

Garras Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111816
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310692
Inspection date	5 June 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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ed Goodridge
Headteacher	Anne Shipman
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	St Keverne Road Mawgan Helston TR12 6AY
Telephone number	01326 221653
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: why there are higher standards in reading and writing than in mathematics and the reasons for a dip in standards in 2007; the impact of falling numbers and of new arrangements to work with other small schools on provision; the effect of strong provision on pupils' personal development and well-being.

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 very small two-class school serves a rural area on the Lizard Peninsula. Its pupils come from a variety of backgrounds. Numbers have fallen in recent years. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than usual. The number of pupils who join the school other than in the Foundation Stage is much higher than usual. With very small numbers involved, attainment on entry varies considerably but overall, it is similar to the level expected.

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, which has served its community well for many years. Pupils achieve well and usually reach above average standards by the time they move on to secondary school. The number of children starting school in the Foundation Stage has been very low in recent years. Provision is good, which allows children to make good progress in their first year at school.

Many pupils join the school later in their school careers, several with a range of specific learning difficulties. This was notably the case in Year 6 in 2007 when four of the five pupils who took national tests joined the school in the older class and several needed significant help with their learning. Understandably, standards fell but, thanks to the good support and guidance provided for pupils with learning difficulties, the school sustained its record of ensuring good overall achievement.

Reading and writing are strengths of the school with pupils regularly achieving outstanding results in national testing in Years 2 and 6. Indeed, even in 2007, the Year 6 English results were still above average. The school's records show that high standards have been restored this year. Literacy has a high profile in the school and, with small numbers of pupils involved, staff are able to give individual feedback and support for pupils in both reading and writing. Parents make a strong contribution to standards by hearing their children read. A very good example of the quality of provision in writing is the way in which meticulous termly assessments of writing with specific targets are shared with pupils and parents. These show consistently good progress, high expectations and very good awareness of learning needs. Academic support and guidance are good.

Standards in science are usually well above average. In mathematics, progress is slower and standards lower, though still usually average or above. Mathematics does not have the same high profile as English. Less time is spent on it each day and many activities are not as challenging for individual pupils in the mixed-age classes.

Teaching and learning are good in both classes. Staff take advantage of the small numbers involved to provide individual pupils with help and support tailored to their needs. Good use is made of the skills of the well-qualified teaching assistant in the Year 3 to 6 class to help provide activities and teaching input matched to the attainment of pupils in the four year groups involved.

Thanks to a well-developed curriculum and very good pastoral care, pupils are happy to say how much they enjoy school and appreciate the way all the adults look after them. Pupils who started school elsewhere are especially keen to say how good they think Garras School is. Attendance is much better than usual in an area where tourism is a key industry. Pupils' personal development is good. The school has ensured that pupils know how to stay healthy, fit and safe. The small numbers ensure that all pupils have plenty of opportunity to involve themselves in the school and local community. For instance, all older pupils are members of the School Council. Good basic skills and improvements to provision for information and communication technology mean that pupils are well prepared for the future. Behaviour is usually very good and was exemplary both in class and around the school during the inspection. However, several parents expressed concern about some disruption caused by the poor behaviour of a very small number of older pupils who joined the school in the recent past. The school has worked extremely hard to resolve this situation with considerable success. It has been very effective in ensuring that all pupils can enjoy their time in school and learn how to become valued members of the

school community. Key to this has been the use of the expertise of the school's enthusiastic special educational needs coordinator.

A very important factor in the good quality of the curriculum and strengths in pupils' personal development is the way the school takes advantage of the various partnership arrangements it has made with other small schools. Joint ventures, such as the 'Making it Happen' crafts project, make it possible for pupils to get involved in activities that would not otherwise be viable. During the inspection, the six children in the younger class joined children from a neighbouring small school for physical education. This not only made many more activities possible but also gave the children from both schools the chance to work with more children of their own age and gender. The interaction between members of staff is very important in terms of shared ideas, expertise, and planning, as well as professional development and in checking perceptions of the quality of pupils' work. However, some parents are concerned about the planned further extension of these arrangements.

The quality of leadership and management is shown by the school's consistently good track record in promoting pupils' academic and personal development. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is honest and accurate. With pupil numbers falling, the headteacher and governors have recognised that the school needs to be proactive in developing its provision. With this in mind, from September, the school will open its own on-site pre-school provision and will be working very closely with a neighbouring school to maximise resources and enhance opportunities for pupils. The school's ambitious plans and willingness to innovate and set itself challenging targets show that its capacity to improve remains strong.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The small number of Foundation Stage children share their class with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The room is well equipped for young children, and appropriate activities enable them to experience all areas of learning. Small numbers mean that each child gets individual attention and the teacher ensures that older pupils play alongside their younger classmates to give them the opportunity to share and cooperate. With older classmates acting as very good role models, children very soon understand what is expected of them at school and aspire to emulate their older classmates.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics to match those in reading and writing by increasing the amount of time spent on numeracy and setting more demanding learning targets for individual pupils.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Garras Community Primary School, Helston TR12 6AY

Thank you for making me feel so welcome on my brief visit. I enjoyed watching you at work and play and talking to you about your school. I agree with you that Garras School is good.

I found these good things:

- Your behaviour is good. You work hard and do your best.
- Everybody gets on well together and when new pupils join the school, they very quickly become part of the community.
- Your teachers and helpers are good at helping you learn and you make good progress, especially in reading and writing.
- The things you have to do in class are interesting and fun.
- You are able to join with children from other schools to enjoy extra activities during and after school.
- You know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- I know you appreciate all the grown-ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible.
- Your headteacher is good at making it possible for everyone to do their best and enjoy working together.

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

- help you to achieve as well in mathematics as you do in English.

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