



St Catherine's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112021
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 289150
Inspection dates 11–12 January 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 address	Moorland Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Launceston
Age range of pupils	3–11		PL15 7HX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01566 772198
Number on roll (school)	220	Fax number	01566 777910
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Julie Bickle
		Headteacher	S V Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	10 September 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007	Inspection number 289150
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized voluntary aided school serves a mixed area around Launceston. The majority of pupils are White British. There are a very small number of pupils who are new to speaking English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average but is well above average in some year groups. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is above average. Attainment on entry to the Nursery varies each year. Overall, it is broadly in line with what is expected, although some years it is below average. The school has achieved a Healthy School award, Investors in People status and achieved the NAACE ICT award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Catherine's is a satisfactory school, with some strengths. Parents are right to consider that it is a 'warm, caring and supportive' school community that values all pupils whatever their difficulties. Through the provision of a satisfactory curriculum, a wide range of additional activities and good care, support and guidance, the school successfully broadens pupils' horizons and learning experiences. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy their time in school and know how to make safe decisions and healthy choices.

The school's Christian, family atmosphere provides the foundation for good relationships throughout the school. Pupils who find it more difficult to settle to learning and behave well because of social, emotional or behavioural difficulties are given the right sort of help so they develop positive attitudes to school. Without exception, pupils said they like coming to school and know that they 'can always go to a teacher if they are worried'. In the Foundation Stage, children get off to a satisfactory and secure start. Children make good progress in their personal and social development because of the strong emphasis on this aspect of their learning. This makes an effective platform for learning when they move into Year 1. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Pupils new to speaking English make good progress due to good support. However, until recently, a few pupils in Years 3 to 6 did not make enough progress. Targeted support has ensured underachievement has been largely tackled. Nevertheless, although the school has a wealth of data about pupils' progress and the standards they achieve, this information could be monitored and analysed more frequently by managers to help further improve pupils' achievements. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although some teaching is good, the quality is not consistent. Some lessons lack sufficient pace and work is not always matched closely enough to the pupils' different needs and this affects the rate of progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher sets the tone for the caring atmosphere that permeates throughout the school. The school has a satisfactory view of its strengths and weaknesses and there is a sound plan for future development. It is targeted in the right areas but it lacks clarity and the practical steps needed to make improvements are not clearly set out. It is not clear, for example, how managers and governors will check if the plans have been achieved. All staff are hardworking and the acting senior managers are developing their skills in order to support the headteacher in driving forward school improvement. There is a good working relationship with other schools and outside agencies that provide a good forum to support professional and school development. As a result, the school has a secure basis to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning ensuring lessons are brisker and activities are better matched to the pupils' different needs.

- Make a more frequent check on pupils' progress and make better use of this information to improve their achievement.
- Improve the school development plan so that it has a much clearer focus on the most important actions that will help the school improve further and how they will be evaluated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average at the end of Year 6. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Children start with varying, but broadly average, skills. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and most children reach the expected goals by the time they start in Year 1. Many children start with below average and immature personal and social skills and with limited speaking skills. In these aspects of learning, the children make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Following this satisfactory start, pupils similarly make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Until recently a few pupils in Years 3 to 6 of all abilities were underachieving. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, some of these pupils did not have positive attitudes to learning because of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Secondly, progress was inconsistent in some year groups because work planned was not always pitched at the right level. This resulted in some pupils having ground to make up in Year 6. The school has successfully targeted support where it is most needed and behaviour has improved. As a result, the underachievement has been mostly addressed. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are now making satisfactory progress overall and good progress in the top end of the school where teaching is stronger. Pupils new to speaking English make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they enjoy school because they 'like the teachers and it's fun to learn'. Pupils are polite and friendly. Instances of poor behaviour, in the recent past, have been addressed, resulting in positive attitudes and better achievement in lessons. As one pupil said, 'I am learning how to be better behaved.' As a result, attendance is satisfactory and improving. Pupils feel secure and happy and they know how to make safe and sensible decisions.

Pupils in all year groups willingly take on responsibilities in class and around the school. The school council members talk confidently about the positive outcomes from their meetings, such as the new sensory garden. Pupils know the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit, enjoying the early morning 'Wake and Shake' sessions, although some still prefer to eat unhealthy snacks.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they have a good understanding of life in a multi-faith society. The school's strong Christian ethos and emphasis on developing moral and social skills results in pupils feeling that they have become 'kind and understanding' and 'a positive person'. Pupils value the opportunities they have to participate in school and community events and they make a good contribution to the local community. Coupled with their sound basic skills, this ensures that they are securely prepared for the future. As one Year 6 leaver wrote, 'The school has provided me with the skills and knowledge that I will use in later life.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is some good teaching in the school, but the quality is not consistent. There are common strengths in teaching that are exemplified by good relationships and subject knowledge. Pupils are always clear about what they are expected to learn and are praised for their efforts. As a result, pupils like their teachers, try hard in lessons and respond well to the values that the school promotes. Pupils new to speaking English are welcomed and valued. They receive good support and quickly gain in confidence and skill to use their new language. Similarly, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are fully included in lessons and receive good support from teaching assistants. They can sometimes be over-reliant on this help because activities planned do not always allow them to work independently or with their more able class mates. In some classes, teachers' planning does not always ensure that activities are matched carefully enough to the pupils' different abilities and this impacts on learning. Some teachers do not use a wide enough variety of different teaching approaches and on occasions pupils spend too long listening to the teacher so the pace of learning slows. Pupils themselves say that when this happens they 'get a bit bored and switch off'. Throughout, information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to make learning relevant and because of this, and improved class management skills, the pupils say that they 'think teaching is better now'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a broad range of learning experiences. The school has made a useful start in making lessons more interesting by linking subjects together so as to support the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Projects such as Exciting Writing are making learning more enjoyable, although such quality learning experiences to support better learning are not as strong throughout the curriculum. ICT is, however, used well to support learning across all subjects. The curriculum is soundly adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school recognises a need to develop the provision for gifted and talented pupils and to ensure that children in Reception have even more opportunities to learn from practical first-hand learning experiences. The school takes advantage of the local area to enliven

learning in subjects such as geography and history. There is a rich tradition of taking pupils out of the school to make learning more interesting. The improved breadth of provision, including a good range of additional clubs, French in Year 3 and increased emphasis on the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), is having a positive impact on improving pupils' attitudes to learning and helping develop a good community spirit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has a positive and caring atmosphere and this is recognised by most parents, who comment on the strong feeling of community and good liaison between staff and parents. Parents of pupils who have joined the school recently have been very pleased with how quickly their child has settled in and made friends. Child protection arrangements are rigorous. The needs of pupils new to speaking English, vulnerable pupils and those with more complex learning disabilities are met well and enhanced by good links with support agencies. Pupils feel safe in school and pupils requiring additional behavioural support are given an effective individual safety plan. The school's good programme for personal and social education enables pupils to develop confidence in coping with difficult situations.

Pupils know their targets for learning in English and mathematics and feel that teachers help them to do better. They all like the 'writers' toolkits' that help them keep a check on the contents of their writing. However, there are missed opportunities to link teachers' marking to pupils' targets so as to provide pupils with even better information on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides clear direction for the school. She has created a hard working team of staff who are all committed to the school's development. Despite a period of absence to work within the local authority, the headteacher has successfully led initiatives to address underachievement and to improve provision for ICT and the Foundation Stage. The care and personal development of pupils is effectively promoted and there are good links with parents and outside agencies to support this. As a result, despite a significant number of pupils having emotional and behavioural difficulties, there have been no exclusions, behaviour has improved and there is a better climate for learning, with underachievement mostly eliminated.

The monitoring of the school's performance by the headteacher and the relatively new acting senior managers is satisfactory. The school has a secure knowledge of its strengths and areas of development, so that the school development plan is focused in the right areas. However, it is not clear how the main priorities will be achieved and the plan does not describe how progress will be evaluated.

Good attempts have been made to gain parents' views and there is a great deal of data about how well individual pupils and year groups are doing. Although the school checks on learning and targets resources where they are needed, the school recognises that it has been over-reliant on the local authority's annual analysis of performance data. As a result, information about pupils' progress is not used as well as it might in the short term to fine tune teachers' planning and to enable activities to be better matched to the pupils' different abilities. Consequently, much of the school's monitoring has not been focused as sharply as it might on achieving consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Governors provide good support. Their programme of visits provides them with a good idea of how well the school is doing, but they are not yet confident enough to ask searching questions about the effectiveness of strategies for raising achievement.

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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?	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?	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?	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

Thank you so much for the friendly way you chatted to us when we visited. We know you like coming to school. We think St Catherine's is a satisfactory school and has some good features. The satisfactory features we found were your achievement, the teaching you receive, the way your school is run and the range of your learning experiences. The good features we found were your development as young people and the care you receive. You told us that your school is a friendly, welcoming place and we agree with you. We liked these things most:

You behave well and are polite. You try hard in lessons and enjoy learning, especially using the computers. You have lots of visits which help you learn. Your school council works hard and we liked the sensory garden. Everyone takes good care of you. We know you like 'Wake and Shake' and know how to keep healthy and safe.

We know that all of the staff are working hard, but there are three things that we want the staff and governors to do to make St Catherine's an even better place to learn:

- Make sure that the activities planned are not too difficult or too easy for you and that you are able to get on with your work quickly.
- Check on how you are doing more often and more carefully so that they can help you learn even more.
- Make sure that the plans they have to help the school improve are more specific and easier to keep a check on.

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