

St Mary's CofE Primary School, Penzance

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111998
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310755
Inspection date	2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Owen
Headteacher	E M Johnston
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Redinnick Place Penzance TR18 4HP
Telephone number	01736 363009
Fax number	01736 363009

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average school. The families of many of the pupils experience social and economic challenges. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. When the youngest pupils start school, their levels of communication and language skills are well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There is a very high level of movement of pupils in and out of the school so that by the time they reach Year 6, as many as half of these pupils have joined the school during Key Stage 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which gives pupils a very high quality all-round education. Pupils are prepared very well socially, emotionally and academically for their future roles in society. Parents wholeheartedly endorse this, making comments such as: 'The dedication of all the staff and most prominently the headmistress, exceeds well beyond the call of duty'. They particularly appreciate that 'All children are valued, important members of the school community'. The headteacher, with the able support of the senior management team and the governing body, has nurtured and developed a team of exceptionally dedicated, enthusiastic staff. Every adult in the school is committed to providing each child with the best possible education.

Pupils' academic achievement is outstanding. Children quickly settle into the Foundation Stage Unit and all make very good progress from very low levels of attainment on entry. As a result, a significant proportion meet the expected levels by the start of Year 1, although overall standards remain below average. This good progress is built on successfully in Years 1 and 2 and continues in Years 3 to 6. Overall standards by the end of Year 6 are average. Standards in English are significantly above average, with standards in mathematics and science not as high. Given the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very high level of pupil mobility, this constitutes excellent progress.

Outstanding teaching and the very high quality curriculum are key factors in pupils' excellent all-round development. This is a school where pupils really want to learn and they relish the challenges given to them to do as well as they possibly can. Attendance levels have steadily improved because of the school's rigorous systems and are now in line with national averages. Pupils behave outstandingly well in and around the school. Their personal development is outstanding and is testimony to the exceptional care and guidance they are given, both personally and academically. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils' cultural development, whilst good, is less well-developed, particularly in pupils' understanding of the various cultures that make up modern Britain. Pupils are very aware of the importance of eating healthy food, keeping fit and staying safe. Through the school council and the open, honest relationships that exist within the school, pupils feel free to express their views. The school has excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress and pupils are fully aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. The school has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to a tremendous start in their first year at school because of the outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage. As a result of excellent induction procedures and strong relationships, children settle into school quickly. Within a few weeks, they have well-established routines, select activities themselves and move from inside the classroom to the outdoor area with ease. Adults successfully engage them in tasks that help to develop their skills by providing a wide range of activities to interest and motivate them. Many children start school with skills that are less developed than expected for their age, particularly in the areas of communication, language and literacy. They make outstanding progress which is achieved by making use of detailed assessment to find children's starting points and by very careful matching of teaching activities to their needs. From the outset, specific help is also provided for those who need to catch up with their peers.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in mathematics and science to match the very high standards achieved in English through addressing the areas identified by the school, such as work on data handling
- improve the provision for multi-cultural education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils of all abilities make very good, and frequently outstanding, progress. Standards on entry are well below average and pupils make very good progress throughout the school. Standards by the end of Year 2 are in line with national averages. In the latest national assessments, standards by the end of Year 6 were in line with national averages overall. Standards in English were well above those found nationally. This is particularly impressive given the high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties, the significant number of pupils welcomed by the school who have had considerable difficulties at their previous schools and the very high percentages of pupils leaving and joining the school, particularly during Years 3 to 6. Whilst understandably pleased with these results, the school is ambitious and recognises that standards in mathematics and science can be improved even further. This progress reflects teachers' very high expectations, very good pastoral systems to support pupils new to the school so that they settle in very quickly and the very good use of systems to track pupils' progress. Pupils who are gifted and talented make very good progress and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make very good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Strong caring relationships underpin a positive environment in which every pupil feels truly valued and able to succeed. This leads to pupils having very positive attitudes towards their learning. They love coming to school. Pupils have high self-esteem and they have a clear framework which enables them to understand right from wrong. This, coupled with high expectations, means that behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils say they feel safe and have been well informed about such things as the dangers posed by strangers, the internet and misuse of drugs. Very close relationships with the church contribute very effectively to pupils' excellent spiritual development. Pupils understand the factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They have numerous opportunities to contribute both to the school community and beyond, through the county's 'Learning Forum'. Pupils influence the running of the school through the school council and some have visited other schools to act as peer assessors. Due to rigorous systems, attendance is now satisfactory and pupils themselves understand the importance of regular attendance. The school is aware that multi-cultural awareness is less well developed than other areas of pupils' personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The high proportion of good and better teaching results in pupils making outstanding progress over their time in the school. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good and the staff work together very well to provide an interesting and appropriate curriculum both indoors and out.

Teachers throughout the school have very good classroom management skills. Learning expectations are made clear at the beginning of every lesson. As a result, pupils know precisely what it is that they are expected to learn and work is very well matched to their abilities. Lessons are very well planned and progress is monitored very carefully and regularly so that pupils are helped to build on what they have learnt before. All lessons are conducted at a lively pace, with varied activities that hold pupils' interest and ensure that they achieve much. Excellent relationships contribute significantly to the outstanding progress pupils make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school works very hard to tailor the curriculum to the needs of its pupils and places great emphasis on providing a wealth of practical experiences in the local environment. This has the benefit of supporting pupils in improving their language skills and leads to high levels of enjoyment. Focus weeks covering a range of subjects are used to great benefit to offer pupils the opportunity to look at some subjects in more depth. The school's vast range of external networks contributes significantly to the wide variety of learning experiences that the pupils encounter. This is especially true for the more able pupils who benefit very much through the 'Challenge Days' offered by the local primary school network. Excellent use is made of visitors and visits out of school and there is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. The Foundation Stage provides an excellent balance between adult-initiated and independent activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a school that clearly cherishes its pupils. Excellent induction procedures help the youngest children quickly adjust to life in school and there are equally good systems in place for transition to secondary school. As a result of these strong pastoral support systems, the school is particularly successful in integrating pupils who have struggled in their previous school. Excellent systems for identifying pupils with particular learning needs and very strong links with external agencies support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make outstanding progress. Assessment procedures are rigorous and very effective in helping pupils move on to the next stage of learning. Regular assessments are used exceptionally well to group pupils so that teaching is very focused on what pupils need to learn next. Clear target-setting systems which involve pupils, mean they have a good view of their own achievements and are very clear about the next steps they need to take in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher have ensured steadily improving standards and excellent progress for all pupils. The school responds very well to the needs of its community. The excellent teamwork among the staff along with the headteacher's enthusiastic leadership and direction ensure that all pupils are given the very best education. Responsibility is delegated very wisely. All staff share the very clear vision, feel fully involved in the leadership and management of the school and are very effective in leading improvements in the areas for which they are responsible.

The governors are very capable and committed, using a wide range of approaches to inform their decision-making. The monitoring of teaching and learning and other areas of the school's work is rigorous. Strong links with parents and outside institutions add significantly to the pupils' opportunities. Parents are extremely supportive of the school. One parent's views summed up the many positive comments received: 'St. Mary's offers my children everything they need to develop both educationally and socially'. The school development plan accurately prioritises important areas for improvement, and resources are used exceptionally well., The governing body and the headteacher have a very clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the self evaluation is very thorough.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St. Mary's CE Primary School, Penzance, TR18 4HP

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleague and I very much enjoyed our visit.

St. Mary's is an outstanding school. You are all making very good progress in your learning. Your headteacher and staff help you to learn really well and enjoy your lessons. They make sure you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe and you do this very well. You told us that you like school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. We agree with you. Your behaviour is excellent and we know you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do.

We have asked your school to do two things to make it even better:

- help you to do as well with your mathematics and science as you do with your English
- give you more opportunities to learn about the wide range of cultural traditions in the United Kingdom.

We are confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis Lead Inspector



3 October 2007

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Clive Lewis
Lead Inspector