

Archbishop Benson CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112012
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325508
Inspection date	8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	436
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	Jonny Alford
Headteacher	Penny Shilston
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bodmin Road Truro TR1 1BN
Telephone number	01872 273185

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	8 July 2009
Inspection number	325508

Fax number

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Age group 4–11

Inspection date 8 July 2009

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Introduction

- The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:
- whether pupils make sufficient progress in Key Stage 1
- the extent to which the teaching and curriculum promote good progress by boys in English
- the achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

The inspectors gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with pupils, governors and staff, tracking pupils' progress, analysis of attendance and the views of parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

This is one of the largest church schools in Cornwall, and admits pupils from Truro and the surrounding villages. St Paul's Children's Centre, run by the local authority, is on the school grounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin, although an increasing number are from Bangladeshi families. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

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 where pupils' good achievements and outstanding personal development mean they leave well prepared for the future. They really enjoy school and behave exceptionally well. In class, they listen intently to the teacher, show a thirst for learning and work very well in teams to make the best of each other's talents. As a result they make good progress. In Key Stage 1, they build well on their good start in the Reception classes and, by Year 2, their standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 6, the school has continued its upward trend over recent years and standards are above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. In most areas, boys and girls make similarly good progress but, for some years, boys' standards in writing have lagged some way behind those of girls. By improving the teaching of writing, and including more exciting writing tasks in all subjects, the school is closing the gap. Nevertheless, some boys say they find writing 'a bit boring', and the school is right to maintain this as one of its priorities.

The school is not just about developing pupils' academic skills. The excellent commitment to physical education and the arts, together with the impressive skills of the teachers in these areas, help to account for the high quality of the art and design, music and sporting achievement found throughout the school. The very well planned curriculum links different subjects together so that pupils develop a thorough understanding of topics. It also forms the foundation for their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and some of their reflections on issues such as how the world was created show impressive depth of thought. The curriculum has a strong and successful focus on developing pupils' awareness of how to stay healthy and safe, as can be seen in their exceptional work towards the Benson Baccalaureate. As part of these challenges, their vivid designs of T-shirts are excellent reminders to others of the need to take care on the road, eat healthily and 'Slip, Slap, Slop' to avoid the dangers of the sun. The many extra-curricular activities and residential visits do much to improve pupils' skills and add extra fun to school.

Parents and pupils are justified in feeling that the teaching is good. Typical lessons see teachers firing pupils' enthusiasm with exciting tasks and providing wholehearted encouragement for pupils of all abilities to do their best. Pupils develop the confidence to ask searching questions to extend their knowledge, and teachers make a point of valuing every contribution. They nearly always make it clear to pupils precisely what learning is expected in lessons, and this helps measure progress by the end. The improvement of the teaching of mathematical skills has been a recent focus of the leadership, and to good effect. Numeracy lessons are a very good balance between quick-fire mental tasks and challenging group work to extend pupils' knowledge.

The care, support and guidance are outstanding. Pupils say how safe they feel at school because bullying is rare and, as one put it, 'the teachers are really good at sorting out the problems of naughty children.' All arrangements for safeguarding them meet legal requirements and are monitored closely by the well-informed governing body. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully, sets challenging targets that they understand fully and provides good support to ensure they have every chance to meet them. The very good support for pupils with learning difficulties means they make rapid progress. One typical parent's comments concluded, 'The care my child has received is second to none. His progress is amazing.'

The very strong leadership and management by the headteacher are important reasons for the school's success. She manages change at a sensible pace, and is fully supportive of staff in their own development. Other leaders provide good support to the headteacher and are key figures in the rigorous evaluation of the school's performance. The leaders' accurate assessment of pupils' skills, regular checks on the quality of teaching and effective action to rectify weaknesses help to explain why the school has made such good improvements since the last inspection and why it is set to do even better. Community cohesion is promoted well. Pupils take a full part in their school and local communities, and enjoy valuable links with other schools in the United Kingdom and overseas that give them a thorough knowledge of different faiths, cultures and social backgrounds.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Reception classes is good. Children enter the school with skills typical for their age, although their early writing and language skills are relatively weak. By the end of the Reception Year, they have made good progress and standards are above average in all areas except writing, where they are average. Good induction procedures, close links with parents and good attention to children's welfare mean that they settle quickly to school routines, feel safe and are ready to learn. Good teaching, with a strong emphasis on developing children's language, number and social skills, ensure that all groups of children achieve well. The classroom is stimulating and organised well to support the different areas of learning. Children develop good levels of independence, and have the confidence to choose from the wide range of activities on offer. They enjoy tasks such as writing a letter to 'Oceana' as much as filling a piece of guttering with water to see what happens when you make it tilt. Staff observe children's learning and development carefully, and use the information well to plan future tasks.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Although some lack confidence to start with, the good encouragement from all adults helps them to become happy and independent learners. Children behave very well and enjoy working on tasks with others. The provision is led and managed well. The self-evaluation systems are good, and provide an accurate picture of the broad strengths and weaknesses of the provision. However, the staff realise the need to track progress by the different ability, ethnic and social groups as well as they do in the rest of the school to ensure that all children are doing as well as they can.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards in boys' writing match those of girls.
- In the Reception classes, gain a better understanding of the provision's effectiveness through tracking the progress of the different ability, ethnic and social groups.

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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?	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?	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
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	1
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
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	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**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Archbishop Benson Church of England Primary School, Truro TR1 1BN

Thank you for your valuable help in our recent inspection of your school. Both inspectors enjoyed talking to you and watching you work and play so happily. You are clearly very proud of your good school and you are right to be. A highlight for me was seeing you sing and play musical instruments to a very high standard. Archbishop Benson School really has got talent!

What we found out about your school:

- You work hard and make good progress. The standard of your work is better than that of most schools.
- You have an excellent knowledge of how to lead safe and live healthy lives.
- You like your teachers and they are good at their job. They make lessons fun so that you thoroughly enjoy learning.
- You enjoy the brilliant range of activities planned for you and the many clubs at lunchtime and after school for things like music and sport.
- Your behaviour is fantastic, and you take good care of each other.
- You have a good understanding of what you need to do to improve your work.
- Your school's leaders run the school well and know how to improve it further.
- All the adults take excellent care of you and are always there if you need help.
- The Reception classes give children a good start to school.

What we would like the school to do now:

- Make sure that boys do just as well as girls in writing. You boys can help by always trying to do your best writing in every lesson.
- Check on the progress of all groups of children in the Reception classes so that the adults know just how well they are doing.

Best wishes for the future!

Yours faithfully

Terry Elston

Lead inspector