultivate a deep respect for other cultures. As a result, the overall personal development and well-being of pupils are good.

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and throughout all year groups. By the end of Year 6 standards are average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their different starting points and capabilities. The main reason why progress is not more rapid is because teaching is satisfactory. Activities planned are not always matched carefully enough to the pupils' different abilities. Some lessons lack pace and teaching assistants are not always used fully to support learning. Teachers know individual pupils well and the school has begun to examine performance data at the end of each year, but a system to monitor and track pupils' step-by-step progress has not been fully developed to help raise achievement further. This puts a limit on the amount of academic guidance provided to the pupils, which is satisfactory. Pupils say they would like some more information about how they can improve their work. Consequently, the quality of care, support and guidance is satisfactory overall.

Parents have every confidence in the school as shown by the very positive response to questionnaire returns. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has worked hard to cultivate the confidence of staff, parents and the community. It has been a steep learning curve because of her lack of experience and significant teaching commitment. Despite this, because the school has a satisfactory and general awareness of its effectiveness, improvements have been made to the curriculum. New resources have helped make learning more relevant and attendance has improved. As a result, standards are slowly beginning to pick up, especially in mathematics and science. Although this gives cause for optimism, the school development plan lacks clarity and detail. Actions planned, although in the right area, are too broad and not yet focused sharply enough on outcomes in terms of pupils' learning. This makes it difficult for the school to check systematically on how well it is doing and for governors to monitor its success. The local authority is providing support; there is a positive and determined atmosphere so that the school has a satisfactory capacity on which to build on the improvements already made.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the rate of progress, ensuring lessons are brisker, teaching assistants are used more fully to support learning and activities are better matched to pupils' different abilities.
- Improve the way the school monitors and tracks pupils' progress, using this information more carefully to raise achievement.

- Improve the school development plan so that it has a much clearer focus on actions that will improve provision, help pupils' learning and show how they will be evaluated.
- Provide pupils with more guidance about how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their capabilities and their level of achievement is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and most will reach the expected goals by the time they start in Year 1. The children settle quickly because of the supportive and caring relationships. Consequently, the children make good progress in their personal and social development. Progress has been slower in the development of early literacy skills, especially linking sounds with letters. The school recognises there is scope to improve the teaching of these skills and has begun to improve its planning.

At the end of Year 6, standards are average. Standards have been falling, especially in mathematics and science. Girls in 2006 did not do as well as the boys. However, new mathematics resources and a practical, investigative approach to the teaching of science have helped improve standards which evidence shows are picking up this year. There is no evidence of any marked difference between the achievements of boys and girls.

Pupils with learning difficulties, new arrivals and those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties get relevant individual support and make satisfactory progress. Parents value the way the school focuses on the pupils' all-round development. The parents are delighted in the way that their children have 'grown in confidence' and 'begun to make progress'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils love coming to this small and friendly school because they get individual attention and are 'made to feel special'. They are very proud of their 'Garden for Life' project which has been developed with gardeners from the Eden Project. Consequently, they adopt a good healthy lifestyle, cook their school grown vegetables and devise healthy recipes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The garden provides a place of calm and tranquillity which moves the pupils to consider wider issues such as the effects of global warming. Positive relationships between pupils and adults contribute to the enjoyment pupils experience in their learning. Attendance is improving and is now average because pupils say that 'work is more interesting' and they are eager to work in the garden each morning. Pupils willingly take responsibility for aspects of school life, with the fledgling school council collecting vouchers to provide webcams to improve links with their friends in India. They have sound basic skills but do not yet handle a budget, which limits their economic awareness. Pupils know how to make safe decisions and have a good understanding about the Internet, road and beach safety. They make effective contributions to local and international communities. The development of independence and respect for others is a high priority. Because the school harnesses international links well, particularly with schools in India, the pupils quickly learn to respect the different cultures in the world, becoming confident, well rounded young people by the time they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers' expectations are generally satisfactory. The good relationships and use of praise and encouragement enables pupils to try hard to complete the tasks and to improve. Teachers make it clear what pupils are expected to learn at the beginning of lessons and check on and discuss this at the end of lessons. However, sometimes pupils spend too long listening to the teacher, the pace of learning slows and lesson ends are rushed. Some lesson plans focus on activities to be completed by different age groups and are not always matched carefully enough to the pupils' different abilities. This is particularly important because there is a wide spread of ability in the two classes. Older pupils say that 'some activities could be more challenging'. There is a good sense of teamwork within the school and teaching assistants support learning well in small groups. However they are not always involved in supporting learning in all parts of the lessons.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources well to make learning practical and interesting. Older pupils, for example, greatly enjoyed the 'smartie fraction challenge'. The work with local artists and gardeners has captured their interest and is helping to raise standards, particularly in science and the creative arts.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved and better links with other schools and sport venues have helped to successfully overcome the limitations presented by the lack of a hall. Consequently, provision for physical education is good. Through activities from surfing to tag rugby and other sports the school has achieved Activemark.

The school has made a useful start in making lessons more enjoyable by linking subjects together in a thematic approach. Although planning is detailed, there is not a consistent emphasis on ensuring the work planned meets the needs of the full range of abilities in each class so as to progressively develop pupils' subject skills. French, numerous educational visits, community projects, working with local artists and international links play an important part in enriching and expanding pupils' horizons and learning experiences beyond this rural area. Links with other schools to support gifted and talented pupils, for example through the 'Pirates Learning Zone', are providing useful extra challenges for the most able pupils. All these additional activities contribute well to pupils' positive learning attitudes, their personal and creative development and their understanding about how to look after the environment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral aspects of care, guidance and support are strengths. The school successfully welcomes and supports pupils who are experiencing difficulties in their lives or who have found learning in other schools troublesome. Child protection procedures are well established and the school provides a safe, family learning environment. Parents greatly appreciate the individual attention and care provided for their children.

Although pupils like school and are keen to do well, their good progress in their personal development is not matched academically. This is partly because pupils are not clear enough about what they need to do to improve. Although teachers regularly talk to them about their work, currently, they do not have individual learning targets and say that they 'do not always find marking helpful'. In addition, they do not always have the opportunity to check on how well they have learned at the ends of lessons because time runs out.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher provides caring and sensitive leadership, which is effective in securing a sense of team work. She has introduced a number of initiatives which are starting to have an impact on improving provision and the quality of education. She is aware that monitoring of pupils' progress is in its infancy and is not yet sufficiently rigorous and analytical. Similarly, the school development plan is not focused sharply enough to become a really effective vehicle to drive forward further improvement in pupils' learning. It identifies the correct broad areas that need improvement but it is not clear how these will be achieved or how actions will be monitored or evaluated. Governors are supportive. Their programme of visits provides them with a sound idea of how well the school is doing. Financial management is astute. They fulfil their statutory duties, but they are not all confident enough to ask sufficiently searching questions about the effectiveness of strategies for raising achievement.

Partnerships with parents and others are harnessed well and make a successful contribution to the life of this very small school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Levan Primary School, St Levan, TR19 6HD

Thank you so much for the mature and friendly way you chatted to me when I visited. I really enjoyed seeing your smiling faces around the school. I think St Levan Primary School is a satisfactory school and has some good features. You told me that your school is a friendly, family place and I agree with you. I liked these things most:

- You are confident, sensible and you behave well.
- I was impressed with the way you look after your garden and care about your friends in India.
- I think that you must have a really good time with all the visits and visitors.
- Everyone takes good care of you. I can see you know how to keep safe and like keeping fit and active and eat lots of fruit and vegetables.

I know that everyone is working hard, but there are some things that I want the staff and governors to do to make your school an even better place to learn:

- Make sure that all your activities are not too easy or too difficult, that you do not spend too long listening to the teacher and that you get help in all parts of the lesson.
- Check on how well you are doing more often and more carefully so they can help you learn more.
- Make sure that the plan to help the school improve is more specific and easier to keep a check on.
- Set your learning targets and help you understand what you need to work on next so you can make even better progress.

I hope you go on trying hard and enjoying all of the interesting activities which help you learn.

Yours faithfully

Julia Coop Lead inspector