

St Buryan Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111798
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310685
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Geoff Burgess

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anita George
Headteacher	Paul Gazzard
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	St Buryan Penzance TR19 6BB
Telephone number	01736 810480
Fax number	01736 810611

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the value added to pupils' standards from intake to Year 6; how well recent improvements in standards in English are being maintained; and the quality of the curriculum, care, support and guidance, and their impact on pupils' personal development. Evidence was gathered from: analysis of pupils' performance in national tests; scrutiny of the school's records on pupils' progress and the targets set for them; first-hand observation of the school's work; discussions with school leaders, other staff and pupils; analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire; and scrutiny of documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small school serves a rural area not far from Land's End and pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Almost all pupils are White British and the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than usual. Children's individual attainment on entry varies considerably but, taking the intake as a whole, it is below the level expected. The number of pupils who join the school other than in Reception is higher than usual.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. One parent, reflecting the views of many, commented that the school offers 'the best education and care' her child could ask for. Its inclusive, caring ethos and almost limitless ambition for its pupils make it, in the words of a member of staff, 'a small school with a big heart and big ideas'. Its big heart has meant that a steady stream of pupils who have found learning difficult elsewhere have joined the school in the older classes. All have become happy, confident learners and successful members of the school community, much to the delight of their parents. The school's willingness to take on big ideas is illustrated by every pupil being given the chance to practise the French they learn in school 'après ski', on the slopes of the Alps during a biannual residential trip.

Children are given the best possible start in the Reception class. Small numbers and excellent provision result in most children achieving the levels expected by the time they move on to Year 1. A particular feature is the way in which children are encouraged to become active confident learners, able to work together and independently, and willing to 'have a go' at anything. Positive attitudes established in Reception are built on throughout the school and do much to ensure that pupils do as well academically as they possibly can. A parent complemented the school on making 'a tremendous effort to keep children engaged and happy in many varied ways'.

These varied ways include excellent pastoral care and a wonderfully creative and exciting curriculum. Everything possible is done to ensure that pupils are happy and secure in school. Pupils say they know they are safe in school and during the many demanding out of school activities. Repeated Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards indicate the importance the school gives to these areas, and pupils are very aware of what it takes to stay fit and healthy. An area which still requires attention, however, is attendance, which is a little below the national average.

One of the greatest of the school's many strengths is the quality of the whole range of activities which pupils experience right through their time at the school. A parent notes, 'For such a small school, the breadth of opportunity is excellent'. From the Reception class onwards, every effort is made to make the things pupils do in class as relevant and interesting as possible. Teachers make excellent use of the local environment, including the Isles of Scilly, and celebrate Cornish culture whilst ensuring that pupils understand what it means to live in a multi-cultural society.

Each pupil has a wide choice of activities to enjoy in addition to what they do in class. Sport and music have a very high profile, and the school's involvement in the local tradition in the arts and in performance is reflected in the displays of artwork and photographs around the school. However, ever eager to improve, the school acknowledges that it needs to make more use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

As a result of the high quality curriculum, care, support and guidance, pupils develop into confident, well-mannered, mature and happy learners. They think their school is 'cool' and that all the staff are their friends. Their behaviour is exemplary. A parent notes that the school has 'an excellent sense of community' and indeed, the school's links with the local community, including the church, are many and very productive. Pupils are heavily involved in the wider community and also have a very strong voice in school through the School Council. Pupils' excellent personal attributes, combined with well-developed literacy and numeracy skills, result in them being well prepared for their move onto secondary school and their later lives.

Excellent teaching makes it possible for pupils of all abilities to make exceptional progress. As a consequence, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave St Buryan at the end of Year 6. English had been a weakness but the school's actions have put it right and improvements in standards in this subject are being maintained and built on. A particular feature in this success is the high quality of the academic guidance and support, including the use of individual targets taped to pupils' tables so that they cannot forget what they are. Very well planned activities match the needs of all pupils closely in the mixed age classes. Highly effective and multi-talented teaching assistants make a vital contribution to supporting and guiding pupils individually and in groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are promptly identified and their needs are met very effectively in and out of the classroom.

The very high regard in which the school is held by parents and pupils, its popularity in the local community, and the excellent education it provides all bear witness to the exceptional leadership and management the school has benefited from for many years. It is a very well run school. Encouraged, challenged and very well supported by the governing body, especially the long-serving chair, the staff team have the confidence to take risks, question accepted thinking and set ever-higher targets for themselves and their pupils. All fulfil their various roles efficiently and work together extremely well as a team. The school's record of innovation and improvement is excellent, as is its capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage Grade: 1

Recognising that many children start school with limited skills and experiences, the school has invested heavily in ensuring that they are given every opportunity to catch up. Small numbers, first-class facilities, a stimulating learning environment and excellent leadership and teaching in the Foundation Stage means that children thrive. Very focused and very personal attention to each child's basic skills leads to them making very good progress. Just as importantly, with a rich, varied and often challenging range of activities to stimulate them, children's desire and capacity to learn grows with them. An extraordinary example of the lengths the school goes to in this area is the Reception class's own residential trip, where the children spend two days and a night together on a local campsite. The impact on their confidence and social and personal skills is remarkable.

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What the school should do to improve further

- make better use of ICT to boost learning in all subjects
- help all parents to recognise the importance of regular attendance.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

7 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Buryan Primary School, Penzance TR19 6BB

I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome on my visit on Shrove Tuesday. I was very impressed with all the fantastic things you have made or contributed to which are displayed around the school and envious of your exciting 'residential's'. Like you and your parents, I think St Buryan is a fantastic school – I also think you do a great deal to make it as good as it is. Well done!

- I found these good things:
- children in the Reception class settle in very quickly and do very well
- your behaviour is excellent, you work very hard and do your best
- everybody gets on really well together and when new pupils join the school, everybody makes sure they soon become part of the 'family'
- your teachers and teaching assistants are really good at helping you learn and you make very good progress
- the things you have to do in class are interesting, challenging and fun
- you enjoy lots of extra activities during and after school – especially sports
- you know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to
- you appreciate all that the grown-ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible
- your school is very well led and your headteacher is great at making it possible for you and all the grown-ups to do your best and enjoy working together.

To make things even better, I have asked your school to:

- give you more opportunities to use ICT in other subjects
- make sure nobody misses all the good things your school offers by being away unless they really have to be.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and doing your best. Again, thank you for all you do to make your school as good as it is. It was a pleasure for me to share it with you for a short time.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Burgess Lead Inspector

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