



St Maddern's CofE School, Madron

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111996
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 289139
Inspection date 14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Hulme

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

The inspection of the day care was carried out under Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where (funded) nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bellair Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Madron
Age range of pupils	4–11		Penzance TR20 8SP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01736 364845
Number on roll (school)	27	Fax number	01736 364845
Number on roll (funded nursery education)	3		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Patricia Hersant
		Headteacher	Teresa Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		
Date of previous funded nursery education inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small rural school serves an area recognised as one with serious social and rural disadvantage and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Most pupils are White British. The school roll has dropped and most pupils come from the immediate village but a few come from outside the area. There are no children who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties is well above the national average. All children work in mixed age classes. There have been a number of staff changes apart from the headteacher in the last two years and one post is temporary until next term. Pre-school provision is on site which provides day care for 12 children and funded nursery education for three children. Most children stay in the pre-school setting until entering the school just before their fifth birthday.

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 school on the road to rejuvenation and offering a provision of education and integrated care that is good overall. The headteacher provides caring leadership, good direction and has a clear vision for the school. It is particularly effective in its provision for children with learning difficulties and disabilities because it promotes equality of opportunity well so that all children achieve as well as they can. The good care, guidance and support are important factors in this success. Comments such as, 'my children have been supported, encouraged and challenged' are typical of parent's views.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected for their age. They spend little time in the Foundation Stage, where provision is satisfactory, and soon move into Year 1. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils' achievement is at least good but for the last two years not all pupils have reached average standards because most pupils in these very small year groups are pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The leadership of the coordinator for learning difficulties and disabilities has been instrumental in these children achieving as well they have and parents are delighted. By the time they leave, most pupils attain results that are in line with national averages. They do particularly well in science.

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have good attitudes and behaviour is good. Some pupils can be quite difficult but are handled well by staff. The school tries hard to improve attendance but a few families find it hard to bring children regularly. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy living. They choose healthy options at the twice weekly breakfast club, and daily sessions of 'wake and shake', led by a parent, give pupils a great start to the day. The satisfactory curriculum has good features and is meeting many of the pupils' needs but is not quite as effective as it could be. Children say they enjoy the activities but want more practical work and chances to use their computer skills in other subjects. This is an area where the school knows it could do better and seeks to develop a more exciting curriculum, with links between subjects, which more exactly meets pupils' needs. Teaching is good. There is effective use of specialists that impacts positively on pupils' achievement and standards in such subjects as music. Pupils reach high standards in singing. Work is marked regularly. However, some comments are not clear enough about how to improve their work. Older pupils find feedback in lessons sometimes leaves them not fully understanding where they went wrong.

The good leadership and management have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have good capacity to improve. Monitoring of the school's performance, although satisfactory at present, is improving now that the headteacher no longer has a full-time class commitment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a more exciting curriculum which better meets the needs of pupils.
- Improve marking and feedback so that all pupils are crystal clear about how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There are variations in national test results from year to year because of the very small numbers taking the tests. All groups of pupils achieve well although not all reach average standards in the national tests because many pupils start school with skill levels that are well below those normally expected for five year olds. Poor language and communication skills hinder progress towards National Curriculum work and most are still trying to do this as they start Year 2. Given their starting points all pupils make good and in some cases very good, progress as they move through the school. Most pupils reach average standards by the time they leave Year 6. Those with learning difficulties make the same good progress as their classmates because they are very well supported and there is specialist teaching to assist them. Typical of such success are pupils who last year reached the highest level in subjects such as science. This is all the more remarkable because the class experienced several changes of staff. More capable pupils gain from challenging activities in collaboration with other local schools, which has resulted in them making the same good progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Most appear happy and relate well to adults because they like their teachers and enjoy the activities. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and show real enjoyment at some of the activities in which they take part, such as singing, science experiments and any physical activity. Pupils know about the importance of healthy diet and regular exercise. The 'wake and shake' activity provides a great start to every day. Pupils find it 'really cool' and their enjoyment is evident in their faces and from their efforts. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and often better in social situations such as during lunch when older ones assist those having problems such as cutting up their food. Pupils say they feel safe and trust teachers because they help them when they have concerns. Preparation for future life is satisfactory. Pupils are proud of helping to improve their school through the school council. The focus on literacy and numeracy skills and the good opportunities to work as a team set a firm foundation for pupils' future life. However, the focus on using information and communication technology (ICT) skills could be better. There are strong community links, including contributions to charities and forging links with a school in Uganda. The school tries hard to improve attendance but absence is mainly due to a few families who find it hard to bring children regularly. Parents agree that the school cares a great deal and consider that 'enthusiasm and dedication from staff does well for all the children'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. However, this is not the whole story. New, less experienced teachers have joined the school only very recently. Until recently the headteacher taught a class but now mainly works with small groups. Pupils say they enjoy working with her. School managers also draw on the expertise of specialists and all children benefit from exciting teaching in subjects such as music, resulting in high standards in singing. The specialist teaching for those with learning difficulties, assisted by the headteacher, is having a very positive impact on their achievement and standards.

Lesson planning is appropriate and teachers are acquiring the skills of planning for mixed-age classes. Occasionally, there is insufficient challenge for older pupils but the headteacher is helping to improve it. In both classes, all adults have established good relationships with pupils who say, 'There is respect and trust so we try hard with our work.' Work planned for pupils with learning difficulties is matched well to their stage of learning and tasks are challenging. Support staff encourage pupils and help them achieve success. The management of behaviour is good and support staff are effective in assisting teachers with those who have behavioural difficulties to prevent any disruption. Work is marked regularly and children in Years 3 to 6 say they read the comments and try to do what teachers request. However, some comments are not clear enough about how they can improve their work and occasionally feedback in lessons lacks 'pupil speak' language and leaves some not fully understanding where they went wrong.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum has some good features. Activities are suitable and there is appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. In partnership with local primary schools, the more capable pupils take part in such activities as media studies, music, dance and a poetry workshop that inspire, challenge and extend them. Liaison with the sports college is adding a dimension to the physical activities for pupils. Listening to views of others has led to the introduction of swimming and instrumental tuition to the curriculum. Visits have brought depth too, as children reap the advantages of learning beyond the school. Extra-curricular provision meets pupils' needs well and broadens their horizons. Music is used effectively to build a strong sense that every child is included and matters. However, pupils made clear that they would like more practical activities, such as in science, and the school recognises that it is time to develop a more exciting curriculum, with links between subjects, which meets pupils' needs better. Planning for cross-curricular work is not so strong and pupils rightly would like to see more use of ICT skills in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the good care, support and guidance, particularly the efforts made to provide the level of support needed in lessons. The school has developed good links with external medical, psychological and social services. The swift identification of difficulties ensures that the school intervenes effectively to help those pupils with the greatest needs. Parents are impressed with the research undertaken by the headteacher to extend their understanding of the learning difficulties that many children face and say, 'They come on by leaps and bounds.' Safeguarding procedures are suitably robust, and plans to update new staff are in hand. Proper checks have been carried out on all adults working at the school.

Good academic guidance for pupils ensures they achieve well; it is testament to the tenacity of the leadership in tracking progress effectively and providing support where needed. However, children do not always understand feedback in class and are not always crystal clear about what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good direction and has a clear vision for the school. She has a good understanding of children's needs and encourages everyone to work hard to raise standards. The school has been successful in addressing the problems resulting from falling numbers, and for the last two years has coped remarkably well with the challenges presented from several changes of staff owing to retirement and poor health. One class had five teachers in 18 months, but the leadership ensured that pupils continued to make good progress. For the first time in the school's history, the headteacher no longer has a full-time class commitment and is able to give more time to monitor and evaluate the performance of the school. She is already working alongside less experienced staff and sharing effective practice. Now, she is able to give more time to help new staff get to know the school and their pupils well.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate. There is good capacity to improve. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and carry out their responsibilities well, including those for the pre-school setting, on site. Several governors give unstintingly of their time in supporting the school. They try to ensure that challenge is an equally important part of their role and this is developing well. They observe teaching, have a good understanding of how children learn, and discuss their findings. The committee structure enables governors to scrutinise spending decisions appropriately, ensuring resources are used to best effect.

Effectiveness of funded nursery education

Grade: 3

Children are provided with a satisfactory nursery education which enables them to build on their natural curiosity as learners and develops their emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. Each child enjoys the opportunities on offer to them. The three children who are funded nursery age were engaged well throughout the session. Despite the low attainment on entry, children are learning to recognise their own name and match initial sounds to objects. They choose appropriate resources to decorate a snowman shape and count to five. They are learning to listen and take turns to answer questions in teacher-led activities such as Jolly Phonics. Children can pedal a tricycle with force and adequate control. They put on their own coats, and act responsibly when offering a plate of fruit around at snack time. Play areas are well organised and large enough to enable children to move freely and to feel secure and happy. There is no formal system in place to ensure children experience the full range of learning activities on offer on a regular basis. As a result, children can spend too much time engaged in a favourite activity and not enough on others. There is adequate outdoor space with suitable equipment for physical development, and plans are afoot to make this even better.

Given the capability and often very low starting points, children's progress through the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage curriculum is steady in most areas of learning, although it is slower in the development of their communication, language and literacy than it is in other areas. However, although staff know each child well, they have taken advice to not assess them against the Foundation Stage profile. This means that it is difficult to know exactly what each child can do and makes planning for the next stage of learning more difficult. Consequently, children may not be as ready as they could be to start the work provided in main school. Good relationships exist between staff and parents but more could be done to involve parents in children's learning through improved information on how to reinforce learning at home.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

- Ensure that the records are sufficiently detailed to effectively assess children's progress in relation to nursery education.
- Implement a system to ensure children experience a full range of learning activities on a regular basis.
- Provide additional guidance for parents to enable them to further support children's learning at home.

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	3
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	3
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	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?	2
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?	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.

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	3
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

The effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality and standards of the funded nursery education	3
How effective is the funded nursery education in helping children to achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
How effective are teaching and learning?	3
How effective is the partnership with parents and carers in promoting the nursery education?	3
How effective is the funded education in helping children to make a positive contribution?	3
How effectively is the funded nursery education led and managed?	3
Does the funded nursery education meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides?	Yes
Is the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development education fostered?	Yes
Has the nursery education improved since the last inspection?	Yes
Does the funded nursery education require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. Your willingness to talk to me was a great help and I enjoyed listening to your views about what you really enjoy and your suggestions for making your curriculum better.

I think your school is a warm, caring place for you to learn. Your parents think it is a good school and I agree! Here are just a few of the things I really liked about it:

- Your headteacher is always trying to make your school as good as possible.
- You have new teachers who are still getting to know you but you get on well with them and they work hard to make you all feel included.
- You try hard to complete the tasks that teachers give you and most of you make good progress because you have the right kind of support and help from the adults.
- The music at your school is really good, especially the singing.
- I remember how much you liked the science work and you told me you want more practical activities and more chances to use your ICT skills in other subjects.

So that you can do even better, I have asked your teachers to give you very clear advice when they write comments in your books and when they talk to you about your work in class. I have asked the headteacher to make your curriculum more exciting and give you more opportunities to use the computers in your studies.

I wish you every success in the future. Keep up the good work!