

St Keverne Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111821
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325470
Inspection date	13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	55
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Rowe
Headteacher	Martin Dalton
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Hill St Keverne Helston TR12 6NQ

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	13 May 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Keverne is a very small school. Almost all pupils are White British and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties. The school has a very small Early Years Foundation Stage. The part-time executive headteacher took up his post in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Keverne Community Primary School provides a satisfactory education. The school's over-optimistic view of its effectiveness was due to its lack of formal monitoring. As new leadership and management arrangements are established, the school is poised to improve provision and raise standards.

Pupils' standards vary year on year, as is typical in very small schools, but they are usually close to national averages by the end of Year 6, although they tend to be a little lower in literacy. Pupils' achievement, including of those with moderate or severe learning difficulties, is satisfactory. Teaching has strengths, notably in the way teachers and teaching assistants know and support individuals and the positive atmosphere in classrooms. However, lessons are sometimes too teacher-dominated and can progress slowly. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. Teachers do not regularly make full enough use of assessment information or, when marking pupils' work, offer helpful advice. The curriculum is satisfactory and has strengths in the interesting range of enrichment activities on offer. The small Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their education, due to good teaching. However, indirect access to outdoor areas is inconvenient.

Pupils are well cared for. They feel secure and say they know whom to go to should they need support or advice. However, only older pupils receive effective guidance on the next stages of their learning. Constructive relationships help to ensure that pupils' personal development is good. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils' great good sense and maturity make a major contribution to their learning. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They are proud of the school's achievement of the Healthy School award. Good opportunities for exercise and nutritious diet enhance this healthy approach.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is well managed and runs smoothly, whether the executive headteacher is on site or not. Some self-evaluation takes place but it is currently insufficiently formal to fully inform the school's plans for the future. Governors work hard to support the school but do not yet challenge it sufficiently. Very good links with other schools enhance what the school is able to provide. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Parents are very happy with the school and very few have any criticisms. One parent summed it up, writing, 'I think our children are lucky to have started their educational journey at this school as everybody really cares about them.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with skills and understanding below those that are usual for their age. Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage nurture children well so that by the time they move into Year 1, their standards are average. However, children have lower starting and end points in communication, language and literacy. The achievement of children in their first year of schooling is good. In particular, they develop good social skills that stand them in good stead as they move up through the school.

Teaching and learning are good because adults know children's needs and offer varied individualised learning experiences. Careful assessment helps staff to keep a close eye on each child's progress and intervene as required. Children thrive with this very personal approach.

Relationships in the classroom are warm. Children get along both with adults and with one another very well. Their personal development is good, they enjoy school and their behaviour is invariably excellent. While the curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements, children sometimes have too few opportunities to initiate their own activities. There is good space in the classroom, but a lack of direct access limits children's opportunities to work freely out of doors.

The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has very strong links with the adjacent pre-school group. Close collaboration on curriculum and assessment ensures that children transfer into the Reception class with a minimum of disturbance. Parents are welcomed into the class and are well informed about how their children are getting on. The attention paid to children's welfare is good. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The coordinator is well informed and enthusiastic about helping children and there is a common sense of purpose amongst all adults.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use marking and assessment information more constructively to improve teaching and learning and raise standards and achievement, particularly in literacy.
- Implement formal procedures for monitoring the school's provision and use this information to update the school's plans for the future.
- Provide better access to outdoor areas for Early Years Foundation Stage children.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils start Year 1 with average levels of skills and understanding, but a little below this in communication, language and literacy. Their standards in tests at the end of Key Stage 1 fluctuate a little each year because very small groups are involved, but are generally close to the national average. The same pattern applies to pupils as they reach the end of Key Stage 2, so their standards as they leave school are generally average, despite some annual variations. As in the Reception class, pupils' standards in English lag behind other subjects a little. There are no other significant variations.

This pattern of standards indicates that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Inclusive teaching ensures that those needing extra help are well supported, so the achievement of pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties is also satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and develop an understanding of cultural diversity through assemblies and in their class work. The ethos in the school sets the tone for a healthy social mix, where everyone gets on well together and older pupils fully support younger ones. In this secure environment, pupils feel safe. There is no evidence of bullying and behaviour is excellent. Pupils enjoy school tremendously and remark favourably about swimming, physical education and information and communication technology lessons. Their attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council and by taking up responsibilities such as library monitors, sports captains and 'buddying' younger pupils. In the wider community, they support older people from the village, who lunch regularly in school.

Pupils' preparation for the future is satisfactory. Their achievement of basic skills is satisfactory and some pupils have the opportunity to develop economic awareness through raising money to support their annual camp.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school makes good use of a favourable ratio of adults-to-pupils to provide effective support for individual pupils' learning. While formal lesson plans tend to lack detail, in practice, work for pupils is adjusted to suit each one's needs, whether it is to provide additional support or to set more challenging work to extend understanding. This individualised approach has great benefits to classroom relationships. There is a strong element of trust in classrooms and pupils are mature and responsible, well able to progress work on their own or in groups from an early age, when given the opportunity. Behaviour is excellent and this means that there are very few interruptions to lessons. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. They support individuals sympathetically and step up to competently teach groups or the whole class, when required.

Some lessons see teachers talking for too long. This can mean less interesting sessions and a slowing of the pace of learning. Marking is inconsistent and too much, while encouraging, is not sufficiently analytical and fails to offer precise advice to pupils. The school has an increasing quantity of assessment information but does not, as yet, use it consistently to influence lesson planning or to formally identify where pupils may be under-achieving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum matches pupils' needs by providing a full range of subjects across the school. In the mixed-age classes, planning ensures full coverage of the National Curriculum. An overall plan for the curriculum describes this process without clarifying the details for each stage and subject. There is good recognition of the need for healthy living and pupils' personal development is well supported. Topic work occasionally promotes wider opportunities for pupils. For example, work on hatching larvae provided opportunities for extended writing and art work. There is an interesting mixture of extra-curricular activities, held mostly after school. They are well attended and cover a wide range of interests. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum for many pupils and they are enjoyed as new learning experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school supports each pupil's personal development individually and each individual is well known to many staff. Good deployment of the proficient teaching assistants ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to progress.

There are clear up-to-date policies to safeguard pupils. Policies to promote health and safety are well understood by adults and pupils. Pastoral care is strong, with every child feeling well supported, with a number of staff they can relate to if there are problems. Parents have easy access to the school, which they welcome. They feel their children are well cared for and supported. Attendance is checked and followed up on a daily basis and the school has a clearly stated policy to discourage parents from taking children on holidays in term time.

Marking and assessment are inconsistent. Older pupils benefit from clear targets in numeracy and literacy, but this has not been extended to younger pupils. Marking does not consistently identify the best way to improve work, only commenting on accuracy. Some pupils have hazy ideas about the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is well managed and administered and runs smoothly day to day. Experienced staff know and fulfil their roles well. The arrangements for the running of the school in the absence of the part-time executive headteacher are effective.

Leadership is satisfactory. The executive headteacher is a relatively recent appointment and has a great deal on his plate. Currently the school's self-evaluation methods are informal but there are plans to put the process on a more regular footing. The school accepts that there is only limited recent information available to inform the school's plans for the future. The school improvement plan is satisfactory and identifies key areas for improvement well, but it is not completely up to date. The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Governors are keen to support the school and they monitor provision regularly. However, they do not consistently provide enough challenge to the school's actions. The school has good and spacious accommodation, is well equipped and its swimming pool is a noteworthy feature. The costs of maintaining and running the pool are met by the parent-teacher association, and its use is shared with the village. The school has very good links with local pre-school, primary and secondary schools. For example, it holds joint training sessions with a nearby small school, and members of staff are on the committee that manages the private playgroup which operates on the school site. Initiatives such as these help it to avoid the isolation that can affect small rural schools.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. There are numerous helpful local links and the curriculum contributes to pupils' understanding. However, there are no significant links with other United Kingdom or global communities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

14 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Keverne Community School, Helston TR12 6NQ

Thank you for being so helpful to the inspectors when we recently visited your school. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoyed school and were very impressed with your excellent behaviour. Well done! You were right when you told us you are well cared for, and this helps your good personal development.

The standards of work reached by the end of Year 6 are similar to those found other schools in the country and your achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there is a pleasant atmosphere in lessons. Teachers sometimes talk for too long and sometimes you lose interest. The mixture of subjects you study, called 'the curriculum', is satisfactory and there are some good and popular after-school activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is well organised and runs well but it should check up on itself more thoroughly. I have asked the school to concentrate on three things that need improvement:

- Use better marking of your work and test information to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement.
- Check up on the school regularly and use the information to plan for the future.
- Make it easier for the Reception children to go out of doors.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was great meeting you.

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan Lead inspector