

Bishop Cornish CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112034
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310768
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Maynard
Headteacher	Jennifer Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Lynher Drive Saltash PL12 4PA
Telephone number	01752 845463
Fax number	01752 848055

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality and effectiveness of the Foundation Stage, the impact of work done to raise standards in mathematics and to broaden and increase the relevance of the curriculum, and to identify any significant variation in the quality of teaching in the school. Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising documents and pupils' work, and from discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not evaluated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of mixed social and private housing and occupies a beautiful site overlooking the estuary of the River Tamar. Proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, or who speak a language other than English at home, are low but have recently increased. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in this excellent school. The positive and inspirational environment makes a profound impact as one enters the building. Classrooms and corridors are lively, exciting places with many artefacts and displays of work that both stimulate learning and offer opportunities for reflection. Excellent use is made of the grounds, with opportunities for pupils to play, take part in sport or music, to care for the gardens and a variety of animals, or just to sit and think. This contributes greatly to pupils' excellent behaviour and enjoyment of school. The Foundation Stage gives children an excellent start to their education.

Pupils start school with the expected skills and abilities and when they leave at the end of Year 6 they attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above average. In 2006, staff identified some weaknesses in standards of mathematics. They worked successfully to rectify these, and in 2007, standards have returned to previous high levels. Work in pupils' books is of a high standard, with much thoughtful and accurate written work in different subjects. Standards in creative subjects such as art, music and physical education are equally high. Pupils speak and listen with confidence. For example, a pupil in Year 3 could accurately explain the differences between the contents and the index of a book, while the rest of the class listened carefully. Pupils also have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe, although some parents question the healthiness of the meals provided. The meals are as healthy as in most schools, and pupils are happy with them.

Pupils' outstanding progress is as a result of the consistently high quality of the teaching they receive. They are given interesting tasks that are planned well to match their abilities. Those who learn more slowly are given excellent support by able teaching assistants. Teachers use questioning, praise and teaching aids such as puppets or the interactive whiteboard very well to support learning. Teachers mark work with diligence, but the approach is not consistent across the school and this means that pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work. The outstanding curriculum gives all pupils an exceptionally wide range of opportunities, for instance in music and in modern foreign languages where both French and Latin are taught. The excellent range of out-of-school activities includes opportunities for pupils as young as four years old, for instance in the gardening club. Pupils are very well cared for and are given good academic guidance through the use of personal targets. All current requirements for protecting children are in place.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and to the wider community. They care for the school's animals and happily take responsibility, for instance as librarians and as members of the school council. The school is noted for its theatrical and musical performances which have taken place over a wide area, such as at The Eden Project. Pupils learn to apply very well the skills that they are learning for later life, for example through their writing and use of information and communication technology (ICT). They express good concern for people in need across the world through links with schools in Africa, and an understanding of others' culture, for instance by singing hymns in the Xhosa language.

Parents are almost universal in their praise of the school. As a mother said, 'Bishop Cornish is a fantastic school and I only wish I was a little girl today. Learning today is fun and interesting'. A few have individual concerns, such as about communication or whether the work is sufficiently challenging for very able children, but the inspection found no evidence to support these.

The success of the school is the result of outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher, staff and governors. Over a considerable period of time they have created an ethos in which all pupils are valued and respected. Every aspect of a child's personality and experience is nurtured and developed. The school sets itself challenging targets that are consistently achieved. There is a very good understanding of the few weaknesses and leaders work successfully to remedy them. Leaders and managers are less willing to acknowledge the school's strengths. However, this is changing and the school is rightly allowing its exceptional teachers to support leadership and teaching in other schools. The school is also developing further its already strong links with initial teacher training institutions. The school works very well with a range of partners, notably parents, the church and agencies that support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection, for instance in the resources for, and use of, ICT across the school. Governors have ambitious plans to increase further the school's provision for very young children, for music and for out-of-hours care, and are exceptionally well-placed to realise their aspirations.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children receive an excellent start to their education in the Reception class. They are given a very good introduction to school before they start, which is appreciated by parents. There is a very good range of indoor and outdoor resources which enables children to play, cooperate with each other and to learn independently. The excellent teaching is exciting, especially when the teacher uses a puppet to support the teaching of sounds and letters, which the children find exciting and enjoyable. To quote a parent, 'My child has me in stitches over the stories the teacher tells to help him remember his letter sounds'. Almost all children attain the goals set for children of their age and some attain exceptionally high standards in their communication and mathematical skills, for instance by writing several sentences accurately. Teaching assistants, parents and other helpers support the teacher very well. There is very effective teamwork with teachers in Years 1 and 2, enabling children to easily progress to a more structured approach to learning when they leave the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of marking so that all pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

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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	1
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	1
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	1
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	2
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

31 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishop Cornish CE VA Primary School, Saltash, PL12 4PA

I very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when I visited your school recently. I want to thank those of you who took time to talk to me. I especially enjoyed listening to you sing in assembly and hearing the 'Junk Band' playing.

Yours is an excellent school in which you make outstanding progress in your work. Some of the best things about the school are:

- Pupils do very well in the tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6.
- The teaching is excellent because teachers and teaching assistants know how you are getting on and give you interesting work to help you learn more.
- You say correctly that there are lots of exciting things to do, such as in music, art and in working with the animals.
- The staff look after you very well. You look after each other and your behaviour is excellent. You take responsibility, for instance in the school council and as librarians.
- The Reception class children get an excellent start to their education.
- You know a lot about keeping healthy and safe.
- You are very confident and talk to adults in a mature and sensible way.
- The environment of the school is excellent. You take good care of it and make very good use of all the facilities.
- You and almost all of your parents agree that Bishop Cornish is a very good school.

The school is led very well. The headteacher, governors and staff understand how to make the school even better and are very good at doing so. I have asked them to improve the way your work is marked, so that you always know how to do better.

Thank you once again for your help, and good luck in the future.

Mr Paul Sadler Lead inspector

Annex B

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Lead inspector