

St Stephens Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111946
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337786
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Lake

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Nicholson
Headteacher	William Hermon
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and held meetings with governors, teachers, support staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the most recent school self- evaluation form, the school development plan, governors' minutes, the school's assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, the records held on vulnerable pupils and on those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, school policies, and reports from the local authority and school improvement partner. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from pupils, staff and 44 parents.

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

- impact of revised assessment procedures on teaching with a specific focus on Key Stage 1 to see if teachers' expectations are high enough and if lessons challenge the most able enough
- provision within the curriculum to enable boys to be engaged in learning and especially the impact of the new phonics programme
- impact of the new senior leadership team upon standards across the school and the contribution of middle management to the implementation of the school development plan
- strategies for promoting and monitoring community cohesion and how these impact upon pupils' cultural development
- impact of the improved accommodation and new leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This average sized school serves an area around Launceston. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend school part-time until Christmas. More pupils than usual have special educational needs and/or disabilities with a very large proportion of these having a statement of special educational needs. The school houses an Area Resource Base which caters for pupils who have severe and complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are integrated into many lessons in the main classes. The entire senior leadership team is new to the school in the last academic year. The school has recently received the Activemark, Investors in People and Healthy Schools awards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Stephens Community Primary School provides a satisfactory education for pupils. After a period of turbulence with many changes of staff it is improving rapidly and has a number of strengths and a number of areas of its work are outstanding.

The school has a caring family atmosphere where all staff show a great concern for the pupils as shown by the good quality care, guidance and support provided, especially for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is helping all pupils become more confident and effective learners. Pupils were very keen to tell inspectors how much they like the school and how it helps them understand how to keep fit and healthy, although this is not always apparent in the food supplied in their packed lunches. The school is especially good at ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. The procedures for safeguarding are excellent. Pupils know how to stay safe. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a good understanding of their local community but their knowledge and understanding of wider British culture is not as good.

The good teaching and stimulating curriculum in Reception ensure that children get off to a good start from starting points well below those normally found. The improved accommodation is allowing better use of the outside area but children do not always have sufficient opportunities to make independent choices in their learning that enable them to move freely between indoor and outdoor areas.

Standards overall are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are achieving well because of the good support provided for them by skilled teaching assistants. Information on how well pupils are doing is used effectively in English to plan work that challenges pupils well and, as a result, standards in English are above average by Year 6 and progress is good. These assessment systems are starting to have an effect in mathematics and science. As a result, progress in these subjects is satisfactory which represents a sustained improvement in all subjects over the last few years.

The sound curriculum has been strengthened by new procedures for teaching reading that have contributed greatly to the improvement in English. It is enriched by a good range of activities that ensure that all pupils, especially boys, are motivated to learn. The quality of teaching is improving, especially in English which has been a school focus for the last year. The improved systems for assessing how well pupils are doing are used effectively in English to plan what pupils need to do next in their learning. This is accelerating the progress that pupils are making especially in English. In other subjects, although progress has accelerated for most pupils, the work for the more able pupils is not always challenging enough.

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Key to this school's emerging success is the effective and highly motivated senior leadership team. They have developed a vision for the school that is shared with other staff and governors. This has created a palpable enthusiasm and ambition to drive up standards further. The school has a very accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. This is allowing well-targeted strategies for school improvement to be implemented to great effect. There is substantial evidence to show the very positive impact that this is having upon standards and provision across the school. This indicates a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that improved systems for more rigorous use of assessment information to plan work that is more closely matched to each pupil's needs, are firmly embedded in all subjects so that:
 - the more able pupils across the school are challenged to reach their full potential
 - planning in mathematics provides details of the small steps necessary to help each pupil improve their work so they can reach the same standards as in English.
- Provide better opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to choose activities independently and move freely between indoor and outdoor areas.
- Develop ways of improving pupils' awareness of the wide range of cultures to be found in Great Britain.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment is improving as a result of improved teaching. This is not immediately apparent in the results of national assessments at Year 2, as results include the attainment of pupils from the Area Resource Base. Very challenging but realistic targets have been set for most individual pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 and pupils are well on their way to achieving these, with learning in many lessons observed now being good. In other subjects, the more able pupils are not doing as well as they could, especially in Years 1 and 2, and particularly in mathematics across the school, where progress is slower, because the work set for them is not challenging enough. Good support for pupils who have additional learning needs helps them to make good progress against their individual targets. Pupils with severe and complex special educational needs in the Area Resource Base make excellent progress because of extremely high-quality support.

Pupils are polite, friendly and most are confident talking to visitors to the school. Pupils say there is almost no bullying in the school and they trust teachers to deal effectively with any that might occur. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. In school they undertake a wide range of responsibilities such as acting as school council representatives, lunchtime assistants in the office (the 'yellow caps'), or as helpers on the playground (the 'red caps'). Within the local community, pupils have

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worked with the police and the local council to design a mural for a bus shelter. Through these activities and the sound development of literacy and numeracy, pupils gain skills that help prepare them satisfactorily for their future lives. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and show respect for themselves and others. They show this, for example, in the way they respect children with complex physical needs in crowded environments such as the dining room. They know about their local culture and have some understanding of other cultures through visitors to the school and strong links with a school in Spain. However, their understanding of wider British culture and some worldwide cultures is a comparative weakness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The teaching team has been strengthened in the last 18 months by new appointments. In addition, the new senior management team has provided a considerable amount of support and training. Much of the improvement in English is due to two factors. First, the introduction of new systems for assessing pupils and using the information gained to plan work which is more closely matched to the needs of pupils. Second, there have

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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been changes to the curriculum through the introduction of a new phonics-based programme for teaching reading and writing Teachers prepare lessons that motivate most pupils, and work closely with teaching assistants to deliver these in a stimulating way This is particularly effective at keeping boys motivated and learning. In many lessons teachers ask searching questions that assess how well pupils understand the work and challenge them to achieve more. For example, in one lesson where pupils were writing biographies, the teacher continually increased the challenge by suggesting the use of rhetorical questions and alliteration. Teachers mark work well with useful comments on how pupils can improve their work, but teachers' expectations about presentation and the pace at which pupils can work are not always high enough especially in mathematics. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support teaching with the effective use of interactive whiteboards, but ICT is not used well enough to support learning across the curriculum.

The broad and balanced curriculum has several good features. Pupils enjoy music and the opportunities to learn an instrument and Spanish. The many after-school clubs are attended by a large number of pupils and links with many local schools provide good opportunities for competitive sports.

Pastoral care is very strong. The school is particularly vigilant in ensuring the safety of vulnerable pupils and in monitoring their attendance. Close links with the local authority services ensure that pupils who have complex and severe special educational needs are supported very well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior management team has high expectations for the school and has already demonstrated the ability to improve standards. The school has a very accurate view of its own performance. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and information gained is used well in performance management. Assessment data is scrutinised well to check on the attainment of different groups of pupils and ensure equality of opportunity and set challenging but realistic whole-school targets.

Procedures for safeguarding are excellent. Training on child protection is extremely rigorous and updated regularly for staff and governors. Senior staff and governors have a very clear understanding of what is required to keep pupils safe.

The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors visit the school regularly

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to observe its work and meet with staff. These visits are closely linked to the priorities of the good school development plan. A strong vision on how the school can impact positively on the lives of the pupils is shared between staff and governors.

Governors and senior staff recognise that the systems for monitoring the impact of strategies to promote community cohesion are not robust enough. Nevertheless, the school is effective in ensuring social cohesion within its own local community.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good links with parents and pre-school playgroups, the opportunity for younger children to start part-time and well-established routines, ensure that children feel secure and well cared for. The strong teamwork among all adults ensures that the welfare and needs of children are met well. Children grow in confidence in this environment and build securely upon their previous experiences. They achieve well from starting points that are below, and increasingly well below, those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal and social skills. Many, especially boys, are reluctant to talk freely and good provision is made through role play to tackle this problem. The boys particularly like acting the role of 'Percy the park-keeper' and repairing and organising the equipment in the park. The good teaching ensures that children start Year 1 well prepared for learning although, because of the very low starting points, standards in the core skills of communication, language and literacy remain below average.

The well-organised and attractive indoor environment is used effectively to support a

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curriculum that provides a good degree of challenge for children. Teachers are skilled at ensuring a good balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children to learn through purposeful play. The good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that children's progress is assessed regularly and activities are provided that ensure all individuals, including those who have special educational needs and or/disabilities, are challenged effectively but gently to achieve well.

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 vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. They are particularly pleased with the pastoral care and the support and guidance given to pupils. Some of those who returned questionnaires also made positive written comments. Typical comments were:

'My children all enjoy school'; 'They attend lots of clubs'; 'I have been very pleased with the progress that my child has made'; 'My child has developed above my expectations'; 'Since the start of the new term I have noticed a big improvement' (parent of pupil in Area Resource Base); 'Everyone is very supportive and informative'.

There was no pattern of concerns or negative comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephens 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 193 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	50	22	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	70	11	25	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	59	18	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	27	19	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	52	21	48	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)	21	48	21	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	41	25	57	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	43	22	70	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	50	20	45	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	59	18	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	62	8	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



18 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephens Community Primary School, Launceston PL15 8HL

Thank you for making us welcome and talking with us when we visited your school. We were very impressed with your good behaviour and polite manners.

Yours is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly. You attain standards similar to those attained in most schools. In English you are doing better than many schools and attaining above average standards. Here are some of the other things we found out about your school.

- You get off to a good start in the Reception classes which helps you to be ready to learn more things when you get to Year 1.
- The school looks after you really well and makes sure you know how to stay fit and healthy. It is particularly good at making sure you are safe.
- You make a good contribution to school life through responsibilities you take on such as being members of the school council and doing jobs such as looking after the school office at lunchtime ' the 'Yellow Caps'.
- Your school is well led and managed which is why it is getting better all the time.

In order to help the school continue to improve, this is what we have asked the headteacher and governors to do.

- make sure that teachers use the information that they have on you to plan work that challenges all of you, especially those who understand things quickly You can help by telling your teacher if you find any work too easy
- provide more opportunities for those in the Reception class to choose their own activities and to move between the indoor and outdoor areas
- find better ways of helping you learn about all the different cultures and communities in Great Britain and the rest of the world, and check how well these are working.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake

Lead Inspector

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