

Delaware Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111973
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310747
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascal

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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Richards
Headteacher	Joanne Grail
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Drakewalls Gunnislake PL18 9EN
Telephone number	01822 832550
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

Two Additional Inspectors carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school that serves a diverse rural community. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and nearly all are from White British backgrounds. There is a higher than average percentage of pupils with learning difficulties, many of whom have learning and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry to the school is below average.

In September 2007, the school established an Area Resource Centre for autistic pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Delaware is a good school. It is successful in meeting its mission statement that 'Every individual should be valued; enjoy their learning, and without fear of failure, strive to achieve their best.' It achieves this through a child centred approach to learning and placing very high importance on the care, guidance and support for pupils. Because of this, pupils make good progress in their personal development and by the time they leave Year 6 are confident young people who take on responsibilities willingly and have a strong sense of self-worth. They have an exceptionally good understanding of keeping safe and how to lead healthy lives.

Pupils benefit from good teaching and make good progress in their learning. They get off to an exceptionally good start in the foundation class; where in many aspects of their learning achievement is outstanding. There has not though been enough focus on ensuring children make sufficient progress in their writing skills. This weakness is now being addressed but has had an impact in Years 1 and 2 where, although they making good progress overall, pupils' standards in writing are below those expected nationally. However, by the time pupils reach Year 6, any gaps in their skills and knowledge have been filled and standards are broadly average and achievement is good. The school is developing an innovative curriculum that is beginning to have a considerable impact on pupils' learning and personal development and is doing much to ensure that pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in the improving attendance rates that are now above average when compared with other schools nationally.

Whilst many parents are very supportive of the school and comment positively on the support they and their children receive from staff, there are those who are concerned about the behaviour of pupils. There are specific concerns about those pupils whose behaviour can be challenging. For the vast majority of pupils, behaviour is good and often excellent. Pupils comment on the fact that they feel safe in school and that there are no issues with bullying. There is though a minority of pupils who do not always respond to the school's behaviour systems. Whilst the school is orderly and calm, there are those who require a more robust system to help them manage their behaviour. The school has recognised this and is already beginning to look at alternative systems.

The drive and determination of the headteacher and the effective support of her senior team has enabled the school to move forward and take on new initiatives. They are not a group who are happy with second best and are constantly looking at how they can improve. There is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and staff are vigilant in checking to see what can be done to improve pupils' achievements. This is reflected in the good work in raising standards in mathematics over the last year from previously being below average at the end of Year 6 to a predicted standard of average this year. The support from the governing body and their knowledge and understanding of the school are good. Because of these factors the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry varies from year to year but overall, children's knowledge, skills and understanding are below national average levels. Children make at least good progress whilst in the Foundation Stage and many make outstanding achievements in aspects of their learning. This is because leadership and management are committed to providing as many opportunities

as possible to enable children to be prepared for the next stage of their education. This is achieved through a very well planned curriculum, which is based on giving children a rich play-based learning experience. The facilities, both indoor and out, are very good and provide a rich and stimulating environment which enables children to benefit from a huge range of opportunities to learn. The focus on enabling children to manage their own activities does much for their personal development and ability to take responsibility. As a result, their attitudes to learning are outstanding. Effective teaching and a very good knowledge of children's abilities through rigorous assessment enable staff to ensure that children develop a range of skills. Although there has been a focus on developing children's skills in writing and linking sounds to letters, this has not been sufficient to enable children to make the progress they should. Action has been taken to address this, which is already having an impact on raising children's achievements in phonics and writing skills.

Arrangements for introducing children to the Foundation Stage are excellent and provide both children and parents with a good understanding of the expectations of staff. The opportunity for parents and siblings to be involved every week in a 'learning together' day is greatly valued. The interaction between staff and children is of a high quality and contributes greatly to children's communication skills. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is innovative and forward thinking. The very good knowledge and understanding of this particular age group and the commitment to ensure that children get the best possible start to their education ensure very high quality provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievements in writing so that the standards reached by the end of Year 2 are at least in line with national expectation.
- Improve the systems for behaviour management to enable those pupils with more challenging behaviour to learn to behave more appropriately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average and pupils make good progress in their learning. Standards in mathematics were a cause for concern last year but through effective action, pupils are now making better progress and are predicted to reach standards broadly in line with those nationally. Predicted results in English, and particularly in writing for Year 6, reflect the good progress made by pupils.

Pupils start Year 1 with good skills in many areas but overall standards are below those expected nationally. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is generally good but writing is a weakness when they arrive in Year 1. Despite making improvements, their standards in writing by the end of Year 2 are well below those expected nationally. The school caters well for those pupils with learning difficulties and as a result, they make the same progress as their peers. The progress of those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is satisfactory and improving. The recent input of specialist help is enabling the hard-working staff to have a greater impact on these pupils' achievements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils clearly enjoy school and are very positive about all the different experiences they have. They like the fact that they are involved in decision-making in school and that they have opportunities to take on responsibility. Children in the Foundation Stage, for example, organised the activities for 'Wake and shake' during the week. A strength lies in pupils' understanding of keeping healthy. They are keen to talk about all the sports they do during and after school and the healthy choices they make at lunchtime. All take advantage of the opportunities to eat fruit and drink water during the day. Their knowledge and understanding of keeping safe is exceptional, for example, providing guidance to the inspector about what to do if there is a fire.

Discussions with many of the pupils reflect that they feel safe in school. They are aware that there are pupils who do not always behave well but know how to avoid situations, and consider that where there are problems, staff deal with these quickly. Their behaviour in and around school is often excellent as was shown by the exemplary behaviour in assembly. The small number of pupils who do not always respond to the school's rules and rewards are often well behaved, but on occasions struggle to conform and to manage their behaviour.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a good awareness of different cultures and pupils show a good understanding of each other and are very supportive and caring. By the time they leave school they have learnt to work together, to take on responsibility and be creative. They are well prepared to meet the challenges they will encounter as they grow older. This is reflected in the very positive comments by the head of a local community college who commented that the confidence and maturity of Delaware pupils stand out when they move to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Planning for learning is very detailed. As a result, lessons are well organised, practical and interesting and pupils respond well to this. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils develop a range of skills. For example, in studying Egyptian history pupils spent time working on what would be the best base for building a pyramid, and extending their skills in shape and measure. Most teachers make clear to pupils what they will learn and in a number of lessons questioning is used very well to encourage pupils to recall information. In some classes this is extended further and pupils are encouraged to research and put forward their own ideas. In many lessons, work is well planned to meet the needs of pupils, and a good understanding of pupils' needs ensures that work is well matched to their ability. Occasionally though, opportunities are missed to challenge pupils and the school is working at improving this aspect of teaching further. The management of behaviour is usually good but on occasions, teachers do not always make use of the school's rewards systems or adapt them in order to meet the needs of their pupils. There are good examples where the marking of pupils' work includes comments that help pupils to know what they need to do next to develop their skills further, but this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There are aspects of the curriculum that are exceptional, including the detail in the overall planning. The curriculum is designed to promote and encourage pupils to become successful learners and confident individuals. Planning is rigorous to ensure that requirements for each subject are met. The combination of an innovative curriculum and a new flexible timetable has resulted in an increase in exciting learning opportunities that pupils value. Much of this though, is still being embedded, and teachers are beginning to become more skilled in linking subjects together to provide a broad range of experiences.

Good use is made of the local environment to enrich the curriculum. There is a very good range of visitors, particularly in terms of music and drama, which enlivens the curriculum. The school organises a wide range of activities for pupils after school, led by outside qualified tutors, which are extremely well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

It is clear that every child really does matter in this school and the display in the hall, 'Everyone is special at Delaware', reflects the commitment of staff to provide the best for pupils. Systems for the care and support of pupils are very good and great care is taken to ensure that pupils are encouraged to grow into well-rounded, healthy young people who are well prepared for their role in society. The procedures for health and safety are excellent as are procedures for child protection and the vetting of staff. These are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain robust. The safety of pupils is a high priority and staff are used well during the day to supervise and support those pupils with challenging behaviour. However, the school has recognised the need to review its behaviour systems to enable staff to better meet the range of behaviours that some pupils exhibit.

The support and guidance for pupils' learning have a number of good features. For example, every pupil has an adult mentor and there are regular meetings with pupils at the end of each learning unit to discuss how well each pupil has done. Although pupils have targets, few know what these are and not all teachers refer to them to promote pupils' learning and ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.

The Area Resource Centre provides for a very small number of pupils. Staff work extremely hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of pupils' special needs and have attended a range of training. The very recent input of specialist staff to provide additional support to both staff and pupils is appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Innovative and determined leadership is the key to the school's success. The need for a more pupil-centred approach resulted in a review of what pupils were taught and how. The resultant changes have been successful and the hard work that has gone into the new initiatives reflects the strong commitment of staff to provide the best for pupils.

Senior leaders work well together and there is regular and thorough monitoring of pupils' progress. As a result, there is a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve pupils' progress and the school sets itself challenging targets to improve. Whilst there is regular monitoring of teaching and a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in this aspect, this is not outlined formally in improvement planning. This makes it difficult for other interested parties, such as governors, to be clear about how effective action has been to bring about improvements and ensure that teaching is of a high quality. Governors know the school well and are frequent visitors to lessons. They are confident to challenge the school to move forward and are extremely supportive of the headteacher and her staff.

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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	3
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

6th June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Delaware School, Drakewall, PL18 9EN

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We greatly enjoyed the opportunities to talk to you and look at your work. We agree with you that your school is a good school and it was wonderful to see how much you knew about keeping healthy and safe. We were very impressed with your knowledge of what to do in the case of a fire. You grow into very sensible mature young people who benefit from the support of all your staff. You told us that although there is some behaviour that is not very good, you feel safe in school and that usually behaviour is good. We agree with you but we have asked the teachers to look at the systems that help you behave to see if they can be improved further.

We feel you get off to a really good start in the Nursery and make good progress all the way through school. Those of you in Years 1 and 2 do well except in writing. You do not make the progress you should in this aspect and as a result, your standards in writing are below what they should be by the end of Year 2. However, by the end of Year 6 you have caught up and standards, especially in English, are broadly in line with those nationally. We have asked teachers to look at writing for those of you in Years 1 and 2 so that it can be improved.

You are very well looked after and told us about the mentor systems and how they help you. You also said how much you like school and all the different things you do. All of these things are a result of good leadership by the headteacher and her senior team. Equally, they could not do it without your support and the role you play in coming up with ideas to help the school improve. We hope you will continue to work hard and be involved in all that the school offers.

We wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Sarah J Mascall Lead inspector

Annex B

6th June 2008

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Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Sarah J Mascal
Lead inspector