

Porthleven School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111985
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310752
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Smith
Headteacher	Duncan Ratcliffe
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2004
School address	Torleven Road Porthleven Helston TR13 9BX
Telephone number	01326 562249
Fax number	01326 563665

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than that commonly found. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The headteacher has been in post for five terms.

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. It is improving. It provides pupils with a caring and friendly environment in which to learn. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school and pleased with the experiences given to their children. The following parental comment is typical of many: 'Porthleven is a safe and friendly school where the staff care very much about the children. They encourage them to take part in a wide and varied curriculum both within normal school hours and after school.'

The headteacher is an astute leader who quickly identified the changes necessary to improve the school's provision. Performance management has been made more rigorous and teachers are now clear that they are accountable for the progress their pupils make. New procedures have been introduced to track the progress of individual pupils and to set targets that are more focused and challenging. Other developments include enhanced provision for children in the Foundation Stage, a new information and communication technology suite, and much improved resources for English and mathematics. Most of these improvements have not had time to impact fully on pupils' progress but the early signs are encouraging. By necessity, the headteacher has shouldered much of the responsibility for overseeing these changes. As yet, other leaders, particularly subject leaders, are not as actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. All staff share his vision for taking the school forward and a strong team ethos is evident. Given these factors, the capacity to make any necessary improvements is good.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and so enter Year 1 with average skills across all areas of learning. Satisfactory progress is maintained throughout the rest of the school. As a result, by the end of Year 6, pupils attain average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement from when they start school. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not as well developed as they could be and this limits their ability to communicate their ideas to others. It also hinders their ability to use their powers of reasoning to solve problems in mathematics and carry out investigations in science. Their writing lacks accuracy, such as in the use of correct spelling and punctuation. Pupils also lack sufficient skills in writing in a variety of styles in English and in other subjects.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are polite and courteous. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning, which is beneficial to their progress. Relationships are good and so classrooms are calm and friendly places in which to learn. Teachers give pupils interesting work but do not always plan it effectively to suitably challenge the different abilities represented in class. This limits the progress pupils make, particularly those who are more able. The satisfactory curriculum is extended well by a wide range of enrichment activities. These include extra-curricular activities and a variety of visits, including a residential stay. Pastoral care and support is strong and pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. There are good links with other providers to ensure the well-being of all pupils. Parents appreciate the way their children are cared for and looked after while they are in school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with skill levels that are as expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and on entry to Year 1 are reaching most of what

is expected of this age group. Satisfactory teaching is appropriately focused on encouraging children to make choices for themselves, which has a positive effect on their personal development. Children behave well and work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. The quality of care is good, so that children feel happy and safe, trusting the adults who look after them. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and extra support provided to enable them to achieve as well as others. The refurbished accommodation provides a stimulating environment for all areas of learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have correctly identified the need to accelerate children's mathematical development and improve further the use of the outside environment to support their learning. There is close liaison with parents and pre-school providers and this enables children to settle in quickly when they first start in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' speaking and listening skills and their ability to write accurately in a range of styles.
- Tighten lesson planning to challenge more effectively all pupils, particularly the more able.
- More effectively involve subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

A small proportion of 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

The satisfactory progress that children make in the Foundation Stage is maintained throughout the rest of the school. As a result, pupils attain standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and in English, mathematics and science by the end of year 6. This represents satisfactory achievement from their starting points on entering Nursery. The main reason that progress is satisfactory rather than at least good is that pupils are not consistently set work that is sufficiently challenging. This is particularly the case for more able pupils. Pupils' speaking and listening skills, and their ability to write accurately in different styles, are weaker aspects of pupils' performance throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enter school with standards that are well below average, due to their additional needs. However, from their lower starting points, they make satisfactory progress overall because of the extra support they receive in class. They make good progress in the highly focused literacy and numeracy withdrawal groups in the 'learning zone' area.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect the feelings of others and are keen to take up additional responsibilities within the school. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and pupils are confident that their views are listened to carefully. Pupils show much enjoyment in coming to school, as is seen in their enthusiastic use of the various facilities of the attractive and extensive school site. Pupils follow a healthy lifestyle with many of them walking to school and a large number taking part in the many sporting activities on offer. They feel safe in the school and they have a good understanding of who they should turn to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils make a good

contribution to village life, such as by raising money for the lifeboats and other local charities. They gain valuable business experience by selling the school's garden produce at the Farmers' Market. Pupils develop literacy and numeracy skills in a satisfactory way and are prepared soundly for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are keen to learn and show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their activities. They collaborate well and are willing to help others when they come across difficulties. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and so are able to explain new ideas and demonstrate new techniques in a clear manner. They plan lessons carefully to build upon previous learning but are not always effective in providing work that stretches pupils of different abilities. Consequently, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Marking is not used consistently to guide pupils to how they might improve their performance. Pupils are developing their skills in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing and how to improve but this is at an early stage. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Music is a strong feature of the curriculum with approximately 80 pupils playing musical instruments and playing in the school orchestra. A wide range of extra-curricular clubs encourage a large number of pupils to develop their interests beyond the school day. The gardening club develops not only an interest in the natural world but also makes a good contribution towards preparing pupils for the world of work. Curriculum planning is not always focused enough to ensure that activities provided for pupils challenge them sufficiently, particularly the more able. The provision for information and communication technology has recently been greatly enhanced by the creation of a new computer suite. Similarly, improvements to the Foundation Stage environment have made it a far more stimulating place in which to learn and play. There are good links with the local secondary school that enable pupils to extend further their skills in science, design and technology, and dance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All staff are aware of the individual requirements of pupils and so are able to provide good attention to their pastoral needs. Parents and carers say that they can approach staff easily for advice or support. Good use is made of external expertise, such as speech and language therapy, behaviour support or identification of dyslexic difficulties. This ensures individual pupils receive extra support when required. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are secure, including rigorous risk assessments of visits and residential trips. Academic guidance is satisfactory, with a much improved system for tracking the progress that pupils make having been recently introduced. The information gained about pupils' progress is not always used effectively to set suitably challenging work for pupils of different abilities. The guidance for pupils to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing and how they might improve is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and enables it to correctly identify and prioritise areas for improvement. Performance management has been improved and now more effectively links individual professional development needs to whole-school initiatives. Resources and staff are deployed well. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities now have a dedicated room in which they are taught in small withdrawal groups. This is leading to an improvement in the progress they make. Most of the checking and evaluation of provision has been carried out by the headteacher. The deputy headteacher and subject leaders are not yet fully involved in this aspect of the school's work. Clearly focused leadership and management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make sound gains in their learning. Governors are supportive of the school and keen to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating its performance.

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

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?	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	3
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	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	3
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**

9 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Porthleven School, Porthleven, TR13 9BX

Thank you for the really friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. Yours is a satisfactory school that is improving. It helps you make satisfactory progress and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are average by the end of Year 6.

What we found about your school:

- It is a very friendly and happy place in which to work and play.
- You enjoy coming to school and are kind and considerate to others.
- You are leading healthy lifestyles well and show a good awareness of how to stay safe.
- The curriculum is made interesting by having after-school clubs and a wide range of visits and visitors.
- You behave well and are keen to learn.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe, both in and around school and on visits.
- You make a good contribution to the school community, such as by being a member of the school council, and to the life of the village.
- The people who lead the school are working hard to make improvements and help you do better. What we have asked your school to do now:
 - Improve your speaking and listening skills and your ability to write accurately in a range of styles.
 - Improve lesson planning to challenge all of you more effectively, particularly those who find work easy.
 - Involve those teachers who lead subjects more effectively in checking how well the school is doing.

We hope you keep on enjoying your learning and being kind to others. You can play an important part in helping the school improve by listening carefully to what teachers tell you and by trying your best.

All my best wishes for the future Melvyn Hemmings Lead inspector



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Lead inspector