

Mount Charles School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111907
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325490
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Anne Newall

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)	417
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	Joan Gallagher
Headteacher	John Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Morven Road St Austell PL25 4PP
Telephone number	01726 73911
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Mount Charles School is a larger primary school than average. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average, though has risen slightly since last year. The proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low, as is the percentage who speak English as an additional language. The school has more pupils with statements of special educational needs than is usual, due to the existence of the 'Additional Resource Base' which currently caters for nine pupils. The overall percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national figure, and has fallen since 2007. Early Years Foundation Stage provision takes the form of two parallel Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time here, and parents value the school. As one wrote, 'It will be a sad day when I do not have any children at Mount Charles – I feel that we are part of a big family.' The clear vision and effective leadership by the headteacher have led to numerous improvements in the personal development and well-being of pupils and the pastoral support provided to them and their families, and standards are rising. Leadership responsibilities are now more widely distributed, enabling greater focus throughout the school upon pupils' achievement and standards. Whilst whole-school targets are not yet aspirational enough to raise standards further, progress is accelerating. Governors are well informed and are involved in both the day-to-day activities in school as well as in strategic improvements through the curriculum working party. Improvements already seen within the school indicate that school leaders now have a good capacity to develop the school further.

Pupils join school with skills and understanding that vary from year to year but are slightly below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where support for their welfare is good, and enter Year 1 working securely at the expected level. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress, reaching standards similar to the national average. During Key Stage 2, there has been some uneven progress in the past, resulting in pupils achieving standards below those which could be expected by the end of the key stage. However, pupils currently make good progress overall so that standards have improved recently and are now broadly average. Progress and achievement over the longer term are not yet better than satisfactory because the faster progress that pupils now make in Key Stage 2 has not yet fed through into higher than average standards. Changes in the deployment of staff and in the curriculum have led to improvements in teaching and learning so that pupils are beginning to make better progress, although this is variable from class to class and more consistency is required.

Good use is made of extended services to support the school's work, and the recently opened breakfast and after-school clubs provide a useful facility for the wider community. The school has good quality and frequent liaison with social services and other agencies, including a strong relationship with the neighbouring children's centre, to help pupils and their families. The Additional Resource Base is an outstanding facility for pupils with very diverse and complex needs.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Great care is taken to ensure pupils are safe, and relevant policies and procedures are in place. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy and take exercise, and their response is outstanding. The school has gained the National Healthy Schools Award. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well, and their detailed individual education plans are shared with parents. Generally, information from assessment is used inconsistently, which affects the expectations for pupils' progress. Nonetheless, academic guidance for other pupils is improving and is increasingly clear and helpful. Pupils behave well and have good relationships with adults in school and with each other.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a safe, happy and secure start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As one child said, 'It's fantastic, and everything's exciting – I love this school.' In general, children arrive in school with skills and abilities slightly below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, number, and personal, social and emotional development, although there is variation within each class and from year to year. During their first year in school, children make good progress from their starting points, and the majority move into Year 1 working at the expected level. Several factors contribute to this: the environment is bright and welcoming, with attractive resources which are easily accessible to the children, promoting their independence; the staff work well together as a team, planning exciting themes and activities, and they have developed good systems for assessing the children's progress. The children's singing in Italian was delightful! Teaching assistants are skilled and carefully deployed to support children's learning. Children co-operate on tasks, for example making treasure chests for the pirate's treasure, and making pirate biscuits. They have free access to, and enjoy using, the attractive and interestingly laid out outdoor area. Their safety and welfare are ensured as staff follow appropriate policies and procedures. Snack time is used to promote healthy eating and good manners, while children sit attentively listening to stories. Good induction arrangements exist between school and parents, and with the linked pre-school, which help children to settle. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, with clear evaluation leading to improvements, for example the newly refurbished classrooms and reorganisation of the day which enable children to persevere at tasks without set breaks. Leaders recognise that links with parents need to be stronger and they are now developing them so that parents are more involved in their children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of assessment tracking data to set more aspirational targets for progress by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Make better use of pupil assessment to raise expectations for pupils' progress.
- Make use of the expertise of skilled teachers within the school to raise the quality of all teaching to that of the best.

A small proportion of 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

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities lower than those expected for their age, although with some variation within year groups and from year to year. From their starting points, children make good progress. The current Reception children have made good progress during the year so that they are working securely at the expected level. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, achieving standards at the end of the Key Stage which are in line with national averages. Standards for the current Year 2 are slightly lower than in previous years, reflecting the complex nature and ability range of the cohort. However, these pupils have made satisfactory progress from their respective starting points. Whilst progress in Key Stage 2 has been below that

expected in recent years, it has improved over the last 12 months, with the school's tracking information showing a more rapid rate of progress than in previous years. This is due to improvements in the tracking of progress, and the introduction of a generally well-taught topic-based curriculum which has improved pupils' motivation and enthusiasm. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. It is promoted through the strong ethos of mutual respect and positive relationships which permeate the school and through their good relationships with each other and staff. The pupils' cultural development is outstanding because they are given numerous opportunities to participate in, appreciate and enjoy, for example in music, languages and art. Visits to places such as the Eden Project develop a sense of awe and wonder. Links with schools in London and Africa help pupils gain knowledge of different cultures and lifestyles. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They eat healthily and can explain why they do, and they take plenty of exercise both in and out of school. Pupils have won many trophies for sporting competition and are proud of the school's awards. Pupils feel safe, and are good at adopting safe practices in all activities. Their enjoyment of school activities, both curricular and extra-curricular, is outstanding and they are well motivated in lessons. Attendance is satisfactory rather than good because a small minority of parents take children out of school in term time. Behaviour is good, and potentially disruptive pupils are well managed so that the learning of other children is not adversely affected. Pupils participate well in the many opportunities to play a part in the local community, for example in sporting competitions, festivals, raising money for charity, and singing with the choir, although there are limited opportunities for them to develop enterprise skills. Pupils respond with pride to the roles of responsibility they adopt, such as being monitors. Their strong personal qualities and their sound and improving basic skills mean that they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching seen during the inspection was predominantly good or better, with some inspired lessons being delivered by skilled teachers. In these better lessons, which are stimulating and productive, pupils are fully engaged in their tasks and their progress is brisk. Pupils are encouraged to be independent learners through carefully thought out lesson planning and are supported by skilled and enthusiastic teaching assistants. In most lessons, work is well matched to pupils' needs to provide enough challenge to keep them on task when working without direct adult support. However, in a few sessions, less effective classroom management allowed a few pupils to lose concentration and make less progress. The school is well served by parent helpers, who are used very effectively. In the Additional Resource Base, good planning individualised to the needs of each child and supported by experienced and skilful staff, leads to their welfare and learning needs being met very effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Excellent use is beginning to be made by some teachers of the local environment as a resource; for example, a visit to The Lost Gardens of Heligan prompted some excellent writing by Year 5 pupils about the sculpture 'The Mudmaid'. However, as yet the curriculum is not sufficiently clearly mapped out to show progression for each year group. The outdoor environment is well used, for example to house the chickens which were hatched in school and the allotments that some classes have. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported and appreciated by pupils, and a wide range of enrichment activities in each year group. For example, visitors, trips and residential visits ensure that there is plenty on offer for all pupils. Information and communication technology is taught discretely in a well-resourced suite, as well as in class, with pupils gaining good technical skills which they apply to their work, for example using editing, copying, cutting and pasting to create animated films. All pupils, including those in the Additional Resource Base, undertake a minimum of two hours of physical education weekly, and all Key Stage 2 pupils learn to swim. The curriculum is continually being reviewed by the governors' curriculum working party, which receives reports from staff and pupils on their views of class activities. The multi-purpose classroom provides facilities to extend opportunities, for example in design and technology and art, much of which is impressively displayed around school. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are met through activities in school, liaison with neighbouring schools and colleges and further afield. Provision in the Additional Resource Base is outstanding and the school library is well stocked with good quality books. Modern foreign language provision is good, as is that for music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. There are some outstanding features. A strength of the school is the pastoral support system where there is outstanding care and support for all pupils, but especially for the most challenging children. The school actively promotes equality very successfully. Safeguarding procedures are all in place and meet current government requirements. The school is working very hard to maintain low absenteeism, and the satisfactory attendance rate reflects the fact that a minority of parents take children out of school during term time. The educational welfare officer works well with the school, and daily telephone calls from school ensure all absences are checked. The school works well with external agencies, including social services, the educational psychologist, the school nurse and speech and language therapists to support pupils and families. Liaison between the headteacher and inclusion co-ordinator and other staff ensures that those most at risk are well supported. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully throughout the school, and data is increasingly being used in to enable teachers to set appropriate curriculum targets for pupils, which they understand. However, this is not yet a strong feature of the school's work because the results of assessment are used inconsistently to set appropriately challenging targets in some cases. Teachers are now reviewing these targets more regularly and a solid foundation now exists for the further acceleration of progress. Transition procedures are very well organised and effective, including both induction for the youngest pupils and transfer to the secondary phase for the oldest.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. Leaders have carefully evaluated the nature of the school and put into place successful actions to improve the climate for learning, for example the school environment, the curriculum and the ethos. Staff share the strong vision of the headteacher that every child matters, and have developed an environment where all pupils feel supported, looked after and valued. 'I'm looking forward to moving into secondary school, but I'm sad to be leaving here, I love it so much,' said one Year 6 pupil. There is a strong focus upon inclusion, with excellent use made of external agencies to provide pastoral care which benefits not only the pupils but their families as well. The school copes extremely well with a large number of challenging pupils who have a range of complex circumstances.

School self-evaluation shows that leaders know their school well and have prioritised effectively, particularly in the deployment of staff which has built capacity across the school. School leaders have improved their focus upon academic outcomes and are using tracking data more effectively in order to improve school self-evaluation. While targets for achievement are not as aspirational as they could be, the actions taken recently by the school to improve the rate of pupils' progress are beginning to show more positive outcomes, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Ninety per cent of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are strongly supportive of the school and one wrote that 'the school is a well-run school with good behaviour management and respect for all people.' Community cohesion is outstanding, with pupils learning to value diversity and cultural differences through the curriculum, links with other schools in the United Kingdom and abroad, and through their contribution to their local community. Governors are closely involved in the work of the school through, for example, links with classes and membership of the curriculum working group, but do not challenge the school enough to raise the level of pupils' academic achievement. They fulfil their statutory requirements.

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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?	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	2

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	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mount Charles Primary School, St Austell PL25 4PP

Thank you very much for the warm welcome and the help you gave me and the other two inspectors when we visited your school this week. It was a pleasure to see you so hard at work, even though it was very hot outside. We could see why you and your families are so proud of your school. It gives you a satisfactory and improving education, and it has some really good points. The headteacher and staff take very good care of you, and provide an interesting and exciting range of activities for you in school as well as lots of extra-curricular trips and visitors. The Additional Resource Base is great and it was lovely to see the pupils from there being helped by other children at lunchtime.

You enjoy lots of art, music, and ICT and you seem to be a very healthy bunch, eating well and doing lots of PE. You do very well to win so many sports trophies! We all enjoyed talking to you in the meetings and in your classrooms, as well as having lunch with you. I really enjoyed listening to some of the Reception children singing in Italian, and the infants sang beautifully in the small hall.

We found that most of you work hard and reach a satisfactory standard in English and mathematics but we think you could do better. We have asked your headteacher and staff to do three things:

- Use the information they have about your progress to set more challenging targets for the school to reach by the end of Year 6.
- Make better use of information about the progress of each pupil to raise expectations of what each of you can achieve.
- Work together so that teachers can share their expertise and learn from each other to make every lesson good or better.

We hope that you will help by always listening to your teachers and other staff, and by working as hard as possible to achieve your targets.

With best wishes,

Yours faithfully

Anne Newall

Lead inspector