

Stithians Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111851
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337756
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cath Cullen
Headteacher	Louise Northern
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
School address	Church Road Stithians Truro TR3 7DH
Telephone number	01209 860547
Fax number	01209 861123
Email address	head@stithians.cornwall.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and two assemblies, observed break and lunchtime activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of children's progress, and the provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, 65 parental questionnaires, 85 pupils' questionnaires and 15 staff questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The variable and occasionally low skills on entry, and the consistency of teaching and learning across the school in meeting the resulting wide range of pupils' needs.
- Boys' achievements in both key stages.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management in bringing about improvement

Information about the school

This village school is smaller than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average; there is variation across the year groups and in some this proportion is above average. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. At the time of the inspection the school had restricted access to some of its outdoor facilities due to structural work being carried out

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Stithians is a good school. It continues to improve and already has a few outstanding features. A strong senior management team and excellent links with nearby schools, specialist colleagues and the local community help pupils to feel really safe at school and make exemplary contributions to their learning. The excellent pastoral care provided by the staff of the school, the effective work of governors and the good links with parents also help pupils to enjoy school and to share very friendly relationships with each other.

By the time they leave, Year 6 pupils' attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science and all groups of pupils have achieved well, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those of high ability. In recent years the headteacher has developed a strengthened approach to tracking pupils' progress; this lies at the heart of rising levels of attainment and informs good self-evaluation and good leadership and management. For example, Reception staff identified that a few children were not making sufficient progress in numeracy and so have provided additional and beneficial help with their calculation skills to support their move into Year 1. The school has recognised that there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning and has taken effective steps to ensure improvement. It is generally good or better in Years 3 to 6, where lessons move along briskly to engage and challenge all learners and pupils' independence is promoted consistently well. However, lessons in Years 1 and 2 do not always stimulate or engage pupils to best effect, and they are sometimes capable of achieving more. This was particularly noticeable in the case of boys' learning in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support are good overall and, along with a good curriculum, promote the pupils' enjoyment and their good behaviour and adoption of healthy lifestyles. Vulnerable pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most-able pupils are all included equally and are effectively supported. Attendance is satisfactory. Although most pupils attend well, too many holidays are taken in term time and not all pupils attend on time. The school agrees that these remain areas of concern and that opportunities to reward good attendance are not fully developed. Even so, the school's good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, its proven ability to raise pupils' achievement and its renewed team-supported vision for the future together demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2, so that it consistently matches the best practice found in other classes, by:

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- reducing the time spent in whole-class or large group sessions
- involving pupils more in small-group learning activities and in thinking about their work
- ensuring that all lesson-planning takes into account the specific needs of boys, and in mathematics challenges all pupils to develop better calculation skills.
- Improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - more rigorously dissuading parents from taking holidays in term time
 - developing a reward system to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Inspectors found that in lessons all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are more able, generally enjoy their learning. Pupils' work in their books and in lessons is above average in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. Progress is variable but satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2, and it is good and occasionally outstanding through Years 3 to 6. Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are at the maximum when they are fully challenged by interesting topics and clear targets, and are expected to evaluate for themselves just how well they are doing. This was seen, for example, in a Year 3/4 history lesson about the Ancient Egyptians, when pupils used self-assessment 'passports' to identify the features of chronological writing.

Many pupils show particularly good skills in speaking and listening, using computers and when investigating in science or undertaking research in history. Pupils enjoy working in groups, and make particularly good progress, for example, when investigating how to remove grit from liquids and foodstuffs. They also enjoy model-making and presenting their 'Moving Mummies' in assemblies. Although attainment continues to rise, some pupils, especially boys in Years 1 and 2, still have difficulty in certain aspects of their learning, for example when calculating in mathematics.

Pupils' contributions to their learning and to their school and community are outstanding. They fulfil their responsibilities diligently, for example on the school council or managing multimedia or information and communication technology (ICT) equipment during assemblies and lessons. The pupils demonstrate high-quality relationships and there is a genuine harmony throughout day-to-day activities and learning. Behaviour is good, both in class and beyond. Pupils play energetically, but are mindful of the need to take great care of the well-being and safety of the little ones. One older pupil said, 'We look after each other', a fact readily acknowledged by younger children. Attendance is satisfactory. The pupils have good knowledge of how to keep healthy, and all those spoken to said how much they enjoyed school. The pupils' love of learning and their good academic achievement prepare them well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and their capable assistants are using the school's improved system of tracking pupils' progress with increasing success to identify and meet pupils' differing needs at an early stage. Individual targets and clear lesson objectives are standard features in all classes. In Reception, for example, children are introduced very innovatively to 'target-setting and getting' and have individual targets based on 'Albert the Alien's Class Rules.' Other typical strengths include warm relationships, good questioning, clear ways to improve work through marking and stimulating use of ICT in the form of laptop computers and interactive whiteboards. At times in Year 1 and 2 classes, though, especially in mathematics, learning is constrained to a satisfactory level because teachers spend too much time in whole-class or large-group sessions. While their questioning mostly provides sufficient challenge, it fails to stimulate all pupils or engage them sufficiently and boys, in particular, sometimes lose interest so that learning slows. The pace of learning quickens through Years 3 to 6 as teachers set practical challenges and give pupils more time to think and work in groups. Individual strengths in teaching older pupils include a very lively and interesting delivery, and opportunities in science, for example, for pupils to set up and follow their own lines of enquiry.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a strong lead and works very effectively with other senior leaders. Together they share a determined commitment to developing pupils as capable, independent learners, providing equal opportunity and ensuring freedom from discrimination. As a result, pupils' personal outcomes, such as excellent attitudes and contributions to learning, also underpin and promote their good academic achievement. The headteacher, now joined by a new senior management team, has ensured that targets are sufficiently challenging to bring about ongoing improvement. Governors also contribute well to school improvement because they receive good information from the headteacher's accurate evaluations of school effectiveness and from their own regular monitoring visits to the school. The school develops extremely beneficial links with partner organisations, such as nearby schools and local authority specialists. These enable staff to provide high-quality support for vulnerable pupils and to safeguard pupils' welfare effectively. Community cohesion is also fostered well through, for example, the teaching of Spanish, the exploration of culture through history, links with India and the study of faiths such as Judaism in religious education. However, the current leadership team has not yet been in place long enough to achieve its intention to lift pupils' academic achievements to the full.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Teaching is good overall, but is very good in promoting the children's confidence, and social, personal, speaking and listening skills. Strong teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant ensures children have a consistent and equally supportive experience. Within a good curriculum, there is usually a very good balance of practical activities led by adults and those chosen by the children themselves. For example, role play, selling biscuits in the 'shop' during snack time, and playing the tabletop 'Gingerbread Man' number game are popular choices greatly enjoyed by the children. Work is generally very well matched to their needs and the children's welfare is safeguarded extremely well. Children make regular visits to the school hall and main playgrounds to develop their physical skills. Currently though, opportunities for the children themselves to choose to play outdoors are not available because of the building works, and this constrains their ability to further consolidate their independence. Children's skills on entry vary from year to year and are sometimes below those normally expected for their age, especially their personal and communication skills. However, good leadership and management ensure that provision is flexible in meeting children's varying needs. As a result, children of all abilities develop their confidence and social and speaking skills extremely well and make good progress across other areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

2

Taking into account:

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

2

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of the parents are happy and have full confidence in the work of the school. There was very strong agreement in the parents' responses to the questionnaire that their children enjoy school and are kept safe at school and that they receive good information about their children's progress. There were a few parental criticisms, mainly about how well the school takes heed of their views, the quality of school meals and how the pupils are received into school each morning. Inspectors were mindful of these parental concerns and examined them during the inspection. They concluded that the school does pay due regard to parents' views within the constraints of the building works and current contractual obligations, and is effective in balancing

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the need to keep children safe with welcoming parents, and in obtaining healthy meals.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stithians Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	58	25	38	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	48	31	48	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	34	40	62	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	42	34	52	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	28	43	32	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	35	35	54	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	28	38	58	5	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	32	32	49	4	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	32	39	60	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	37	36	55	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	38	34	52	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	26	39	60	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	51	27	42	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stithians Community Primary School, Stithians, TR3 7DH

Thank you for your warm welcome during our visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking with many of you. I would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us, particularly members of the school council and the group of pupils from Years 1, 2, 3 and 4. We were particularly impressed by your excellent manners, very positive attitudes and contributions to your learning and by the very caring individual support you receive from all the staff. We agree with you, most of your parents and with your teachers that Stithians is a good, very caring school that continues to improve.

These are the things we liked best.

- The standards that you reach in Year 6 are above those found nationally. They show that you are taught well and achieve well. An increasing number of you make excellent progress, especially in speaking and listening, using computers and in undertaking your own research.
- You say that you feel very safe at school and enjoy a good range of activities.
- You particularly enjoy working in groups and work really well together.
- Your headteacher is a very talented leader who works very closely with senior colleagues and governors. Together, they manage the school well and develop excellent links with other schools and specialist staff to make sure that you achieve well.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2, especially so that boys do consistently well and attainment rises in mathematics
- improve attendance and punctuality by reducing holidays taken in term time and by making sure that all pupils come to school on time.

Keep giving of your best and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead inspector

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