

Mevagissey Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111890
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	289089
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Way HMI

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 on roll	147
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marline Behennah
Headteacher	Sue Coates
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	Old Road Trewinney Mevagissey St Austell PL26 6TD
Telephone number	01726 843522
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

Mevagissey Primary School with 147 pupils on roll is smaller than average. It serves a working Cornish fishing village but through parental choice takes in a large number of pupils from a wider area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is not dissimilar from the national picture, but the proportion of those with statements of special educational need is significantly above the national average. The school has achieved Investor in People and Healthy Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils are happy and make good progress. It is a reflective community and has taken positive action to improve the quality of education which it offers. It has a particular strength in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and plays an important part in accommodating pupils who might otherwise find school challenging. Such pupils are well integrated into the caring community spirit which is a feature of this school. It works closely with external agencies and the local authority in this respect. Standards are satisfactory. There is variation in test data year by year, and sometimes the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has appeared low, but by and large the pupils do well, although some, especially those of higher ability, could do better. Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress. There has been a decline in standards at Key Stage 1 and further support for the work in this part of the school has not yet shown that this trend has been reversed. The decline in pupils' skills at this stage, especially in English, has an impact as they move through Key Stage 2. Despite variation and fluctuation, pupils are making good progress throughout Key Stage 2, and pupils with particular learning needs do especially well. Parents who returned the questionnaire are strongly supportive of the school and a number choose to bring their children here from outside the catchment area for its happy atmosphere and caring ethos.

Pupils' personal development is good; they behave well, are courteous and polite. In class they show respect for each other and work well individually or in groups and pairs. At no time during the inspection was poor behaviour seen, nor did pupils waste time in lessons. They play an active part in the life of their school and the local community. Many opportunities are provided for them to learn more about their Cornish heritage. This includes adaptations to the curriculum, for example in history and art, to celebrate local people and events.

Subject coordinators are beginning to play a more active role in developing their curriculum areas and to take more responsibility for monitoring the quality of learning. An emphasis is placed on staff sharing good practice and this is beginning to improve aspects such as pupils' writing. Although marking of pupils' work and feedback to them is helping some pupils to understand how to improve their work, this is not yet consistent across the school. The monitoring of pupils' progress, and in particular for different ability groups, is not yet providing enough detailed information to ensure that work is always well matched to pupils' individual learning needs.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good and although the school is about to undergo a significant change as the current headteacher is shortly to retire after long service at the school, the capacity for continued improvement remains good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor pupils' progress more systematically in order to raise standards of attainment, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that the 'comment-based' marking is used consistently across the school to help pupils understand how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When the pupils join the Reception Year their attainment is below that which is usually found, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in their first year of schooling and by the end of the Reception Year they achieve standards which are in line with, or above, national and local authority averages. This rate of progress is not maintained in Years 1 and 2. Standards of attainment have been declining in the Key Stage 1 national assessments for the past four years and many pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Weaknesses in English in Key Stage 1 have an impact on progress through Key Stage 2.

A wide variation in each year group in the number of boys and girls, and of those pupils who have particular learning difficulties, affects the outcome of the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The school does its best to compensate for such factors but there is considerable variation in pupils' performance year by year. In 2006, performance just exceeded the national average with mathematics results being particularly high. English results have shown a steady improvement since 2003. These are encouraging outcomes for Key Stage 2, especially as the mathematics results reflect a planned change in the organisation of teaching groups. But there is room for improvement and especially for the achievement of more able pupils in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Provision for all aspects of personal development is good. There is ample opportunity for pupils to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The school's curriculum and its general ethos encourage pupils' to think about others and to develop their own sense of worthwhile personal values. The personal, social and health education programme provides good opportunities to discuss important social issues and to give guidance on personal relationships. Healthy eating, regular exercise and the adoption of safe practices are all strong features of the school.

Pupils readily engage in sharing views and show respect for each other during class discussions. A school council, racial diversity committee, buddy system and house captain positions give pupils opportunities to develop a commitment to community values and to contribute to everybody's well-being. These systems and the strong emphasis on community, contribute very successfully to the happy and caring atmosphere which pervades all aspects of the school's work. Consequently, behaviour is good, enjoyment is high and the attendance of most pupils is good. Attendance overall is only satisfactory because some parents in the holiday trade have to take holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. In some parts of the school there are considerable strengths in the way teachers present information and encourage pupils to think for themselves. There are also some apparent weaknesses when pupils are too heavily directed and not given enough opportunity to organise their work or take more control of their own learning. There is a good

mix of teacher direction and pupil-initiated activities in the Foundation Stage. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils work with enthusiasm and excitement because they are given interesting and varied things to do. There is considerable scope for them to learn in a way which suits them best and teachers are constantly looking for more imaginative means of engaging pupils. The response from pupils is good and they genuinely make a good effort with their work. Some teachers are skilled at asking questions which require pupils to be reflective and use their imagination. Most teachers provide a clear explanation of each lesson's purpose and return to this in summary at the end. This helps to secure good progress for most pupils. Although teachers monitor progress and provide constructive feedback through 'comment-based' marking this is not yet well established throughout the school nor sufficiently effective in setting targets and planning for further challenges. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed throughout the school and make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, well-balanced curriculum which gives pupils the opportunity to learn in different ways. Some subjects are being taught through a more integrated approach linking different aspects of the curriculum, while others remain focused on building skills. Practice in literacy and numeracy skills is being planned into many areas of the curriculum. This has been an important development on the part of the school to implement more effectively the view that children see the world in a holistic manner. A number of such integrated topics were seen during the inspection and these were very effective at engaging pupils' interest and enabling them to produce a greater flow of work. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about this way of working. There is a strong flavour of Cornish heritage in the school's curriculum and this has been actively encouraged to good effect. Pupils know about their locality, its history, the natural environment and the people who live and work in the area. Liaison with local secondary schools provides additional learning opportunities. For a small school, there is a better than average range of extra-curricular activities and clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for care, guidance and support for pupils is good throughout the school. There is a particular strength in the support for pupils who have additional learning needs. The school works closely with parents and external agencies to provide high quality nurturing for vulnerable pupils. An expertise has been developed in helping children with autistic spectrum disorders to cope with life in a mainstream school. Success in this area has been significant.

Teachers know their pupils well and have a clear view of the learning needs of most of them. There is occasionally evidence of insufficient challenge in the work being given to pupils of higher ability. The feedback and marking systems are being developed, and although good in some classes, do not yet ensure in all year groups that pupils are given adequate guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are both good. There is a good climate for improvement and the staff are committed to the provision of exciting learning opportunities. The community spirit is strongly promoted by the headteacher whose clear vision and educational principles underpin the school's inclusive nature and the attention to equality of opportunity. All aspects of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda receive proper attention. The very positive attitudes of the pupils and staff testify to the headteacher's successful leadership skills. Systems and procedures for reviewing the school's strengths and weaknesses are well established and lead to considered improvement. The school improvement plan has identified the correct priorities on which to work although the success criteria are not written clearly enough to enable regular monitoring and evaluation. Self-evaluation is accurate in almost all respects and the school has demonstrated good capacity for sustained improvement.

The role of the subject coordinators has been strengthened since the last inspection and their particular responsibilities have been clearly defined. Standards and pupils' achievements are only just beginning to feature as a priority for the coordinators but some have already developed effective strategies for evaluating the outcomes of teaching and learning across the school.

Governors have a clear view of their role in supporting the school and in holding it to account. They play an active part in the life of the school and make many visits. The governing body makes brave financial decisions to promote the school's inclusive nature and ensures that there are sufficient additional staff so that pupils with learning difficulties are well supported.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mevagissey Primary School, Mevagissey, PL26 6TD

I am very pleased that you are taking the time to read this letter because I know you all care a great deal about your school. You were very welcoming when I visited you recently despite that fact that there was so much going on at the same time, with the interviews for a new headteacher as well as the inspection.

I have come away from your school with a very warm feeling about you all and the adults who work with you. There is a wonderful community spirit in your school. You are clearly enjoying what the school offers and especially some of the exciting projects which I saw you working on. Your teachers are successful at finding new and interesting ways of 'grabbing' your interest and helping you to learn, especially about your local area and Cornish heritage. Those of you who find learning more difficult are very lucky to be given so much help and care by the adults around you. All of you are very tolerant of each other's needs and you show good respect towards each other.

There are a couple of things I would like the adults to improve – with your help of course. First, some of you could actually do harder work than is sometimes given to you. Well, tell your teacher when the work is too easy. Second, I think some of the teachers could write more useful comments in your work books so you know how to improve next time. If you do not understand what the comments mean, or if there is no comment, ask your teacher. That will keep both them and you sharply focused on improving your work.

You are very fortunate to be in a happy school with such a good community spirit – guard that in every way that you can.

With my very best wishes

Peter Way Her Majesty's Inspector