

St Mabyn CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112018
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337817
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Alexander Baxter

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Northcott
Headteacher	Karen Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and five teachers were observed. The inspectors attended two assemblies and observed break and lunchtime activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities were evaluated. In addition, 27 parent/carer questionnaires, 26 pupil questionnaires and eight staff questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the school's use of assessment to promote pupils' progress in mathematics, writing and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- the impact of efforts to enhance the curriculum and to develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to accelerate pupils' progress
- the degree to which leaders and managers, including governors, within the new federation bring about continuous improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average rural school with three mixed age classes. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and varies significantly within the year groups across the school. Most needs are related to speech and language difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Among others, the school holds the Healthy School award. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is above that normally expected. The number of pupils attending the school is significantly lower than at the time of the previous inspection in 2007. Since the beginning of the year, the school has been part of a federation with another nearby primary school, which means that the schools share their executive headteacher and are managed by a single governing body. Given the absence of the executive headteacher due to ill health, the designated head of teaching and learning temporarily fulfilled the role of acting headteacher during the inspection.

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

The school's strong commitment to continued improvement is clearly evident in the decision to federate with its partner school. It has been accompanied by increased teamwork, which by more effectively sharing expertise has strengthened the consistency of provision across the school.

The newly appointed executive headteacher works very closely with all staff, but especially with the new head of teaching and learning. In a relatively short time, through good self-evaluation, they have gained an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their effective work in developing common approaches to assessing pupils' skills and in using targets and new interactive whiteboards has further strengthened teaching and learning and pupils' progress through the school. These developments show a good capacity for the school's future improvement.

The creation of a new governing body, drawn from governors of both schools, has widened the expertise available. They are already working successfully together and strengthening the vision for the future.

The school works well with outside agencies, for example to aid pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and with the local church community. Most parents and carers support the school well, but communications with parents and carers have weakened during the introduction of the federation and are not promoted strongly enough to support the federation or to lift attendance.'

The good teaching and learning evident in all classes are typified by challenging questioning and practical activity to enthuse pupils. In response, pupils show good concentration and share ideas which help to sustain good progress.

From varying starting points, children across the range of needs and abilities make a good start to school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Levels of attainment fluctuate significantly across the small year groups and are further influenced by pupils leaving or joining from other schools. Even so, the broadly average overall level of attainment clearly shows that most pupils achieve well during their time in this school. A significant number of pupils in all parts of the school develop very good speaking and listening and computing skills.

Although improving, some pupils still have difficulty solving problems in mathematics and others find that their underdeveloped handwriting skills constrain their ability to reflect their true ability in extended writing.

Within a good curriculum, interesting learning activities, such as the 'Spirit of Carnival' further motivate pupils and promote their enjoyment of school and good adoption of

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healthy living.

In response to good care, guidance and support and nurtured by the school's community ethos, pupils behave well and relate warmly to other people.

By the time they leave the school, pupils' good academic and personal achievement and their willingness to socialise and work with others, prepare them well for the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the next two terms, raise pupils' achievement in mathematics by continuing the focus on developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary, problem solving skills and enjoyment of mathematics through practical activity.
- Further improve the quality of pupils' writing over the course of the next year by more systematically developing pupils' handwriting skills as they move through the school.
- In readiness for the next school year, strengthen the partnership with parents and enlist their support of the new federation and in raising attendance, by improving lines of communication, especially with the new governing body.'

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The inspectors' observations of lessons clearly showed that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who joined from other schools, enjoy learning and make good progress, both indoors and outdoors, especially during practical work. In particular, pupils' good speaking and listening and computer skills reflect their teachers' strong modelling of clear speech and skilful use of interactive whiteboards. Many pupils exhibit traditional strengths in the expressive arts and in sport. Pupils respond well to good teaching and learn effectively as they move through the school. Over time, pupils' attainments by the end of Year 6 reflect their variable starting points and needs and mostly they are broadly average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Good learning was seen, for example, in Years 4, 5 and 6, when the teacher encouraged the pupils to share their ideas with 'Talking Partners' to sharpen their understanding of how connective words can be used to enrich their writing. However, observations of pupils undertaking writing tasks and a scrutiny of their books showed that the quality of pupils' handwriting varies and sometimes constrains the quality of their work. Teachers promote practical work to good effect in mathematics, but it has not been in place long enough to fully develop the problem solving skills of all pupils."

Pupils enjoy very good relationships and there is a friendly sense of community at the school. Pupils behave well and say that they feel safe, adding, 'We are never short of a friend at this school.' Pupils live up to their Healthy School award through their eagerness in adopting healthy lifestyles during their physically active playtimes on the popular 'Green'. Pupils express their views confidently and those on the school council report that adults act on their suggestions, as evident in the increased play equipment available at break times. Attendance is satisfactory, but a few pupils do not attend

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regularly enough. Pupils make good contributions to school events and charities, such as the 'Haiti Appeal', although occasionally, a few boys do not contribute sufficiently in class discussions.' Pupils have a good awareness of the local and church community and increasingly with the partner school, but their understanding of national and global cultures, although satisfactory overall, is less well developed.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The good teaching and learning in all classes reflects the teachers' very good relationships with their pupils, and the improved assessment procedures which enable them to have a good understanding of the needs of each pupil. Since the beginning of the year, initiatives brought from other schools and from the partner school, have been developed successfully alongside existing strengths to raise pupils' attainment and contribute to good achievement across the school. Initiatives include clear literacy and numeracy targets and lesson planning which make particular reference to up-to-date assessments and which have lifted pupils' understanding. In English, structured work on letters and sounds led by teaching assistants helps individuals or small groups of pupils

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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to bridge gaps in previous learning or to meet their special educational learning needs.' Teachers' and their skilled assistants' questioning skills are consistently effective and promote pupils' good speaking and listening skills. These were seen to good effect in a lesson in the Reception and Year 1 class, for example, when adults sought the pupils' ideas and perceptive flight predictions for their 'spaceships'. Pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to learn practically and use computers. These activities were seen, for example, in the Years 4, 5 and 6 class, as pupils prepared their multi media' presentations of the 'Earth and Beyond', and when exploring facts and fictional statements about the planets during a science lesson. Such teaching methods are particularly effective in generating a good pace and help keep pupils on task and sustain their concentration. As a consequence, pupils learn well. An increased emphasis on practical work enriches pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics. This was seen in Years 2 and 3, where pupils responded well to the challenging task of refitting shapes together to form the original square. However, such strategies have not been in place long enough to develop problem solving skills to the full. Teachers work well with their assistants, who are frequently involved in intervention activities with pupils most in need of help, currently, for example, revisiting and bridging gaps in pupils' understanding of sounds and words.'

Newly completed assessments in the form of 'Provision Maps' and individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs, bridge gaps in pupils' prior learning and promote good progress. These initiatives, which help teachers to match learning more effectively to pupils' needs, represent improved and now good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As necessary, teachers make good use of outside specialists to help those pupils who, for a variety of reasons, find learning difficult. All staff are sensitive to the pupils' needs and provide good pastoral care to keep pupils safe. Pupils say they have a good awareness of their literacy and numeracy targets because teachers review and talk about them at the beginning of lessons and give pupils good information when marking their books.

The good curriculum includes a wide range of extra-curricular activities, clubs, visitors and residential visits.' A recent residential visit, for example, included pupils from both schools and beneficially widened the social experiences for the pupils. The school sustains traditional strengths in the expressive arts and these were evident in the quality of the pupils' tree paintings completed in the sensory garden and their harmonious singing in assemblies. When interviewed, members of the school council talked with pride and enthusiasm about their role in the 'Spirit of Carnival' performance, widely recognised as a successful community event. Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted effectively during lessons in these subjects, but are not always promoted to best effect across the range of subjects.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2

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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 good teaching and learning in all classes reflects the teachers' very good relationships with their pupils, and the improved assessment procedures which enable them to have a good understanding of the needs of each pupil. Since the beginning of the year, initiatives brought from other schools and from the partner school, have been developed successfully alongside existing strengths to raise pupils' attainment and contribute to good achievement across the school. Initiatives include clear literacy and numeracy targets and lesson planning which make particular reference to up-to-date assessments and which have lifted pupils' understanding. In English, structured work on letters and sounds led by teaching assistants helps individuals or small groups of pupils to bridge gaps in previous learning or to meet their special educational learning needs.' Teachers' and their skilled assistants' questioning skills are consistently effective and promote pupils' good speaking and listening skills. These were seen to good effect in a lesson in the Reception and Year 1 class, for example, when adults sought the pupils' ideas and perceptive flight predictions for their 'spaceships'. Pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to learn practically and use computers. These activities were seen, for example, in the Years 4, 5 and 6 class, as pupils prepared their multi media' presentations of the 'Earth and Beyond', and when exploring facts and fictional statements about the planets during a science lesson. Such teaching methods are particularly effective in generating a good pace and help keep pupils on task and sustain their concentration. As a consequence, pupils learn well. An increased emphasis on practical work enriches pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics. This was seen in Years 2 and 3, where pupils responded well to the challenging task of refitting shapes together to form the original square. However, such strategies have not been in place long enough to develop problem solving skills to the full. Teachers work well with their assistants, who are frequently involved in intervention activities with pupils most in need of help, currently, for example, revisiting and bridging gaps in pupils' understanding of sounds and words.'

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's progress is good and reflects effective teaching, especially during adult-led learning activity. Children make excellent progress in developing self-confidence, positive attitudes to learning and in developing speaking and listening skills. These qualities give them an important foundation for learning and were evident as the children enjoyed a 'carousel' of creative activity, making aliens, for example, during their space topic. Staff promote good links with parents and carers and, by presenting caring role models and sustaining the children's welfare effectively, staff ensure that children feel cared for and behave well. The planned curriculum covers all areas of learning, but at times children do not have enough opportunities to choose activities for themselves and this constrains their independence. Consequently, leadership and management are satisfactory, rather than good.

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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	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with the school. Responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were mostly positive, with unanimous agreement that the school keeps children safe and that children enjoy school. A few parents and carers were interviewed informally in the playground and most expressed positive support of the school. A few parents and carers indicated disagreement, mainly about their children's progress, how the school meets their children's needs and concerning the new federation. The school readily acknowledges that incomplete information and fears about the creation of the federation possibly leading to a replacement school undermined the confidence of some parents in the intended benefits of partnership with another school. The findings of the inspection now show that the federation, with its more corporate leadership and wider community, is already raising the quality of provision and pupils' achievements. Inspectors share the view expressed by some parents, and accepted by the school, that parents and carers should now be given more information about how the federation is affecting pupils' learning and they should be encouraged to play a greater part in the future development of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mabyn C of E 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 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 56 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	37	13	48	3	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	33	12	44	5	19	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	59	4	15	2	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	33	14	52	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	67	8	30	1	4	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)	12	44	12	44	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	44	12	44	2	7	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	41	9	33	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	30	15	56	1	4	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	14	52	3	11	2	7	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	52	12	44	1	4	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.



13 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mabyn Cof E School, Bodmin PL30 3BQ

Thank you for the warmth of your welcome during our visit to your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work and talking with you. I would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us, particularly members of the school council. We were particularly impressed by your very friendly relationships when working and playing together. We agree with you, most of your parents and with your teachers that St Mabyn is a good and improving school.

'These are the other things you can be proud of:

- Your progress and achievement are good. Many of you develop impressive speaking and listening, and computer skills.
- You feel safe at school and enjoy an interesting range of activities, which includes strong links with the church and the community. You say that you like working with the pupils in your partner school and have already made new friends there.'
- You behave well and show a good understanding of healthy living.
- Staff provide good care for you and develop some good links with other schools and specialist staff to give you extra support when you need it.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors of your school, and of your partner school, are strengthening how they work together and are helping you to achieve more.

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

- help you to become better at solving mathematical problems
- help you to improve your handwriting"
- work more closely with your parents, to improve your attendance and to assist the governors in their work.

You can help by always giving of your best.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead inspector

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