

Gunnislake Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111952
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310740
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Richard Mudge
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Chapel Street Gunnislake PL18 9NA
Telephone number	01822 832685
Fax number	01822 832685

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average and the great majority of pupils are of White British Heritage. The proportion of pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which include both problems with literacy and numeracy and behavioural and emotional difficulties, is high in some classes. There has been a complete change of teaching staff in the last year, and the school has had an acting headteacher during this period.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Gunnislake Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has been a difficult journey to get to this stage, but staff, pupils, parents and governors all testify to the recent improvements. These comments from parents are typical of several: 'The new leadership appears to have turned this school around' and 'The school is now offering a good learning environment where the children appear motivated and encouraged to learn'. The school has had to emerge from a period of disruption caused by frequent changes of staff and leadership, and marked by problems of poor attitudes and behaviour by many pupils, and underachievement by older pupils in particular. The entire teaching force has been in post for a year or less. Nevertheless, in a comparatively short space of time, a sustained approach to improvement, shared by all staff and governors, has begun to reap dividends.

The small school intake varies in levels of ability from year to year. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress at the start of their school life owing to the good quality of provision. Nevertheless, in recent years pupils have often left the school with below average standards, having underachieved. The school has begun to address this through a range of strategies to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the quality of both teaching and the curriculum. The current group of Year 6 pupils, despite several having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are achieving satisfactorily. They are on track to reach their realistically challenging targets and attain broadly average standards. However, out of all the core literacy and numeracy skills, writing range and quality remain the weakest and is a continued area for development throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development has improved. Pupils are now more positive towards learning. There is less misbehaviour and improved attendance. Pupils themselves speak of an 'improved learning environment'. They feel well cared for, although procedures to provide pupils with good academic support are less developed than those for personal care and support, and they are not yet embedded in classroom practice throughout the school. Teachers have willingly accepted the need to raise standards and expectations. They have begun to take on responsibility for areas outside their own teaching, such as subject leadership, although monitoring of provision by those other than the headteacher or the local authority is in its early stages. Teaching is satisfactory; there are examples of good practice, evident for example in brisk pace and high expectations, but these are not yet consistent, especially for older pupils. Some teachers do not use assessment sufficiently well to plan activities which match pupils' learning needs, and marking does not consistently help pupils to understand how to improve. The curriculum is also being developed so that pupils in mixed-age classes follow a more coherent programme of study containing a wider range of activities. These now include more languages, sport, creative activities, drama and art.

There have been improvements in standards, in information and communication technology (ICT) provision and in monitoring since the previous inspection. Not all parents are convinced of the improvements. A minority still express concerns about behaviour and the frequent changes of teaching staff which have dogged the school. The inspectors agree that several improvements are not yet embedded firmly, but also agree with the majority of parents and pupils who feel much more positive about the school. Much of the credit for this belongs to the acting headteacher, who has ensured that the school currently has a satisfactory capacity for improvement. It is also showing encouraging signs of being able to develop more sustained improvement, particularly if the very recent stability in staffing is maintained.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress in the necessary areas of learning, after starting from well below expected levels on entry, especially in language and literacy skills. Children are working within the levels expected for their age by the end of the Reception year. Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities matched appropriately to children's needs, whilst also encouraging children to choose activities. The school keeps parents well informed of their children's progress, and the coordinator provides good leadership. There is a good understanding of how further improvements can be made, particularly in the provision for outdoor play and raising standards in writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English by improving the range and quality of writing throughout the school.
- Spread the good practice in teaching and learning, ensuring assessment is used consistently to plan work which meets pupils' needs and raises expectations.
- Provide pupils with constructive advice through marking that shows how to improve
- Develop the skills of the new staff team in monitoring the effectiveness of new strategies for development.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

With such small numbers of pupils in each year group, standards have fluctuated in recent years, although there has been a trend of underachievement amongst older pupils. The underachievement was confirmed by the results of the 2007 Year 6 national tests. However, improvements in teaching and in pupils' attitudes have begun to reverse this trend. The current Year 6, despite containing several pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and several who have joined the school other than at the usual time, are attaining average standards overall. Although the range and quality of writing are weaker than standards in mathematics and science, overall performance represents satisfactory achievement. There is no significant difference in achievement between boys and girls or between pupils of different levels of ability. Standards in science and ICT have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils by the age of seven continue to reach average standards, as they did in the 2007 national tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Improved attendance, which is now above average, is a reflection of the school's hard work to improve the attitude of pupils, many of whom are now more enthusiastic about attending school. Behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils respond to a range of recent strategies such as 'Golden Rules' and are now more considerate of each other, although there are still instances of thoughtless behaviour which disrupt learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, and improving. They have limited opportunities to take on responsibility. For example, the school council is not seen by pupils as very effective. However,

pupils appreciate improvements to their environment and enjoy an increased range of activities in and out of the classroom, such as more opportunities to use ICT. Pupils have a sound understanding of what it means to live healthily. Preparation for the next stage of education is satisfactory. Although the school is developing core skills better, several pupils still lack confidence and the ability to express themselves well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There have been some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, which has affected the quality of learning, although teaching has improved as the result of an intensive programme of support from both within and outside the school. In the better lessons, teachers plan well for the needs of a wide range of pupils of different ages and abilities. These lessons are well paced and make good use of time to keep pupils focused. Teachers use support staff well to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress. Sometimes too much time is wasted between activities and pupils become less motivated and learn less well. Teachers do not always match the right level of challenge to the range of pupils' abilities. Marking of work has improved, but remains inconsistent. Younger pupils in particular benefit from effective use of targets and guidance, but sometimes marking is not helpful to pupils because it does not show them how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The current leadership has improved the structure of the curriculum so that there are better planned programmes of study as pupils move up through the school, and they avoid repetition. The school recognises the need for continued development, so that all pupils, whatever their age and ability, get the best opportunities to achieve well. Although there is still more to do to raise standards, the school has succeeded in enriching the curriculum well. There is an imaginative programme of Spanish and Cantonese language teaching, more physical education, arts and creative activities, and a range of clubs and visits which pupils enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe in school and report that incidents such as bullying are now dealt with more effectively. They also confirm that they feel well looked after and they willingly turn to staff for help. Procedures to ensure pupils' well-being and safety are securely in place. Support for academic progress is less well developed. The school has worked hard to collect data and track pupils' progress through the school, but this is yet to be embedded, and there is inconsistent use of this information to set useful targets and influence learning in the classroom.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is no leadership team in the school. However, the acting headteacher and the good and knowledgeable governing body have successfully focused all staff on the need for improvement,

and their dedication has paid off. There is now sound strategic planning in place, based on an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and extensive monitoring by the acting headteacher. A completely new and relatively inexperienced team of teachers has begun to take on responsibility for developments across the school, although opportunities for them to monitor these developments are at an early stage. There are productive links with outside agencies, for example to support vulnerable pupils. Links with other schools to promote learning are less well developed, although there are some fruitful arrangements with a local secondary school, for example to provide sports coaching.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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

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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gunnislake Primary School, Gunnislake, PL18 9NA

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. It was fascinating to talk to you about your time in school, and to see you in and around the classrooms.

We agree with many of the things you told us about how your school has improved during the last year in particular. We know that many of you and your parents think highly of the school, and that many of you are more enthusiastic about your work than you were. We know that your behaviour is better than it was. More of you attend school regularly. Most of you like your teachers, the displays, the general look of the school and the things you can take part in outside lessons such as trips and clubs.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Mr Mudge and the other staff have worked hard to bring about improvements. Importantly, most of you are now doing better in your work and make satisfactory progress to reach average standards. This is not just because of your teachers, but also because you are taking your learning more seriously. Teaching is satisfactory and your teachers are now giving you a greater variety of things to do in lessons. We know that many of you enjoyed activities such as the school production.

Although your school has improved, it could be doing even better. We have asked your teachers to try to improve your writing, partly by giving you a wider range of tasks, and partly by giving you more help in the marking, so that you have a better idea of how you can improve. We have also asked them to make sure that all of you, however difficult or easy you find the work, get the right sort of task so that you can make good progress. We do not just expect more from your teachers: you have a part to play, because some of you could behave even better and make even more progress if you try. Your teachers and other adults in the school are all sure that you can do even better.

Once again, thank you for your welcome and we wish you good luck for the future.

John Laver

Lead inspector

Annex B

23 April 2008



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