

## St Columb Major Community Primary School

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111893
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	310718
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jonathan Palk HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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 (total)	257
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicola Le Couteur-Bisson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Antus Phillips
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Newquay Road St Columb TR9 6RW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01637 880272
<b>Fax number</b>	01637 880272

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Columb Major is slightly larger than an average-sized primary school with an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that admits children, initially part time, from the age of four years. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils are from other minority ethnic groups but very few pupils are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Children's attainment on entry is below that of most young children. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broad, including autism, speech and communication problems and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical needs. The proportions joining the school during their school career are high. The inspection of Major Steps Childcare, which includes a Children's Centre, was carried out the day before this inspection and is reported separately.

## 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 where the dedication of the staff and their warm relationships with the pupils and parents make it a happy place to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance, although average, has improved significantly in the last few years. Parents are extremely pleased with what the school offers, summed up by one parent who wrote, 'The staff have provided such a rich and happy environment for the children my son now cannot wait to get to school.'

The quality of teaching is good and this is one of the key strengths of the school. Pupils appreciate the effort their teachers put in to make lessons fun and exciting. Most lessons are adapted well to suit pupils' needs and include good opportunities for pupils to share and discuss their ideas. Pupils are well cared for. Support is directed sensitively towards pupils' needs, both academic and personal. Pupils behave well. A small number of parents have concerns about the behaviour of a few, although the school manages well any difficulties they present. Pupils feel safe because they say any problems are resolved quickly. They show concern for newcomers and help them to settle into school.

Pupils' personal development is good. The many practical activities planned for them help them to develop self-confidence, take pride in their work and tackle their lessons with enthusiasm. Within the satisfactory curriculum, there are plenty of opportunities for them to understand the importance of keeping healthy and staying safe and to learn important life skills.

Standards are average throughout the school. Whilst the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels by the end of Year 6 is steadily improving, it remains below average. Most pupils achieve well. The strategies for addressing underachievement in writing and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 were particularly effective last year. However, standards in writing in last year's national tests for pupils in Year 6 were still slightly below average. Throughout the school, reluctant writers are gaining confidence in reading and spelling, leading to their use of more adventurous vocabulary.

The curriculum has been reorganised to provide good links between subjects to make it more relevant for pupils and fun for the teachers to teach. There is good emphasis on art and learning through investigating and research. There is not always enough focus on how the more able are to be challenged to develop their skills. Leadership and management are good. Purposeful action by school leaders has led to good improvements in achievement, provision and management since the last inspection. Governors are now effective and are actively involved in the school improvement process. They are conscientious in ensuring statutory duties are fulfilled and managing the school's financial resources. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. The amount of assessment information has improved and pupils are set challenging targets. However, this is not analysed in depth, making it difficult for school leaders to gauge the impact of their actions. In spite of this, there is a shared understanding of the school's qualities and priorities for improvement, so that it is well placed to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class from below expected starting points. By the time they start in Year 1, children's communication, language and literacy development remains below expectations but in other areas of their learning they are meeting expectations.

The good emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development forms a basis for their evident success in learning and development as they move into Years 1 and 2. Children love the many opportunities to practise their sounds and letters and 'writing'. A good range of activities challenges their thinking and encourages them to develop communication skills. For example, the opportunity to order and collect materials from the hardware store set up outside the classroom demonstrated well the seamless link between learning inside and outside. There is a very good balance of activities led by teachers and those that children choose for themselves. The leader of the EYFS recognises that more could be done to develop the links with home and pre-school settings to gather information about children's interests that would be useful in planning activities and encouraging them to greater challenge. All adults are rigorous in tracking the gains children make in their learning and care is taken to give them the right support when they need it. Children's welfare is promoted well. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about the things they do in the day. The good leadership of the EYFS is seen in the wide and interesting range of activities planned for children and the good organisation of learning across the two classes.

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

- Improve standards in writing.
- Ensure that the curriculum provides sufficient challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able, to develop their knowledge and skills across a wider range of subjects.
- Improve the leaders' skills in analysing school performance information to identify priorities more sharply.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter the school with skills that are below the expected starting point for their age. Throughout the school, far more pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age than in the past. This is most evident in reading and mathematics, but to a lesser extent in writing. During the EYFS and Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average, with a similar proportion of pupils gaining the highest levels in national tests as found nationally. This is due to accurate assessment in the EYFS that identifies gaps in the children's development. Lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills through role play and a range of activities which promote vocabulary development.

By the end of Year 6, standards are average. Pupils' good achievement is seen in the improving rates of progress that are now occurring consistently in all year groups. The recent whole-school focus on mathematics is having a good impact on progress, with standards of work rising because of improved provision in aspects of the subject, such as methods of calculation and using and applying mathematics, which were previously weaknesses in pupils' learning. Whilst progress in writing has lagged behind other areas and too few reached average standards last year, this is now catching up. With carefully focused support and a range of well matched intervention strategies, pupils who are behind or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are getting the academic support and guidance they need to improve rapidly.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Classrooms are characterised by very well motivated, attentive and well behaved pupils enjoying their learning. Attendance is average as too many parents choose to take their children on holiday during term time despite the best efforts of the school. Spiritual, social and moral development is good. While pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, their awareness of the richness and diversity of British culture and the global community is a relative weakness. Pupils have a strong social awareness, make a valuable contribution to the local community and are keen fundraisers for charity. They look after each other and many invest time in the active school council and helping at playtimes by encouraging cooperative play. Pupils are keen to stay on after school to take part in clubs and competitive activities. There is some boisterous behaviour at playtimes but pupils understand and accept the clear structure of rewards and sanctions, which help them get their behaviour back on track. Pupils show a good commitment to healthy living by choosing to eat and drink healthily. Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory overall. The emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills and opportunities to work together make a considerable contribution to their confidence and levels of independence.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and this sets a positive tone for learning. Teachers generally plan work that is closely matched to pupils' individual abilities and consequently progress is good in lessons. Teaching assistants are well informed about what pupils are expected to learn from activities and have a good level of expertise in the areas where they are working. This ensures pupils are fully included in learning. All teachers are good at engaging pupils in talking, to help them develop their ideas and choice of vocabulary. This encourages them to organise their writing effectively. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their skills through investigation and problem solving. The effective use of interactive whiteboards motivates and inspires pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and provide targets for improvement that are appreciated by pupils. In some lessons, questions and discussions are not challenging enough and not enough time is given at the end of the lesson to help teachers assess and deepen pupils' understanding of their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

A strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, scientific and thinking skills leads to good progress in these areas. Pupils are beginning to make use of these skills to support their work in other subjects but this not always planned for in a systematic way. The curriculum has been adapted well in Years 1 and 2, as staff have responded well to the needs of different groups of learners. However, the planning for foundation subjects in Years 3 to 6 does not provide enough challenge to meet the full range of needs and this limits what more able pupils can achieve. Nevertheless, the school has made good strides in improving the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection. A good range of popular extra-curricular clubs, along with residential visits, provide good support for pupils' social development and add greatly to their

enjoyment of school. A regular programme of visits and visitors enriches their understanding of history and art.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school meets all the requirements for safeguarding pupils. The school provides strong academic support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the recent work of the gifted and talented coordinator is improving the provision for these pupils. A comprehensive range of strategies is now in place to keep track of pupils' progress, although the refinement of planning in foundation subjects is not yet secure. Skilled support helps pupils achieve demanding targets. The recent introduction of assessments linked to National Curriculum levels in writing is helping to identify sooner any problems pupils may be having. Individual targets, group targets and individual education plans are regularly reviewed and information shared between adults and pupils. As a result, most pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have formed an effective team, working to a common purpose. Success is evident in the way the provision has improved since the last inspection and respect has grown in the local community. The leadership has been effective in raising standards across the school and securing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. The use of assessment information to provide more focused intervention for vulnerable groups has been successful. There has been effective targeting of the curriculum to make it more appealing to groups of learners, in order to eradicate the dips in performance in Years 3 to 6. The school works well with parents and local authority agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these pupils are integrated well into all activities.

Senior leaders are developing their leadership and management roles, but there is some inconsistency in the way they evaluate the quality and impact of their actions to improve outcomes for pupils. Systems for evaluation are not analytical enough and do not always pinpoint strengths and weaknesses clearly. The governors provide the headteacher with good support and are actively involved in checking up all areas of the school's work to help drive further improvement.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Columb Major Community Primary School, St Columb, TR9 6RW

Thank you very much for all the help you gave us during our recent visit. We enjoyed being shown around by members of your school council and talking with so many of you. Your school has improved a lot since it was last inspected and this is because you work hard in your lessons and get involved in what you are learning.

Yours is a good school. All the staff know you very well and take good care of you. They plan many exciting and interesting lessons for you and it was good to see so much of your work displayed around the school. We thought that some of you need harder work to make you really think so we have asked the teachers to make sure the work they set you in all subjects has the right level of difficulty.

Your teachers and support staff are good at helping you achieve well and reach the standards expected. We have asked that they help some of you to do even better in writing. You can help by trying to write accurately.

Your parents tell us they are very pleased with you and your teachers and the school works closely with them. We were impressed with how well you behaved when we were there. Keep it up! You are fortunate to have a good headteacher and teachers. They have high expectations of you all, and are checking that you are making good progress. We have asked them to think more carefully about what the information they are collecting is telling them. This will help the adults who are responsible for the school, known as governors, to make sure the school keeps doing well.

Best wishes

Yours faithfully

Mr Jonathan Palk Her Majesty's Inspector