

Pensans Community Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 134726 |
| Local Authority | Cornwall |
| Inspection number | 341515 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 November 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jane Neech |

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 | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 298 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Kevin Brockman |
| Headteacher | Martin Higgs |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 November 2006 |
| School address | Madron Road Penzance Cornwall TR20 8UH |
| Telephone number | 01736 363627 |
| Fax number | 01731 363627 |
| Email address | head@pensans.cornwall.sch.uk |

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, observed playtimes, a family learning session, before-school and after-school clubs and held 16 meetings with governors, pupils, staff, parents, outside agencies and the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books and teachers' planning. The team looked at the school's documentation including safeguarding policies and procedures, and records of pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and 73 parents and carers.

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

- the attainment of pupils to determine whether standards are high enough
- the impact of assessment and target setting to see if pupils are making as much progress as they can
- the impact of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning on raising standards
- whether the curriculum is meeting pupils' needs
- the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils.

Information about the school

Pensans Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school which serves the immediate area in Penzance. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are at the early stages of learning English as a foreign language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national figure. Mobility rates in and out of school are high.

The school admits up to 52 children into the Nursery class at the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of children go on to join one of the two Reception classes. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are taught in a mixture of single-age and mixed-age classes. The school runs before- and after-school care on site. The school was amalgamated from separate infant and junior schools in September 2005 and worked on two separate sites until building work was completed on the single site in January 2007. The school has National Healthy School status, the Arts Mark Gold award, the Sports Active Mark and the Children's Society Silver Award for Pupil Voice.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding procedures are inadequate because arrangements to ensure that adults working with pupils are appropriately recruited and vetted do not comply with current regulations. There has been a period of change, with many staff new to the school but procedures for vetting staff have not been rigorously carried out. The school's overall effectiveness is judged as inadequate.

The school's overall performance has declined since the last inspection. However, as a result of the energetic leadership by the headteacher and key staff, this trend of low performance is now reversing. Results of tests in 2009 were higher than those in 2008 in most respects. Pupils' progress is satisfactory but is improving because of good teaching and a good curriculum. The settled atmosphere is a major strength and has done much to improve aspects of school life, such as pupils' behaviour and their good attitudes to learning.

Among the school's particular strengths is the engagement with families; as one parent explained, 'The staff go above and beyond the call of duty.' This same sentiment is echoed by many parents. The way in which the leaders of the school works with parents and carers, the local and wider community makes a strong contribution to the personal development and well-being of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A warm sense of community permeates all areas of the school's work and leaders are justifiably proud of the positive impact this has on the good behaviour of pupils. This view is echoed by parents who see the changes to the school as nothing but positive for their children.

Another of the school's strengths is the themed-based curriculum and the range of extra-curricular activities offered to pupils in sport and music. Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is a strength and many pupils are given opportunities for responsibility. An area of relative weakness is the underdeveloped use of assessment. Pupils can talk about their targets but assessment in lessons and marking does not always help pupils improve their work.

School self-evaluation is satisfactory and the leadership team acknowledges that pupils are not yet reaching the standards of which they are capable in all subjects. Many governors are newly in post. While the governing body are supportive of the school they

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have yet to monitor rigorously the impact of the school's work on raising standards and apply a sharply focused strategic perspective to their role. The improvements brought about in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, in raised attainment in science and reading, for example, coupled with the improved rates of pupils' progress demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school must meet the statutory requirements for vetting staff urgently.
- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics so that more pupils reach or exceed the levels expected for their ages.
- Use sharply focused assessment, target setting and marking to help pupils improve their work.
- Ensure leaders and managers, including governors, keep a thorough check on the effectiveness of the school's work in keeping pupils safe, and in securing high quality in teaching, learning and the curriculum so that pupils achieve as well as they can.

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

Achievement overall is satisfactory but attainment is significantly below national averages. There are, however, clear signs of improvement in the 2009 Key Stage 2 national test results that show the rates of pupils' progress are increasing markedly. Test results were still significantly below average for English but close to average to mathematics and science. In Key Stage 1, pupils' standards continue to be low overall, particularly in mathematics, but are improving in reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in their work and as a result make satisfactory or better progress; in the 2009 statutory assessment tests, they performed better than might be expected in mathematics and science. Higher attaining pupils, however, have made significantly less progress than similar pupils nationally in recent years.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and work well together, in groups or with their talk partner. For example, in a Year 6 religious education lesson, where the teacher invited pupils to discuss who inspired them, pupils responded thoughtfully and listened carefully to one another. The teacher further challenged pupils to work in groups and brainstorm ideas for writing about inspirational characters. This task supported pupils in being able to talk confidently about famous people and the qualities needed to be inspirational.

Relationships are good. Pupils are polite to visitors and keen to engage adults in conversation. Older pupils accept responsibility readily, such as being lunchtime helpers. An example observed during the inspection was an older pupil helping a younger pupil to put a straw in a drink carton. The drink was accidentally spilt and very calmly wiped up by the helper ensuring no one was upset! Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they have worries or concerns. Pupils value friendships and younger pupils often save a special place on

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the carpet for their friend. The school parliament has received awards for representing the pupil voice in school. Pupils enjoy applying their literacy and numeracy skills through a range of opportunities, for example, older pupils use mathematical skills in real-life situations in their role play areas. In developing these skills pupils are being suitably prepared for the future. Good partnerships with outside agencies provide support for families, and have helped to improve attendance, which is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are clearly proud of their work, their teachers and their school.

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 | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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?

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching can be found in all key stages and is leading to improvements in pupils' work and to their rates of progress. Many of the lessons seen during inspection were lively, imaginative and highly engaging. Good subject knowledge and thoughtful questioning by teachers, such as in a guided reading lesson observed, lead to well-considered answers from pupils, in this case relating to the characters in the book

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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being studied. The good lessons follow a brisk pace and are structured to give an appropriate balance between challenge and support. However, some pupils do not make progress during the lesson because they are unclear about the task and teachers fail to check their understanding. Occasionally teaching does not provide enough challenge so that pupils become restless and do not achieve as well as they could. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well managed; the sensitive interventions by adults ensure many such pupils make good progress, particularly in their social skills. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well but occasionally teachers miss opportunities to involve them in whole-class activities. The assessment of pupils' progress during lessons is generally satisfactory. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers' marking is supportive, although comments explaining how to improve are not consistently evident. Targets are set, and older pupils can explain them, such as gaining your pen passport in order to use a pen for handwriting. However, pupils are less clear what to do next to improve their work.

The theme-based curriculum appeals to the pupils and as a result they engage enthusiastically in activities. The emphasis on taking learning into real-life situations, such as cross-curricular work in English related to Remembrance Day, is typical of opportunities that underpin improvement and provide pupils with learning that is meaningful. During a history lesson on the Second World War, pupils applied their numeracy skills to weigh out food ration items. The good curriculum enables pupils to develop skills for the future. The artwork around the school reflects the national award gained by the school. Visits and visitors to school, such as drumming and karate teachers, enhance the curriculum. Visitors from abroad help develop the pupils' understanding of the wider global community. Such events add value to pupils' learning and are reflected in the school's International Award.

The care and support for pupils enables them to develop confidence in relationships and positive attitudes. The warm atmosphere in the school encourages and enables pupils to talk confidently to staff about any concerns they may have. Adults show an understanding of the needs of individuals and provide an inclusive environment where pupils confidently relate to one another, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has developed provision for the support of pupils and families. Family Learning courses, run in the school, help parents understand how their children are being taught. These are much appreciated by parents, as observed during inspection, when a group of adults were good-humouredly grappling with mathematical problems. However, as a result of inadequate safeguarding procedures for vetting staff, care, guidance and support are inadequate overall.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|---|----------|
| The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| | 3 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 4 |

How effective are leadership and management?

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked effectively to lead the school through an amalgamation a few years ago and as a result, the staff team remain focused on further improvements. There are systems in place for monitoring provision, such as observations of teaching and learning. These actions are having some impact on raising standards, but as yet standards overall remain low. The school realises that it must continue to focus rigorously on the impact of assessment, tracking and marking to raise the achievement of pupils. The views of parents are taken into consideration and parents report feeling comfortable to approach the school. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the school's work. These comments are typical of many parents' comments: 'The headteacher is dynamic and responsive', and another parent stated, 'It's a pleasure to have my child educated here.' Parents appreciate the timely extra support put in place for children, which helps them overcome difficulties and contributes to their enjoyment of school.

Commitment to pupils is at the heart of the school's work. It ensures there is equal opportunity for every pupil. For example, partnership work with outside agencies helps provide financial support to run clubs and extra-curricular activities so that no pupil is prevented from attending. The school has effective links with local schools such as those for sports activities. The planning of work to tackle discrimination and support national and international aspects of community cohesion is good, but evaluation of it is not yet well developed. Governors are developing their skills in keeping the school's effectiveness under review but they have not ensured statutory safeguarding procedures are met in respect of vetting staff.

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 | 4 |
| 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 | 2 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 4 |
| 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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The strengths in provision for the youngest children, such as the good teaching and the support they receive, enable them to grow into independent and cheerful learners. Children join the Nursery with skills that are generally low compared with those typically seen at this age. They have particularly low levels of ability in social and communication skills, speech and language, and understanding of number. As a result of the good induction they settle quickly and show enjoyment. By the time children reach Reception they have made good progress. The children develop independence through a range of well-planned activities and have opportunities to make their own choices such as when to have their fruit and drink. A group of reception children were observed maturely organising themselves at snack time.

The youngest children in Nursery love to join in with rhymes and can express preferences for favourites, such as 'Incy wincy spider'. The good balance of teacher-led and independent activities encourages children to be active in their learning. Adults are good role models and support learning well, such as in the role play 'bakery' helping with the shopping list. Regular review of children's progress ensures that planning meets their individual needs. Parents appreciate the partnership between home and school, and the school works hard to reach out to all families. Leaders understand what improvements are required, and have successfully ensured that there is a daily focus on counting and phonic activities that is leading to an improvement. The outside area provides exciting opportunities for children such as water play. Daily assessments are undertaken by staff and the school has recognised the recording of these needs to be dated and signed. Overall effectiveness, provision, and leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage might be judged highly were it not for the school's shortcomings in meeting statutory requirements for safeguarding children but, given the omissions in the school's checks on staff, they are inadequate.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 4 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 4 |

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Views of parents and carers

Views of parents and carers

From the returned questionnaires, it is clear that the school enjoys the support of parents. Responses to each of the questions were almost all positive. Just a very few parents commented about bullying in the playground but inspectors found much evidence that playtimes were calm and harmonious. Many parents added comments praising the school's work. In particular, parents commented on the dedication of the headteacher in bringing improvements to the school since the amalgamation, such as a curriculum that interests the children and includes a range of clubs. Many parents commented on the settled atmosphere now in the school and how happy and confident their children are as a result. Parents appreciate the breakfast club and after-school club. Parents commented on the inclusive nature of the school and how new families are welcomed; as one parent put it, 'I wouldn't send my children to any other school.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pensans 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 298 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 53 | 73 | 18 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 50 | 68 | 22 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 47 | 64 | 25 | 34 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 44 | 60 | 28 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 46 | 63 | 27 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 42 | 58 | 31 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 37 | 51 | 34 | 47 | 2 | 3 | 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) | 41 | 56 | 30 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 40 | 55 | 32 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 40 | 55 | 32 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 40 | 55 | 32 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 51 | 70 | 17 | 23 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 51 | 70 | 21 | 29 | 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.



13 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pensans Primary School, Penzance, TR2 8UH

Thank you for welcoming inspectors to your school. We enjoyed meeting with you, walking around the school and spending time in lessons. We are pleased that you enjoy coming to school and many of you enjoy clubs before and after school. I write to let you know our findings.

The main positive features of your school are:

- teaching and the curriculum are good
- the school helps you to be confident and get on with each other well
- your behaviour is good; you are polite and respectful
- you enjoy the responsibility you are given
- your school works in good partnership with your parents and carers to support your learning
- your headteacher and all the staff work hard to improve your school; they know what needs to be done
- results in the national tests in Year 2 and in Year 6 have improved and your progress and learning are being speeded up
- the school has several awards including the Sports Active Mark Award.

We know that most of you try hard, but we believe that more can be done to help you reach higher standards in your work. We have asked the leaders and managers of your school to keep a close eye on the school's work to ensure you achieve as well as you can. We have asked them to work on four things:

- Make sure more of you reach or exceed the levels in English and mathematics that are expected for your ages.
- Make better use of assessment, target setting and marking to help you improve your work.
- Ensure staff and governors check thoroughly that what school is providing for you is as good as possible so that you achieve as well as you can.
- Carry out and record checks on adults working in school to make sure they are suitable and that you are safe.

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech

Lead inspector

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