

Penponds School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111838
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325474
Inspection date	9 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	92
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cynthia Watmore
Headteacher	Kaye Pitcher
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Higher Penponds Camborne TR14 0QN
Telephone number	01209 713929
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school is located in a rural setting on the southern outskirts of Camborne and serves the community of Higher Penponds and surrounding areas. There are four classes and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) are taught in the same class as pupils in Year 1. The three other classes cater for pupils in Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6 respectively. Most pupils attend the on-site independent nursery, which also provides breakfast and after-school clubs for pupils at the school. About 14% of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including 1% with statements of special educational needs. These proportions are slightly below the national average. Pupils' learning difficulties include dyslexia and moderate learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have physical disabilities. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds, but a small minority are of Asian British origin.

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 that has made steady improvement since its last inspection. The headteacher, staff and governors work together effectively and their strategies for improving writing have been successful. As a result, the quality of writing is good, although standards in handwriting and presentation are not high enough. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to secure further improvements by substantially raising standard in reading and virtually eliminating the gap in boys' attainment compared to that of girls. There are good links with parents, who are very supportive of the school. 'My child's education, confidence and social skills have flourished with thanks to Penponds School,' is typical of many of the comments made by parents.

When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception, their attainment in all areas is close to that expected. Because of effective teaching and provision, they make good progress and most attain the early learning goals in all areas of learning. A good proportion exceed the early learning goals in their personal and language skills. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6 and reach standards which are above average by the end of Year 6. However, a small group of more able pupils do not make as much progress as they should in mathematics.

Teaching is effective in moving pupils forward and teachers make good use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. The focus on improving pupils' writing skills has led to substantial improvements in content, spelling and grammar. Assessment is very detailed and enables teachers to quickly identify where pupils need to improve their work. Work is well matched to pupils' needs, as the curriculum has been successfully adapted to cater for the mixed-age, mixed-ability classes. Pupils are well cared for and they say they feel safe. There is a good emphasis on healthy living and care for the environment. Pupils are confident about their future and one pupil in Year 6 said, 'I am really looking forward to next year. This school has given me a great start in life.'

Pupils' positive attitudes are evident throughout the school. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and respectful of adults. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' personal development is good and their social development is very good. However, their spiritual development, although satisfactory, is not as strong as other aspects. The school council makes a good contribution to the life of the school. The school makes a valuable contribution to community cohesion and pupils have a developing idea of the wider world through good links with schools in London, America and India.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress and achieve well. Their achievement in communication, language and literacy is particularly good, as is their personal and social development. Practitioners show good levels of concern for children's well-being and they provide good role models for children to follow. However, sufficient time is not always given for children to express their feelings, as staff tend to dominate discussions on occasions. Links with parents and the on-site nursery are good and this enables children to settle quickly into the class. Effective use is made of assessment information to track children's progress. The outdoor area is used effectively to stimulate children's learning, especially their communication skills. Children are very enthusiastic about their life at school and clearly enjoy learning. The leadership and management of the

Early Years Foundation Stage are effective and the coordinator works effectively with other managers to ensure good provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of pupils' handwriting and presentation throughout the school.
- Raise the standards of more able pupils in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.
- Provide more opportunities for learners to develop the spiritual aspects of their personal development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make steady progress throughout the school and standards are generally above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in reading are particularly good. The action taken to improve pupils' writing skills has been successful in all aspects except handwriting. Although standards in mathematics are good, a small group of more able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Results in national tests are variable, because of small year groups, but show an improving trend overall. Provisional results from teachers' assessments for this year show that standards have improved still further. Pupils' good skills in reading, numeracy and information and communication technology, along with their improving skills in writing, prepare them well for the next stage of their education and future economic well-being. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least good progress and some make very good progress, especially in reading. This is because of effective support from teaching assistants and teachers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good overall; their social development is very good. However, they are reluctant to express their beliefs and views in assemblies and their spiritual development is not as strong as other areas. Pupils are confident to express their feelings through art and their creative development is good. The links the school has with schools in London, America and India have had a positive effect on pupils' cultural development and contribute positively to their understanding of diversity. Pupils are eager to learn and show good levels of concentration in most lessons. Occasionally, younger pupils grow restless when they are left too long sitting on the carpet. Behaviour is good and older pupils demonstrate highly responsible attitudes. The school council is an active voice in the life of the school and gives pupils a real say in important issues. Other pupils have responsibilities, such as 'playground buddies', which they take seriously. Pupils enjoy school and this is shown by good levels of attendance and punctuality. The school has worked hard to promote a healthy lifestyle and pupils say they enjoy the healthy meals and sporting activities provided. They say they feel safe and are all aware of Internet safety and of the dangers of talking to strangers. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through fundraising and putting on well-attended performances. They take part in local events, such as the Camborne Christmas Parade and festivals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is good teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants and other visiting staff. Work is usually challenging, although occasionally work is not sufficiently challenging for more able pupils in mathematics. Teachers make good use of a wide range of teaching strategies to engage pupils. Effective use is made of interactive whiteboards for presentations and to improve pupils' computer skills. Good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and staff are sensitive to their needs. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils' work, and as a result, learning in lessons is good overall. Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows and when this happens, younger pupils become restless and learning is less effective. Good use is made of assessment to adjust work to pupils' needs, and planning clearly identifies what pupils are to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

After the last inspection, the school revised its curriculum to better match the needs of pupils in mixed-age, mixed-ability classes. With the move from three classes to four, the curriculum has been further refined and now meets the needs of pupils well. However, some older pupils said they would like to have the opportunity to choose some of the topics covered, as they felt there had been some repetition in the past. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' key skills, especially information and communication technology. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, drama and gardening.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Everyone involved in the school says that there is a good level of care for pupils. All legal requirements for health, safety and safeguarding are fully met and the school's policies are effective in practice. There is good support for pupils of all abilities, including those with statements of special educational needs. Marking and homework are generally used effectively to support learning, but there are some inconsistencies in practice between classes. The best marking clearly gives pupils targets for improvement, and this enables pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. Nearly all pupils are well aware of their targets and are keen to let others know what they are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are effective in moving the school forward. The contribution of the governing body to the management of the school is outstanding and they provide excellent support for the headteacher, staff and parents. Governors have been fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and make a substantial contribution to helping set the strategic direction of the school. Individual governors monitor the school's work carefully and they bring vital professional expertise, which has proved to have been beneficial in improving the school's provision and performance. The headteacher provides a good educational direction

of the school, which is firmly focused on further raising standards. The initiatives taken to raise standards in reading have been highly effective and now the school has substantially improved standards in writing. The school involves everyone in the self-evaluation process, which includes parents, pupils and members of the community. The school's improvement plan is detailed and has already identified the need to improve handwriting as a target. However, the school has not addressed the underachievement of more able pupils in mathematics, although it is aware of this issue. Overall, the school is inclusive and promotes equal opportunities well, but there is currently an imbalance in the composition of the school council, which is mainly girls. The school make a good contribution to community cohesion, both at the local level by engaging in community events, and on the wider scale by its links with a multi-ethnic school in London and schools in America and India.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penponds School, Camborne TR14 0QN

Thank you so much for making us feel really welcome to your school. You were so enthusiastic about your work and so willing to tell us all about your targets and the things you liked about your school. Ms Townend and I thought you read beautifully and the pictures on the wall showed many of you are really good at art. We were very impressed with your politeness and good behaviour. I especially thought the school council explained themselves really well and they really help make your school a good place in which to work. Your teachers give you interesting lessons and you say you enjoy them. The headteacher and governors lead the school well and make sure that the things the inspectors said needed improving last time have been put right.

This time, we have asked your teachers to help you improve your handwriting and the way you present your work. We have also asked them to help those children who are really good at mathematics already to do even better. Finally, we have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to think about spiritual matters and to help you better understand people's different beliefs.

We hope that you will all do even better in the future, and we wish 'good luck' to those of you in Year 6 who are going on to secondary school in September.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Dennett

Lead inspector