

Marhamchurch CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111991
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	289135
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	117
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Corney
Headteacher	Janet Drew
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2001
School address	Helebridge Road Marhamchurch Bude EX23 0HY
Telephone number	01288 361445
Fax number	01288 361088

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 small village school where nearly all the pupils are White British and none are learning English as an additional language. Children join the school with the knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with expectations for their age, but their mathematics, language and literacy skills are lower than this. An average proportion of pupils have difficulties with learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. 'It's the life force of the village,' explained one parent. Its strong Christian ethos, numerous links with the local community and commitment of governors, staff, parents and pupils make it lively and exciting. The determination and effort put into developing all pupils as well-rounded individuals ensure good care, guidance and support. As a result, pupils enjoy school, behave well and have good attitudes towards their work. They eagerly take responsibilities around the school, act as play leaders to diffuse any potentially difficult situations in the playground, and show concern for others through their many charitable fund-raising efforts. These are all indicators of their good personal development and well-being.

'Teachers really try to make lessons fun and interesting for us', was one of many positive opinions voiced by pupils. Lessons are planned carefully and explanations are clear. Good teaching means that pupils approach their work confidently and learn effectively. This was evident as pupils in Years 5 and 6 tackled the problems of calculating the volume and cost of landscaping a large area with much enthusiasm. They worked well together, sparking ideas off each other and receiving good on-going support from their teacher. Targets are set and these are useful and challenging. However, pupils say, and inspectors agree, that although teachers often give good oral guidance, marking is not as helpful. This is because it does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work.

Pupils are making good progress throughout the school and achieving well. Standards have significantly improved in the last year, particularly in English and science. In English, many opportunities are planned for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects. This has had a positive impact on the quality of their writing. This process has not yet been extended to planning for the use of mathematical skills in other subjects. As a result, overall improvement has not been quite as pronounced in mathematics as it has been in English. Nevertheless, standards overall are above average. Children in Reception get a good start to school, and a wide range of activities is provided across all the areas of learning. This helps them make especially good progress with their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. This good curriculum extends into the rest of the school, where it is enhanced by an outstanding range of enrichment activities and clubs out of school hours. These support learning positively and evoke an enthusiastic response from pupils.

Leadership and management are good. The key to the improvements made in the last two years has been the introduction of a robust assessment system, backed up by a strong monitoring regime. Pupils' progress has been carefully scrutinised and information used to identify where underachievement is occurring and how this could be rectified. Actions taken, such as the decision to split the upper junior class for literacy and numeracy each morning, have been rigorously checked, not just by the headteacher, but also by governors, to ensure good progress was being made. The headteacher, staff and governors all have a very clear picture of how well the school is performing, and there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Make marking more helpful to pupils so that they understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in Reception make good progress across all areas of learning. Most join Year 1 having achieved the goals expected of them in all areas except mathematics and literacy. Across the school, pupils achieve well and standards are above average. Standards in science have improved significantly because of the good emphasis placed on the carrying out and recording of investigations by pupils. Progress in mathematics is a little slower. This is because pupils have not had the opportunity to use their mathematical skills across other subjects in order to reinforce their learning. The school exceeded the targets set in English and mathematics for pupils' performance last summer. It is well on course to meet the challenging but realistic targets set for this year. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because they are provided with good support both individually and in small groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop good social and moral attitudes which are firmly underpinned by the strong ethos that is an essential element of the school community. Although they explore the faiths and traditions of other cultures, their understanding of growing up in a multi-ethnic society is rather limited. Pupils have good opportunities to be reflective and are thoughtful in their attitudes to their learning. These factors all make a contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe and have a voice through the effective school council. This was responsible for introducing healthy options in to the school tuck shop as well as encouraging the development of an exercise programme for younger pupils. Pupils are adamant that bullying doesn't occur. Most leave the school with an above average standard of basic skills. These, together with their good personal skills, especially confidence and self-esteem, give them an effective preparation for the next stage in their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. This is because teachers are imaginative in their planning and try very hard to make learning relevant for the pupils. Good subject knowledge gives teachers the confidence to be adventurous in the classroom. For example, science is made more interesting through the use of practical and challenging investigations. Pupils tackle tasks with vigour. They are eager to learn because they find the teaching inspiring and exciting. They work well together and discuss ideas and thoughts maturely with partners. This enables them to respond confidently to teachers' questions. Pupils with learning difficulties learn effectively because they receive good support. Marking is satisfactory. Although teachers often tell pupils how well they are doing, they do not always give pupils sufficient guidance as to their next steps in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of learning opportunities is provided in the Reception class which enables the children to make good progress across all areas of learning. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is exciting and brings learning to life for the pupils. This has been instrumental in improving achievement, although opportunities to develop mathematical skills across other subjects have not yet been identified. Good provision for personal, social and health education gives pupils skills which prepare them effectively for the next stage of education and their future life. The curriculum is effectively monitored to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. The range of visits, visitors and out-of-school activities is outstanding and has a positive impact on pupils' academic and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for by staff and their personal development is carefully nurtured. Children with learning difficulties are identified quickly and are very well supported by learning support assistants. The school works successfully with outside agencies to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. Child protection procedures, health and safety routines and risk assessments are firmly in place. There are clear rewards and sanctions which are valued by pupils and ensure there is good behaviour. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the 'worry boxes' that are in each classroom. 'They're hardly ever used, but it's good to know they're there', explained one pupil. The monitoring of pupils' on-going progress is outstanding and the information is used effectively to feed into the process of setting targets. However, in the short term, marking does not give pupils sufficient information as to how they can achieve their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are characterised by shared values and a clear vision for further improvement. In the last two years the school has made an increasing use of data to check its own performance, and the quality of these assessments is now very good. As a result, decisive action has been taken to address weaknesses. This has been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Rigorous and robust monitoring has ensured that standards have risen and the impact of actions taken is evident in pupils' work, although there is still more to be done to improve mathematics. The governing body is strongly supportive of the school and governors monitor the work of the school effectively. They have a good picture of how well the school is performing. Most parents hold the school in high regard and one comment was typical of many: 'Our children have always received great care and a fantastic education; we are so glad that schools like Marhamchurch exist'.

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

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

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Marhamchurch C of E Primary School, Cornwall EX23 0HY

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. I think your school gives you a really good education and your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make it even better.

- These are the things we liked best.
- You behave very well and are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning.
- You are all doing well in English and science.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise – using 'huff and puff' and other equipment at playtimes, as well as in PE lessons.
- Teachers make learning fun for you and you find your targets useful and challenging.
- You have a varied curriculum and the additional activities, visits and visitors arranged to extend your learning are excellent.
- The teachers and other staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors lead the school well.
- We think that a very few things could be even better.
- You are doing better than you were in mathematics, but the improvement has not been as great as in English and science because you do not have enough opportunities to use your mathematical skills in other subjects.
- You say that teachers' marking is not always as helpful as it could be. We agree with you and have suggested that teachers try to give you more information as to how you can improve your work.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes,

Mrs Christine Huard Lead inspector