

Brunel Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131248
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	315763
Inspection dates	8–9 July 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	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	N Sullivan
Headteacher	P Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2004
School address	Callington Road Saltash PL12 6DX
Telephone number	01752 848900
Fax number	01752 849749

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 most primary schools. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils attending the school has decreased significantly over the last few years. A high number of pupils, in classes other than Nursery, join or leave during the school year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The overwhelming majority of parents are rightly pleased with the stimulating experiences provided for their children and the way they are cared for in school. The following parental comment is typical of many: 'Brunel is a very caring school with dedicated and enthusiastic teachers. I am very pleased that we chose Brunel to send our children to.'

Good leadership and management are central to the school's success. The headteacher provides strong educational direction and has a clear vision for the future development of the school. All staff and governors share this vision and there is a firm commitment to working as a team to help the school improve further. Leaders place strong emphasis on the school being fully inclusive and meeting the individual needs of all pupils. This is important, as an increasing number are joining school with emotional and social difficulties. A good example of how leaders are meeting this challenge is the provision of a nurture unit, the Bridge, which successfully enables pupils to overcome temporary emotional or behavioural upsets when they arise. However, some subject leaders are not fully involved in monitoring and evaluating performance in their subjects. This limits their effectiveness in promoting school improvement. Leaders have effectively managed budgetary difficulties, caused by the falling roll, so that pupils' learning has not been adversely affected. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, and the school's recent track record shows that the capacity to make any necessary changes is good.

The attainment of children on entering Nursery is well below that expected for their age, particularly in language and communication skills. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, though standards are below average on entry to Year 1. Good progress is maintained throughout the rest of the school and, by the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are broadly average. This represents good achievement from their starting points on entry to school. Pupils' performance in writing, particularly in their sentence structure and composition, is a weaker aspect of English throughout the school.

Good teaching and learning are the main reasons for pupils' effective progress. Pupils have positive attitudes to their activities and are keen to learn. Relationships are good and lead to classrooms being calm and friendly places in which to learn. Teachers manage lessons well and usually plan activities that suitably meet pupils' different needs. However, there are times when the work given to pupils is not sufficiently challenging and they do not make the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case for pupils who are more able. Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school. They are keen to take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council or a peer mediator, and in so doing make a positive contribution to the school community.

A wide range of enrichment activities adds interest to and extends the good curriculum. These include a variety of extra-curricular activities that are well attended by pupils. Pastoral care and support is excellent, with all staff having a firm commitment to ensuring pupils' health and safety. The very good links with other providers, such as social services and health visitors, ensure the well-being of all pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children are only just three years of age when they start in Nursery, so they are at an early stage in developing basic social skills. Nonetheless, they settle quickly due to the well-planned play and learning routines. They quickly gain confidence, learning to mix and share with others sensibly. Children behave well and they find learning through play great fun. Their lively attitudes and desire to learn continue as they move into Reception. This is due to good teaching skills and teacher assistant support that challenge and spark children's natural curiosity and enjoyment of learning. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, although standards remain below average on entry to Year 1. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage. Consequently, they are given extra support so that they make good progress relative to their needs. Children's personal development is good, enhanced by the good curriculum and warm relationships and teamwork across the Foundation Stage. Children's independence and thinking skills develop well. Work is underway to improve the outdoor area to support learning better throughout the day. Leadership and management are good, with careful assessment of progress and good links with families.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by improving pupils' sentence structure and composition.
- Tighten lesson planning so pupils, especially the more able, are always challenged effectively.
- Ensure all leaders are fully involved in promoting school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good because pupils' skills are successfully built upon year by year through good quality teaching and learning. Though standards at the end of Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics, this still represents good progress for pupils in Years 1 and 2. High pupil mobility has an adverse effect on standards in these year groups, as many of the pupils who join these classes during the year have low academic skill levels. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6, and standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Reading and writing are weaker aspects of pupils' attainment and this stems from their low language and communication skills on entering school. However, standards in reading are beginning to rise because of recent changes to the English curriculum, such as the introduction of more tightly focused guided reading sessions. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enter school with standards that are well below average, due to their complex needs. Nevertheless, from their very low starting points, they make good progress because of the well-targeted extra support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They clearly know right from wrong and are polite and respectful to others. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups and are willing to listen to and appreciate the views of other pupils. They make a good contribution to the local community, such as being involved in helping to design a local skate park and by raising funds for local charities. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well, such as by eating healthily and taking regular physical exercise. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe,

as is shown in the responsible way they move around the extensive school site. Despite the best efforts of the school, some pupils do not come to school regularly enough and so attendance overall is no better than average. Pupils in Year 6 act as peer mentors and spend time with younger pupils at lunchtime on a rota basis. In so doing, they effectively develop their negotiating and leadership skills. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use questioning well to find out what pupils know and to deepen their understanding of new ideas. They provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss their work in pairs and small groups and this makes a positive contribution to developing their speaking and listening skills. Pupils show interest in their work and are able to concentrate for lengthy periods, which is beneficial to the good progress they make. There are times when the work set for pupils does not match their ability and is too easy. This is particularly so for more able pupils. The best marking guides pupils to improving their performance but this is not sufficiently consistent throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good specialist teaching and focused one-to-one withdrawal support, with work matching the class curriculum but adapted well to meet their individual needs. Teaching assistants provide valuable help for all pupils and especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of visits enhances the curriculum and widens pupils' experiences. These include a residential stay on the Isles of Scilly in which they learn life skills such as working together as a team. The good links with other providers, such as professional sports coaches, develop pupils' skills effectively across a range of subjects. The well-organised programme for personal and social development has a positive impact on pupils' readiness to learn. Curriculum planning is not always sufficiently focused on providing pupils with work that is challenging enough. The curriculum makes a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of how to stay safe. For instance, pupils are made aware of safety issues through assemblies and working with a variety of visitors such as a community police officer and road safety advisors. Pupils have good opportunities to use information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects, such as pupils in Year 6 researching information on the internet as part of a scientific project.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know and understand pupils and their families very well, offering excellent pastoral support that enables pupils to concentrate fully on learning. There is very good access to external expertise such as behaviour support and speech and language therapy through the linked children's and nearby health centres. This provides very positive additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those more vulnerable, such as looked after children. Safeguarding procedures are secure, with thorough procedures for child protection and rigorous risk assessment in and around school and on visits. The progress that individual pupils make is tracked closely. However, the information gained is not always used effectively

to plan work that is sufficiently challenging, especially for pupils that are more able. Guidance for pupils on how to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing and how they might improve is better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Self-evaluation is accurate and shows that senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they are in a good position to set challenging targets to bring about improvement. This is seen in the way that steps taken to improve pupils' reading skills over the last year are proving successful, and standards in this aspect of English are beginning to rise. The roles of some subject leaders are not fully developed in terms of monitoring and evaluating provision in their subjects. Performance management has been improved and links individual staff professional development effectively to whole-school priorities. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed effectively, linking well with families and external agencies. Governors support the school well and are fully involved in helping the school move forward.

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?	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	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brunel Primary School, Saltash, PL12 6DX

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 good school that helps you make good progress and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are average by the end of Year 6.

What we found about your school

- You behave well and are keen to learn.
- It is a very friendly and happy place in which to work and play.
- You enjoy coming to school and work well with others in pairs and small groups.
- You are leading healthy lifestyles well and show a good awareness of how to stay safe.
- There are many after-school clubs, and a wide range of visits and visitors to make the curriculum more interesting.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe, in and around school and on visits.
- You make a good contribution to the school community, such as by being a peer mediator.
- Leaders of the school are working hard to make improvements and help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Help you improve your skills in sentence structure and composition to raise standards in writing.
- Improve lesson planning so you are always given activities that make you think hard, especially those of you who find work easy.
- Make sure all leaders are fully involved in helping the school improve.

You are a credit to your school. You could all help the school improve further by always trying your best in all that you do.

Best wishes for the future

Melvyn Hemmings Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector