

St Mewan Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111896
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325488
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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)	416
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	19
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carolyn Clayton
Headteacher	Paul Towe
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Mewan St Austell PL26 7DP
Telephone number	01726 74887

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average and admits pupils from neighbouring villages and the outskirts of St Austell. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average. However, a few have complex needs associated with speech and language and specific learning difficulties. Whilst the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than average, the school's catchment area includes some areas of significant deprivation. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes. The school provides a before school club and an after-school club and it has recently taken responsibility for a pre-school class which is located on the same site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mewan is a good school which provides a very high quality of care. In the words of one parent, 'It is a lovely environment for children to learn in.'

Pupils' personal development is good and they become confident and articulate young people. They really enjoy coming to school because of the good curriculum and the very wide range of after-school clubs, trips and visits. Their behaviour is outstanding. Whilst students have a good knowledge of their local culture, their knowledge of the different cultural and religious traditions in wider Britain is less well developed.

Good teaching ensures that pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. The more able pupils do particularly well, and consequently a relatively large proportion of pupils gain the higher levels in national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards are above average, and achievement in speaking and listening is notably high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress as a result of the very high level of staff expertise. The achievement of lower attaining pupils is satisfactory overall. The school has introduced several improvements to the curriculum and to teaching styles which are having a positive impact on raising the achievement of this group. However, there is some inconsistency in planning between classes and occasionally activities are not adapted to fully meet the needs of lower attaining pupils.

The school has established excellent links with parents, the local community and external agencies, including those which provide support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the music tuition service. These links make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents hold overwhelmingly positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher and the approachable and friendly manner of staff. One parent commented, 'The headteacher has a great rapport with the children and is genuinely interested in them as individuals.' Another stated, 'I feel the staff team are frank, genuine, positive and caring.'

Some groups of pupils underachieved following the last inspection, in part owing to changes in staffing. Since that time, new senior leaders have joined the school and several initiatives have been introduced to raise standards. The positive impact of these changes, together with the clearly emerging strengths of the reorganised senior leadership team, means that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly and happily into school as a result of the well-established links with local pre-schools and the carefully structured induction programme. Staff ensure that care and welfare are given high priority and this means children develop as confident learners who feel safe and secure. Children also develop well as individuals and are enthusiastic about their learning. They form good relationships with one another and work and play together well. Relationships with parents are excellent and they are involved as true partners in their children's learning. Although they vary from year to year and between areas of learning, children's standards when they start school are close to those expected nationally for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, by the time they enter Year 1, standards are above average. Children experience a good range of activities which cover all

areas of learning. The recently reorganised indoor learning environment gives the children free access to a wide range of structured play activities which promote increasing independence in their learning. A good balance of adult-directed and self-selected activities is provided and adults are skilled at intervening to move children on in their learning. The introduction of a structured phonics programme has played an important part in improving children's literacy skills. From the outset, specific help is also provided for those who need to catch up with their peers.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed. The recent acquisition of the pre-school by the governing body provides a good opportunity to build on the strong informal links that already exist with the Reception classes. The school leaders have yet to establish management arrangements for this new provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish management arrangements for the newly acquired pre-school provision.
- Raise the achievement of lower attaining pupils by ensuring that planned lesson activities consistently challenge them to do well.
- Promote an understanding of the wider British community by encouraging pupils to learn more about the diverse ethnic groups and religious beliefs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children enter the school their standards are in line with the expected starting point for their age. Progress is good in the Reception classes. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2, standards are generally above average. A large proportion of pupils gain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The attainment of boys is lower than that of girls, but the school has identified this and modified the curriculum accordingly. Attainment in Key Stage 2 has varied in recent years. However, standards are currently above average in English, mathematics and science, and show an upward trend. The school is particularly successful in its provision for higher attaining pupils, ensuring that a high proportion reach the highest levels in national tests at the end of Year 6.

In recent years the achievement of lower attaining pupils has been less marked than that of other groups. The school has introduced strategies to engage lower attaining pupils more effectively and these are having a positive impact; for example, the systematic use of phonics teaching in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes and targeted small group intervention. The school is on track to meet challenging targets set for the current academic year across the school. Pupils make very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills because of the regular opportunities provided for them to make presentations and engage in group discussions. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The school is particularly successful in supporting pupils with complex needs because of the very high level of staff expertise and provision of specialist resources.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and want to succeed. They are keen to make their views known and listen well to the views of others. These positive attitudes help to prepare them well for their future education and employment. Their behaviour is excellent and they have a

high regard for their teachers and for each other. Pupils know what is needed to stay healthy and can describe a healthy diet, although this is not always reflected in their break time snacks! Their participation in sport and playground games is good. Pupils feel safe and cared for, know who to talk to if they are troubled, and say that there is little bullying and no racial abuse. Pupils play well together and movement around the difficult site is orderly. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community by helping devise rules, acting as buddies to younger children and making their views known through the school council. The council involves pupils from all year groups and also employs a special Year 6 executive committee that is involved in fundraising, improving the school and recycling. The council recognised the need to improve facilities for playtime and has had some success, providing new goal nets and fencing. It recognises that there is still a lack of space for more energetic activities such as football during wet weather. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community through, for example, links with the church, engaging in dramatic performances in the town theatre and performing in choir festivals. Pupils have a very good understanding of Cornish culture. Their knowledge of the different religious and cultural traditions in modern Britain is more limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy learning because teachers take care to make the topics stimulating and exciting. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and share their enthusiasm with pupils. Expectations are high and pupils are encouraged to research topics and develop their own ideas. This approach works especially well with the higher attaining pupils, who make good, and sometimes exceptional, progress. Teachers generally plan lessons well, using assessment information to ensure that pupils are stretched at all levels. However, there is some inconsistency between classes and occasionally activities are not sufficiently matched to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils, which results in them making slower progress. The highly trained teaching assistants are employed effectively to support pupils, both in class and by running withdrawal groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been strengthened by the recent introduction of more investigative and experimental approaches to learning. Topics, which often cross several subjects, have helped to capture the interest of pupils, especially boys. These developments are at an early stage and have yet to demonstrate fully their effectiveness in raising standards. The school has a wide range of extra-curricular activities, in the areas of dance, music, drama, sports, public speaking and the environment. Regular residential trips take place for older pupils, for example to London and the Isles of Scilly. There are excellent links with the local community through the church, choirs and presentation evenings. The school works closely with the local secondary school to offer all pupils instruction in French, Spanish, German or Chinese. The school also ensures that parents are kept well informed about the curriculum, for example through the provision of sessions to help them understand how mathematics and reading are taught.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a school which clearly cherishes its pupils. The extremely caring atmosphere is a significant factor in pupils' enjoyment of school, their sense of well-being and the good progress they make. Rigorous procedures for protecting and safeguarding children are in place and arrangements for health and safety are well established. Excellent relationships with parents and a wide range of outside agencies contribute strongly to the personal development of pupils. They also ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with more complex needs, receive any necessary support. Good academic guidance is available to pupils through the use of target setting procedures but marking is more variable and does not always give children enough detail on how to improve their learning. The extended services provided by the school, for example the before- and after-school clubs, are appreciated by parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a committed leader who is highly visible around the school and promotes its inclusive ethos very effectively. New senior leaders have joined the school recently and are already having a strong impact on the work of the school. Data are used effectively to set challenging targets and to identify pupils who are falling behind. The school has good arrangements for evaluating its performance. Senior leaders monitor teaching regularly and have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Several initiatives, which have been introduced since the last inspection, are helping to raise the school's performance. There are clear plans to take the school forward, although the planned developments do not always have success criteria which are clearly linked to raising the achievement of pupils. Resources are used well and there is very good professional development for all staff. The school is very active in promoting strong community cohesion at a local level and it also develops pupils' understanding of cultures in different parts of the world. Links with wider British communities are less developed. Governors have played a major role in supporting the headteacher in implementing changes since the last inspection, and have made good progress in developing their ability to evaluate and monitor the school's 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?	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?	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	3
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**

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mewan Community Primary School, St Austell PL26 7DP

As you know, I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. We really enjoyed our visit. Thanks to those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. You were very polite and helpful. I am writing to let you know what we thought about your school.

Here are the main points.

- Your school is a good school and you make good progress in your work.
- Many of you gain high results in tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Those of you in the Reception class settle well and get off to a good start.
- You are rightly proud of your school and enjoy taking part in the many interesting clubs, trips and visits on offer.
- Teaching is good and you really enjoy the interesting lessons.
- Your headteacher and staff care for you very well and are very keen that you do your best.
- Your school has excellent links with parents and the local community which help you to learn.
- Those of you who need extra help with your learning get very good support.
- Your school is well led by your headteacher and other staff are very friendly. Your parents appreciate this and they are extremely pleased with the school.

I have asked the school to do some things to make it even better.

- Help some of you who are achieving below average results to make better progress.
- Help you learn more about the different religions and cultures in modern Britain.
- Work out how the new pre-school facility for the youngest children is to be managed.

You can help by trying your hardest and by taking an interest in different religions and cultures.

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector