

St Merryn School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111920
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337779
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Julia Wilkinson
Headteacher	Sarah Cudmore
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2007
School address	St Merryn Padstow PL28 8NP
Telephone number	01841 520683
Fax number	01841 520683
Email address	head@st-merryn.cornwall.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed five teachers and visited 12 lessons. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and pupils and looked at the school development plan, assessment information, teachers' planning, pupils' work and safeguarding procedures. They also analysed 67 parental questionnaires.

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

- the sustainability of pupils' improved attainment at the end of Year 6
- the quality of teachers' questioning skills
- the quality of the outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

St Merryn is a very small primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average, although in some year groups this figure is often higher. The main areas of need are speech, language and communication and learning difficulties.

There are four classes in the school and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class. The on-site pre-school provision is run by an independent management committee and has a separate inspection. The school has achieved an Activemark, Healthy School Status, an Artsmark and a Global Schools Foundation Schools Award.

Since the last inspection the school has had a new headteacher and two new teachers.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where pupils are very happy, work hard and achieve exceptionally well to attain high standards. Staff provide outstanding care and support for all and they work exceptionally well with parents and other partners to support pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils, all staff including the first-rate school leaders and governors, the parents and the local community are justifiably proud of their school and they work together as an outstanding team who strive constantly for excellence. Together they have taken very significant strides forward on their journey of improvement since their last inspection. Staff and leaders at all levels have a much improved capacity to measure pupils' attainment and achievement and to track their progress in all subjects. Leaders and governors carry out highly detailed and reflective evaluations to successfully improve all subjects and aspects. Self-evaluation is excellent. These features, together with the creation of an exciting curriculum, have resulted in a dramatic and sustained rise in standards and achievement over the last two years. Taking into consideration a highly impressive track record of school improvement, the high staff morale and the exceedingly ambitious, challenging and determined leadership, the school demonstrates an outstanding capacity for future improvement.

A key reason for the school's exceptional success is that the new headteacher's inspirational leadership enthuses others to have the highest possible aspirations for themselves and the pupils. The headteacher's highly ambitious vision and total rejection of complacency are manifest in the exciting, stimulating and vibrant learning environment seen in all classes. Stunning displays convey the outstanding achievements of all groups of pupils and the high expectations of all staff. Parents speak in glowing terms about the school's considerable achievements. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote, 'I can honestly say this school is getting better and better each year. The new headteacher is amazing, as are all the staff. There is such a happy atmosphere and the education provided is second to none.'

Outstanding teaching for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that they have an excellent start to school life, although the access to the outdoor learning area is difficult. Teaching in the other classes is also of an exceptionally high quality. Teachers, supported by highly-skilled teaching assistants, have embraced the school's new vibrant curriculum and skilfully use assessment information to plan exciting lessons which meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils' excellent behaviour and attendance ensure happy, successful and productive learning for all. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and their outstanding academic skills and personal qualities prepare them exceptionally well for later learning and life.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage through implementing the plans to relocate the Reception class to provide easier access to a secure outdoor learning area.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs, say they love school because 'teachers make our lessons fun and interesting and we learn a lot'. Inspection findings endorse pupils' views because all groups of pupils make excellent progress. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills as typically expected for their age. By the time pupils leave Year 6 their attainment is exceptionally high. In lessons, pupils show very positive attitudes to learning and impressive levels of sustained concentration. A strength in many lessons is the way pupils support each other, for example as 'chit chat' partners or in assessing each other's work. For example, Years 3 and 4 pupils scrutinised each other's work to determine where fellow pupils had successfully used imperative verbs, connectives and interesting nouns. All pupils work exceptionally well together and are clearly very involved and engaged in their learning. Pupils say they 'definitely feel very safe in school because the front gate is locked all day and we're not allowed outside or in our Forest School until an adult is on duty'. Years 5 and 6 pupils enthusiastically described a recent visit to 'Hazard Alley' where they had learnt how to keep themselves safe through role playing a potentially dangerous situation. Pupils are also very clear about internet dangers. They have an exceptionally good understanding of why some foods are healthier than others, and like the fact that their lunch boxes are inspected daily by two prefects to see whose lunch is the healthiest. Older pupils have conducted food surveys to discover who have balanced diets. Pupils, parents and staff are very enthusiastic 'Wakers and Shakers' in all winds and weathers! Pupils regularly win inter-schools' 'Wake and Shake' competitions, with their amazing routines and actions. They also love the myriad of sports events on offer including swimming, surfing, athletics and football.

Pupils are very proud of, and highly committed to, their school community. Over half of the pupils have a leadership role in the school and all pupils have a strong voice in decisions relating to their learning and well-being. Through their actions and decision making they have changed the structure of playtimes, had training on bullying, been part of a sustainable schools conference, visited a recycling centre and helped the local community obtain a bid for allotments. The school is at the very heart of village life and pupils' involvement is substantial and valued. Staff and pupils recently held a very successful arts evening when 200 local people came to view pupils' art work and take part in a willow sculpture procession. Pupils' relationships with staff and each other are excellent and pupils show great empathy for others by raising considerable amounts for various local, national and global charities. They think deeply about a wide range of issues. For example, in an excellent assembly, they were fascinated by the Guatemalan

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'Worry Dolls' and maturely discussed how they could handle stress in their own lives. Attendance is excellent because of parental compliance with school policy.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and high expectations ensure that lessons are exciting, stimulating and challenging. Hence pupils become engrossed and highly active learners. Planning is outstanding because it is very detailed and shows exactly how pupils' different learning needs are to be met. Lessons move at a very swift pace and are often conducted outdoors as a result of many pupils' comments that they feel they learn best when they are active. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils made excellent progress in describing and classifying angles whilst searching for different examples in the playground. Pupils' interest and engagement are often captured by interesting resources and stimuli, such as the witches' cauldrons into which pupils can place their 'Revolting Rhymes!' Outstanding lesson organisation encapsulates many areas such as the notion of sustainability. For instance, Years 1 and 2 pupils quickly grasped the idea of buying local Cornish produce rather than using food produced abroad through the

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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teacher's skilful questioning and resources. Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to plan lessons to precisely match pupils' various abilities. Individuals, as well as groups of pupils who require further support or increased challenge in their learning, are swiftly identified and highly effective measures are put into place to meet needs. Pupils' progress is meticulously tracked and evaluated to identify the progress made by different groups. All pupils know what their targets are and they know exactly how to improve their work thanks to teachers' high-calibre marking. Pupils are exceptionally involved in their own learning and demonstrate a maturity beyond their years when they confidently discuss ways to become even better learners. A parent sums this up well: 'Both my children are very enthusiastic learners and are always keen to find out more for their homework books □ which are more like personalised learning journals.'

The headteacher and staff have worked very hard to successfully devise an innovative curriculum. This is manifest in the outstanding way pupils explore curriculum areas and make meaningful links between subjects. For instance, all Key Stage 2 pupils are currently completely engrossed in their topic about Africa. Their considerable achievement and obvious enjoyment are evident in the eye-catching displays depicting African stories, art and animals and in their brilliant African tribal dancing. An outstanding number of trips, clubs and visitors bring pupils' learning to life. Years 5 and 6 pupils enthusiastically describe a recent residential visit to London where they visited a Sikh Gurdwara and the Tower of London, saw 'The Lion King' and met their pen pals in a school in Chelsea. . The excellent partnerships with local secondary schools and colleges have resulted in considerably enhanced science provision, resources and outdoor learning. Pupils of all ages love the Forest School where they spend very happy break and lunchtimes building dens and 'trading not raiding' (the pupils' phrase) natural resources such as fir cones and wild mint. An excellent range of additional activities including Beach days, chicken care and gardening clubs, and numerous visitors enrich pupils' learning even further.

Pupils receive exemplary care because each child is known and valued. Induction arrangements are excellent which enable Reception children to settle very quickly. Older pupils have many chances to visit their local secondary schools and participate in interesting projects. Highly-effective support for all pupils enables them to make the very best of all the opportunities provided by the school. Staff provide excellent support to pupils with additional needs. One parent commented, 'My child has Asperger's Syndrome and the staff have been absolutely fantastic in supporting my child's education, social development and general well-being. A million thanks!'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>1</p>

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1
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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and the governing body form an exceptionally impressive team where their distinct areas of expertise combine seamlessly to make this school highly successful. There is a tremendous team spirit and all staff are totally committed to providing the very best for all pupils. There are exceptionally clear policies and procedures underpinning all aspects of the school's work. The school's effective work to promote equalities is demonstrated in the skilful way staff ensure all pupils make outstanding progress. Inspectors' classroom observations reveal that adapted planning and exciting and memorable curriculum events to encourage all pupils are paying huge dividends. The school has excellent policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the welfare of all pupils. Safeguarding policies are constantly reviewed and updated to ensure pupils' safety. Staff and governors have an excellent awareness of safeguarding measures. Community cohesion is promoted very well, with an effective audit undertaken and excellent links with a multicultural school in London to broaden pupils' understanding of life for children in different parts of England. The highly effective partnership with parents and carers is evident in parents' extremely positive comments about the school. Parents' views are an integral part of school life as parents are always consulted about future plans and receive timely updates about school development. The school website is an excellent resource where parents can find a myriad of information. Parents value and appreciate their school. One parent writes, 'This is a fantastic school with a totally dedicated and caring head who always has fresh ideas and never judges any parent. We are so lucky to have her and all her incredible staff. My child loves his school and so do I!'

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1
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Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage classroom is stunning. There are exciting and inviting displays and activities hanging from every available wall space and ceiling, just waiting to be enjoyed. No wonder children make rapid progress in all areas of their learning and development. Children are very involved in their learning. For example, an excellent surf shop role-play area complete with mini surfboards and flippers has been carefully designed and made as a result of their suggestions! Children love being outside and confidently learn to take risks and explore in the Forest School. Staff take every chance to take children outdoors, but it is currently not easy for children to move freely between the outdoor and indoor environments. Outstanding leadership and management, excellent teaching and loving care ensure that most children exceed the expected levels for their age on entry to Year 1. Children do really well in learning to read and write because of skilful teaching. Staff make learning fun and very enjoyable and really challenge children to think and work together. For instance, during the inspection children loved an exciting World Cup party where they made up songs, dressed in red and white and blew vuvuzelas! Staff are highly enthusiastic play partners which greatly enhances children's learning and structured play.

Reception staff work as an exceptionally effective team and have excellent knowledge and understanding of the personal and learning needs of young children. This ensures that children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development and are well equipped for their move to Year 1. The curriculum is excellent and provides constant pleasure, excitement and adventure. An outstanding partnership is quickly formed with parents who feel their children have a 'wonderful start' and appreciate the endless patience and unbounded enthusiasm of all the staff. One parent commented, 'My child has thoroughly enjoyed her first year. She loves the continuous variety of activities and especially loved the tree planting which reflects the balance of educational, social and physical education they provide at an outstanding level.'

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

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Well over half of the parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. All of these parents and carers feel that teaching is good and that their children are kept very safe. All parents and carers are happy with their children's experiences at this school. A very small number of parents raised concerns, but there were no issues which were relevant to the school as a whole. Parents' individual concerns were summarised and reported to the school without identifying any individual. Inspectors agree wholeheartedly with the parents' and carers' very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Merryn 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	78	15	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	79	12	18	0	0	2	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	75	16	24	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	76	14	21	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	84	11	16	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	78	11	16	1	1	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	78	15	22	0	0	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)	55	82	9	13	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	75	15	22	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	66	20	30	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	70	15	22	1	1	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	55	82	9	13	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	82	12	18	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Merryn School, Padstow PL28 8NP

We really loved visiting your school overlooking the sea and I am writing to thank you for two very interesting and happy days. I particularly enjoyed looking at all the stunning displays of your work and seeing how much the Reception children enjoyed their World Cup party. We hope the older pupils had a good time camping out on the school field on Friday evening.

We agree completely with your parents that you go to an outstanding school.

These are the things we found out.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you work hard and play very happily together.
- You are taught exceptionally well and your lessons are fun and interesting.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors lead and manage the school exceptionally well.
- You all enjoy learning very much and are given many exciting things to do.
- The adults keep you very safe in school and you learn to eat healthily and enjoy playing lots of sport.

There is just one area where the school is not as good as it could be. We have asked the headteacher and staff to make sure the Reception children can get easily to a secure outdoor learning area.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by keeping up your excellent standard of behaviour.

We wish you all the very best in your journey through life.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox

Lead inspector

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