

St Columb Minor School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111908
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337775
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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 of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jessica Fergusson
Headteacher	Jennie Walker
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons taught by 14 teachers and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to pupils' progress, strategic and curriculum planning and the safeguarding of pupils. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 207 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- the attainment and progress of current pupils, especially in Years 1 and 2, and any differences in the attainment and progress of boys and girls
- pupils' personal development to see if any aspects were better than the school assesses
- the consistency of teaching and assessment practice across the school
- the impact of provision and leadership and management on outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is of above average size and serves part of a coastal town and a base for Her Majesty's armed forces. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than the usual ones is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These range from moderate learning difficulties to profound and multiple disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British or Cornish ethnicity.

The school shares its site with a children's centre and a privately operated pre-school. The school has received a wide range of awards. These include the Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy, the International Schools Award and the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Award.

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

An interesting and varied curriculum makes pupils excited about coming to this good school. Each class has links to a country overseas which helps pupils to develop their interests in the range of faiths and cultures in the world and in learning modern languages, and makes an important contribution to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has received an unusually wide range of awards in a number of areas, such as the 2010 Ashden Award for sustainable energy. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the impact of the school's wind turbine and solar panels on its use of energy, showing a dimension of their outstanding contribution to the community. Pupils also have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives and especially enjoy the many opportunities for sport, exercise and adventurous activities.

Leaders and managers analyse data about pupils' performance in great depth and examine the progress of individuals and a wide range of groups of pupils. They have, for example, identified differences in the quality of writing of boys and girls, and have taken successful action to close the gap between them. A focus on the attendance records of those with lower levels of attendance has led to improvements through support for families. Leaders also analyse the attainment and progress of those pupils who join the school other than at the usual time, although strategies put in place to ensure these pupils make rapid progress are as yet only meeting with partial success as not all teachers make full use of their knowledge of these pupils' needs when planning lessons. The high degree of accuracy of the leaders', managers' and the excellent governing body's understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the success achieved in rectifying the latter, means that the school has good capacity for continued improvement.

Some teaching is outstanding and leads to high achievement, as when Year 4 pupils could readily convert one-third to a decimal. Importantly, pupils can apply their basic skills well to solve a variety of problems. In casual conversation, a Year 6 pupil who had just finished reading a book used her knowledge of the author's age in 1988 to mentally calculate his current age. 'He looks older than that!' she said, examining his photograph. Overall, however, pupils attain average standards from starting points generally below those expected, representing good progress overall. In the recent past, progress in Years 1 and 2 has been slower than in Years 3 to 6, but action taken by school leaders, especially in adopting a rigorous approach to the teaching of letters and sounds, has ensured that pupils in these years are now making better progress in reading and writing, reflecting the school's dyslexia friendly status. This work starts in the Reception classes where work led by adults is effective, but the current arrangement of the indoor and outdoor areas limits children's opportunities to make choices and develop

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independence. The school has excellent partnerships with a range of agencies, schools and networks, both locally and across the world, and these make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development and the quality of care, guidance and support they receive, helping, for example, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to reflect the best practice in the school by ensuring that:
 - all lessons are planned to meet the needs of all pupils, including those recently arrived in school.
 - introductions to lessons are sharply focussed and concise.
- Provide more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their independence by:
 - providing a greater range of activities for children to make choices in their learning
 - improving the quality of, and access to, outdoor learning opportunities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well in both their academic and personal development. When they leave at the end of Year 6 they attain standards in English and mathematics that are in line with those found nationally, and which are improving. For example, by Year 3 most can write at length in a neat, cursive style, although some skills such as the use of paragraphs are slower to develop. Pupils show developing self-confidence, for example in Year 4 when facing questions from the class whilst in the role of a child from an African village. They show empathy with those leading very different lives, such as where children carry significant responsibilities within the family.

Pupils behave well, both around the school and in most lessons, although they sometimes become restless in class when the teacher talks for too long. They say they feel safe in school and recognise the steps taken to help them learn about personal safety, such as through links with local police and coastguards. Relationships, both among pupils and with adults, are very good. Pupils are proud of their school and the successes achieved, which is evident in the high quality displays of work throughout the school. Attendance has improved significantly during the past year and is now above average. Pupils use a wide range of basic skills effectively, for example when using the internet to carry out research on another country.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The classrooms and corridors are a celebration of world culture with flags, artefacts and pupils' work that celebrate the school's international status. This is reflected well in both the teaching and the curriculum. Teaching is good and the school's efforts to broaden the range of assessment techniques used has paid dividends, especially in pupils' assessment of their own and each other's work. In an effective example, in Year 3 the teacher made notes of those who used their thumbs to show they had not fully understood the work, so that he could provide individual help later. Marking is thorough and is mostly helpful in showing the pupils how to improve their work. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well in their lessons, such as by using number games to make mathematics exciting. Teaching assistants are highly skilled, for example in supporting less able pupils in developing their writing skills. Occasionally, introductions to lessons are too long and pupils start to become restless and the planning of individual lessons does not always take all factors into account, such as the known absence of a teaching assistant, so that a few pupils, often those recently arrived at the school, can occasionally be left floundering. The exciting lessons planned around the international curriculum are very demanding, and can sometimes test the teacher's subject knowledge to the limit! The school provides a good range of sporting, adventure and other additional activities such as visits.

Parents and carers agree that the school provides high quality care and guidance. 'The communication, care and procedures in place to support children with additional learning needs is a credit to the school', is a typical comment. There are very good relationships with external agencies, other schools and pre-schools and good

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preparation for the next stages of pupils' education. For example, during the inspection the parents and carers of children in a Reception class joined them for lunch, before the children were taught by their Year 1 teacher during the afternoon. While leaders and managers make every effort to ensure that the many pupils who start during the school year are included as quickly as possible, this is not always reflected fully in the planning of classroom activities.

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
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 stimulating curriculum and the wide range of awards the school has received reflect the good ambition and drive of the headteacher and senior leaders to ensure it improves further. In this they are very well supported by the able and active governing body, which both supports new initiatives and challenges weaknesses, for example in monitoring the gap between the performance of boys and girls to ensure it was reduced. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and are aware that further steps need to be taken to reduce variations, especially in the quality of lesson planning.

There are good arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe and the school places an appropriately high priority on this matter. A few small points drawn to the school's attention by the inspection team were dealt with immediately. The international curriculum exemplifies the importance the school gives to the promotion of both equality of opportunity and community cohesion. The school is aware of where further work is needed, for example in developing already good links with schools in different parts of the United Kingdom, and in further training of staff on equality matters. Any potential discrimination, for example concerning pupils with disabilities, is not tolerated. To quote a parent or carer, 'They are concerned that all children fulfil their potential in all areas'.

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	1

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. They make good progress in skills such as communication and number, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, due to effective, well-planned activities led by adults. Their independence and social skills develop somewhat more slowly because they do not have sufficient opportunities to make choices about their own learning. In part this is due to their limited access to a stimulating environment outdoors. Plans to develop this aspect of provision further are at an advanced stage.

Children receive good care and the relatively inexperienced team of staff is supported well by senior leaders. Relationships with parents and carers are strong. Assessment of children's progress is an improving feature of their work, so activities, especially those led by adults, are now well-matched to individual children's needs. Leadership and management of this aspect of the school are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers returned the inspectors' questionnaire and were overwhelmingly positive about their child's experience at the school. Almost all said that their child enjoyed school and was safe there, views with which inspectors agree. A few thought that unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with effectively, but inspectors found that this was not the case. A small number of individual concerns were raised with

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senior leaders and inspectors were satisfied that these matters had been handled correctly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Columb Minor 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 207 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 408 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	122	59	78	38	4	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	137	66	65	31	4	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	116	56	79	38	9	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	117	57	71	34	13	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	125	60	71	34	2	1	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	111	54	78	38	13	6	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	123	59	76	37	4	2	3	1
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)	117	57	81	39	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	113	55	73	35	17	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	87	42	88	43	21	10	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	94	45	82	40	15	7	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	115	56	68	33	13	6	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	129	62	66	32	5	2	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	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. ■ 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 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Columb Minor School, Newquay TR7 3JF

We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you when we visited your school recently. You are confident, can express yourselves well and are friendly young people. We agree with you and your parents and carers that yours is a good school. These are some of the good things about it.

- You all really enjoy school. In Year 6 you reach standards in English and mathematics that are average and improving, meaning you are making good progress.
- The international curriculum is really exciting and teaches you a lot about the world and the people who live in it. We enjoyed seeing your great work on display.
- You do a lot for the community and we were very impressed with your work on sustainable energy, and the awards the school has received for this.
- Your behaviour is good and you look after each other.
- You are very good at keeping yourselves safe and healthy.
- Teaching is good and you have interesting things to do. The teaching assistants help you really well when you need it.
- Your headteacher, the staff and governors lead the school well.

We have asked the school to do two things to make it even better.

- Make teaching even better by making sure that the level of work is right for everyone and that you don't spend too long 'on the carpet'.
- Giving children in Reception more chance to choose their learning and play, partly by improving their outdoor area. We know the school plans to do this soon.

I wish you all the very best for the future. Continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler

Lead inspector

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