

# Probus Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 111865        |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cornwall      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 310707        |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 4–5 June 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Mike Capper   |

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

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|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary                                   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                                 |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11                                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                     |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 185                                       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                        |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Steven Bradford                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Robert Adams                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 26 January 2004                           |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Ladock Road<br>Probus<br>Truro<br>TR2 4LE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01726 882647                              |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01726 884533                              |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Most pupils in this slightly smaller than average rural primary school come from the village of Probus and the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties is slightly below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is moving forward quickly under the good leadership of the headteacher and other senior staff. They are tackling areas of weakness with renewed vigour now that there is a more settled staffing structure and a stronger understanding amongst subject leaders and governors of the shared responsibilities for ensuring improvement.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children get a good start in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year), where they make good progress. Progress is improving in the rest of the school and there is an upward trend in test results, especially at the end of Year 2. Standards at the end of Year 6 are also rising and are broadly average overall. In English, standards in writing are lower than in reading. In Years 3 to 6, pupils do not always present their work neatly enough and they make too many mistakes in their spelling and punctuation. This is because opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects are not extensive enough and marking and targets for improvement are not used consistently to help pupils understand the next step in their learning.

Thorough monitoring and support from senior managers has resulted in improved teaching and this is why pupils' progress has picked up in the last two years. Teaching is now satisfactory overall, with good practice seen across the school. Teachers are hardworking and have excellent relationships with pupils. They plan carefully for lessons but, except in mathematics, do not always pitch work at a high enough level for all pupils, slowing the pace of learning. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics because teachers are successful at ensuring that there is good challenge in numeracy lessons.

Pupils are very well cared for and this ensures that their personal development is outstanding. One pupil rightly commented that, 'Teachers are very kind and caring and there is always someone to sort out any worries.' Throughout the school, pupils behave very well and they have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. For example, they use new play equipment very sensibly, following rules very conscientiously. Members of staff work very hard to enrich the already good curriculum. The success of this is shown in the very high rates of attendance and the smiling and happy faces that can be seen throughout the day. Pupils greatly enjoy school, and the very large number of clubs reflects the willingness of staff to go the extra mile to make school fun. Teachers foster creativity very imaginatively through lessons and clubs. Pupils produce high quality artwork such as the superb pictures on the theme of 'Images of War' that are displayed in the entrance hall.

Pupils are very proud of their school and they are right when they say that it helps them to become very responsible citizens. School councillors speak confidently about the things that they have done to improve provision and they manage large budgets very wisely. Activities such as these, as well as improving progress in developing basic skills and their very high levels of confidence and self-esteem, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher and staff have a good awareness of what remains to be done to raise standards further. The school is already taking the right steps to improve progress in writing. Although some of these initiatives are relatively recent, they are already having a positive effect on the quality of written work in some classes, especially Year 2. Senior managers have rightly identified that they now need to monitor more rigorously recent initiatives to check that they are having the desired effect on pupils' learning across the school and are being sustained. Nevertheless, the generally upward trend in standards and the many recent developments demonstrate that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Members of staff have forged strong partnerships with parents, with other local schools and with outside agencies. Parents are very pleased with the school, typically saying things like 'My child has really blossomed at Probus' and 'There is a wonderful family atmosphere and children get on together well.' Comments such as these successfully capture the main strengths of this improving school.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because teaching is good and they are provided with interesting activities. Consequently, they make good progress and, from starting points broadly in line with the levels expected for their age, standards rise to above average levels by the start of Year 1. Children make especially good progress in personal and social development because of the high expectations of all adults. Writing skills also improve quickly, due to the structured way in which they are taught. There is a happy, purposeful atmosphere throughout the day, although at the end of lessons, there are missed opportunities for children to gather together to talk about what they have done so that learning can be extended. The good curriculum includes effective use of the outdoor area to support learning. Provision is well managed. Leaders have started to track progress in more detail in the current year so that any areas for development can be identified even more quickly.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Give pupils in Years 3 to 6 more opportunities to write in different subjects and make better use of marking and targets to help them know how to improve their writing.
- Make sure that the work that teachers plan for different groups is sufficiently challenging and that all lessons move at a faster pace.
- Strengthen monitoring at all levels so that it focuses more sharply on whether recent initiatives are having the desired effect on pupils' learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make the best progress in the Foundation Stage where they develop new skills quickly. In the rest of the school, senior leaders' monitoring shows that there is more good teaching than in the past and this is resulting in improved progress. This is beginning to be reflected in higher test results at the end of Year 6, where standards have risen to broadly average levels and are set to rise further as improved standards lower down the school filter through. Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics where differing needs are being met particularly well. In writing, progress is uneven. Although there is a more positive picture lower down the school, with standards at the end of Year 2 rising sharply in the last two years, older pupils do not apply basic spelling and punctuation skills confidently and handwriting and presentation is variable in quality. Pupils with learning difficulties make the same progress as others.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy attending school and behave exceptionally well. They become confident and articulate individuals who are sociable and considerate. As one pupil said, 'Everyone looks after each other.' Pupils are extremely polite and helpful and there is a calm and purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Pupils work hard most of the time, although some older pupils do not always take enough care with their written work.

Pupils have an excellent understanding about the dangers they face in their everyday lives and how to avoid them. They explain about how to stay safe in the local environment, for example when playing on the beach, and they use school play resources very sensibly. Pupils happily adopt healthy lifestyles. They take frequent exercise through activities such as 'wake and shake' and often, but not always, make healthy choices of playtime snacks.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils quickly learn to work together sensibly and they enjoy sharing in each other's successes. They make a superb contribution to the community by raising funds for charity, by looking after the environment and taking part in local events such as the Truro Festival of Lights. School councillors are very responsible and they listen carefully to the views expressed by the whole school at 'forum' meetings. The impact of their work can be seen in greatly improved outdoor play equipment.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

There are good features to teaching across the school. All teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. They engage the pupils' interest successfully by using interactive whiteboards to demonstrate what they expect them to learn. In mathematics, older pupils are grouped by ability for lessons. This has helped to improve progress with work being closely matched to differing needs in most lessons. Teaching assistants take small groups of pupils at these times and provide particularly valuable support. Outside mathematics, teachers do not always ensure that work builds closely enough on pupils' starting points. When this happens, work lacks challenge and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently but they do not always give clear enough guidance to show them how to improve, especially in written work across the curriculum.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

In the last two years, the school has made great steps in improving the way that basic skills are introduced across the school. This has been most effective in numeracy, where provision is now good, and there are strong links being made between different subjects. In literacy, although there have been recent improvements, pupils are still not yet given enough opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills in subjects such as science, history and geography, especially in Years 3 to 6. This slows the pace at which these skills can improve.

Enrichment of the curriculum is outstanding. The school provides every child with an extremely wide range of experiences, especially in physical education and the arts. There is a large choir

that sings beautifully and pupils excel in sport. Close links with other schools also add greatly to the curriculum. For example, older pupils learn French because of these links.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Very good pastoral care supports pupils' personal development very successfully. Members of staff know the pupils very well and the school provides a safe and caring environment. There is always an adult available for pupils to talk to if they are finding school or home life difficult so that problems can be resolved quickly. Good links with the on-site pre-school help pupils to settle quickly into the Reception class.

Academic support is satisfactory. The use of targets to help pupils understand how to improve is developing well, but it is not yet consistent across classes or subjects. It is most effective in mathematics, where pupils talk very confidently about the next stage of their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified quickly and given suitable support towards meeting their individual targets.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a school that is improving quickly. Senior managers have taken decisive action to tackle underachievement and most pupils are back on track. There have been many positive initiatives that have helped to raise standards, especially in mathematics. Pupils' progress is being thoroughly monitored and they are set clear targets for improvement, although these are not yet consistently challenging enough, especially for writing, to ensure good progress is made by all pupils.

Good systems for evaluating school effectiveness are now more sharply focused on whether all pupils are doing well enough. Subject leadership has been greatly enhanced in the last two years and this has helped to increase the pace of change. Subject leaders are relatively new to their roles, but have made a good start to improving provision. Governors have also strengthened their role significantly and they now play a full part in holding the school to account and in planning for the future. Senior managers, subject leaders and governors know that they now need to concentrate on monitoring sharply the success of recent developments and on checking that these are having the desired effect on pupils' learning.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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   |
| 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?  | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?                                  | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |

### 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? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 3 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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  | 3   |
| 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                     | 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  | 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

6 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Probus Community Primary School, Truro TR2 4LE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. We found that at the moment your school is providing a satisfactory education, although it is improving quickly.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- You make good progress in the Reception Year and quickly learn many new things. Satisfactory teaching means that you make steady progress in the rest of the school. At the moment, you make the best progress in mathematics.
- You behave extremely well, greatly enjoy school and take responsibility very sensibly. We were particularly impressed with the way that the school council and school forum are working together to improve things.
- Adults in school are very kind and caring and they look after you well.
- You are taught all the subjects you should be. The school successfully teaches you about the importance of staying safe and healthy and there are lots of interesting clubs, visits and visitors. We thought the school choir sang superbly when they performed for us.
- The headteacher, other members of staff and governors are leading the school well and they are taking the right steps to help you learn even more quickly.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help older pupils to do better in writing by giving you more opportunities to write in different subjects and making better use of marking and targets to help you understand the next step in improving your work.
- Make sure that teachers always expect enough of you and that they ensure that you work quickly.
- Check that all the new things members of staff have introduced are helping you all to learn more speedily.

You can help your teachers by making sure that you take greater care to present your work neatly, especially in Years 3 to 6.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and wish you well for the future. We hope that the Year 6 camp on the Isles of Scilly is a success!

Yours sincerely

Mr Mike Capper Lead Inspector

6 June 2008

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Mr Mike Capper  
Lead Inspector