

# Sithney Community Primary School

Crowntown, Helston, Cornwall TR13 0AE

**Inspection dates** 1–2 December 2015

**Overall effectiveness** **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The leadership of the inspirational headteacher and her team is outstanding. Her compassion for children is skilfully blended with a steely determination for all to succeed. This has enabled the school to improve since the last inspection to provide an excellent standard of education for the community it serves.
- The ethos and culture created by the headteacher make an important and distinctive contribution to the school's exceptionally positive values and beliefs. Governors, leaders, staff and pupils model these values exceptionally well.
- Systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching are personalised, detailed and highly effective. Staff reflect on their practice, work with others and help to improve the quality of education beyond the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is extremely impressive. This reflects their high levels of maturity and the responsibility they feel for their school. Attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly positive; pupils understand how teaching is developing their academic ability alongside their personal qualities. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- Children in Reception get off to a flying start. The excellent links with the on-site pre-school ensure that their transition into school is seamless.
- Teaching is consistently of a very high quality. Teachers routinely plan lessons that provide significant challenge for pupils of all abilities. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high.
- Teaching also promotes pupils' exceptional learning habits so they are able to reflect deeply on their learning and improve their skills. Pupils work exceptionally well together and are keen to share their learning with adults, including visitors.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is rapid. Those who join the school other than at normal times catch up quickly and achieve equally as well. Standards in all subjects across the school are typically average or above and improving quickly.
- The school curriculum, including homework, provides rich experiences that stimulate pupils' interest and thirst for knowledge. High-quality plans are in place to develop the curriculum in mathematics even further.
- Pupils report that they feel very safe. They are knowledgeable about a wide range of safety-related issues.
- Governors' strong decisions are securing the future success of the school. Just occasionally their monitoring does not track the precise impact of actions taken.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure planned actions in the school development plan are even more precisely monitored by governors to check how successful they have been on improving pupils' learning.
- Further develop planned experiences for pupils in order to fully meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum for mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Leadership and management at Sithney are exceptional at all levels, including in the early years. The headteacher provides high-quality leadership. She and her team have ensured that the good standards at the school's previous inspection have improved. The school successfully delivers its mission of providing highly inclusive education for all those who work and learn here.
- Improving teaching so that it is the highest possible quality and never less than good is the school's core purpose. The headteacher leads this aspect of work extremely well. Systems to improve, monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching are personalised to each individual. Leaders hold a deep understanding of what makes effective teaching and learning for pupils at Sithney; they evaluate strengths and areas for improvement with skill and precision.
- Leaders ensure that staff have every opportunity to develop their expertise for the benefit of pupils. Training is extremely well planned and implemented across the federation with Garras Community Primary School; it is linked well to teachers' targets for improvement and the school development plan. Leaders ensure that pay progression is closely aligned to performance. Historical weak performance has been robustly tackled.
- Middle leaders are unanimous in their view that they are well supported and held rigorously to account for their work. Recent opportunities to develop their work across the federation is further strengthening their impact on finding new approaches to improve teaching and pupils' learning. Middle leaders' checking of pupils' progress on the 'learning ladders' assessment system is extremely effective and leading to measurable gains in pupils' knowledge and skills across all subjects.
- The curriculum is extremely broad and well balanced. It enables all groups of pupils to pursue their personal interests and academic development. The effectiveness of the curriculum is reflected in the consistently high rates of pupils' progress as they move through the school. Leaders have developed high-quality plans to develop even further the curriculum in mathematics in order to more fully meet the needs of the new National Curriculum and further enhance pupils' mathematical reasoning skills.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is extremely impressive and contributes enormously to the welcoming ethos created at the school. Discrimination in any form is just not tolerated. The school's chosen approach to teaching, with a strong emphasis on learning behaviour, develops pupils' skills of reflection extremely well. Pupils are not only highly reflective about matters of faith and personal responsibility, but also their academic work and progress.
- Very carefully planned programmes of study, including the development of pupils' skills through each strand on the curriculum, provide an excellent foundation for pupils' appreciation of modern British values. Pupils' understanding is enhanced when national experiences are blended with rich local topics, such as Cornish mining heritage. Pupils' leadership skills are developed exceptionally well through a wide and varied range of activities, including the democratically elected school council.
- The school is creative and resourceful in how it uses the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. All pupils who benefit from this funding are very well supported through a detailed, personalised programme of intervention or additional challenge. Funding is also broadening pupils' cultural awareness and raising their aspirations, for example through trips to London.
- The school knows the precise needs of each pupil exceptionally well. The detailed knowledge held is used very carefully to tailor support for each pupil. The high proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 last year made excellent progress due to the one-to-one programmes organised for them. As a result their progress was faster than other pupils nationally.
- Funding to increase pupils' participation in physical activity and improve their performance in physical education (PE) and sport is used highly effectively and is popular. Eighty per cent of pupils across the school take part in competitive school sports. Activities and clubs, even for the youngest children, are very broad and range from sailing to horse riding. Some clubs such as Zumba classes are also offered to parents. The large playground and sports field provide increased opportunities for high-quality, whole-class PE and sport.
- Parental satisfaction with the school is extraordinarily high. One hundred per cent of parents who responded to Parent View indicated that they would recommend the school to another parent. Positive responses to all the questions posed are much higher than those found typically for primary schools. Parents spoken to, when dropping their children to school, were also overwhelmingly positive about the school.

- The local authority provides only light-touch support to the school. This is because local authority officers place considerable faith in the headteacher to provide high-quality education for pupils at the school. They successfully supported the appointment of the headteacher across the federation with Garras Community Primary School. This is now helping the school to improve and expand experiences for the benefit of leaders and pupils.

#### ■ The governance of the school

- The governing body is highly effective. Along with school leaders it has improved the quality of teaching and pupils' learning since the last inspection. Strong and decisive actions to form a federation with Garras Community Primary School have strengthened governors' overall contribution to the leadership of the school.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about how well the school is performing and the quality of teaching at the school. Extremely detailed data analyses are frequently used to check the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. They ensure that pay increases are entirely warranted and relate to pupils' academic and personal achievements. The use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is closely monitored.
- Leaders are held firmly to account for the school's performance. Governors gather a range of information including a high number of first-hand visits to lessons, attendance at staff meetings or training events and external evaluations of their own work. This information is used to check on improvements. There is further room for even greater precision when checking the impact of planned actions identified in the school development plan on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Record keeping is extremely well maintained and meets all current requirements. Support for vulnerable pupils is highly detailed and personalised. Very close liaison with outside agencies ensures that all pupils are catered for with care and attention to detail. Those who have been taken off roll are followed up assiduously to check that they remain in education. Staff are very well trained and experienced in dealing with complex issues. E-safety takes a high priority through assemblies and the 'digital literacy' curriculum. Risk assessments are comprehensive including for those pupils who elect to be educated at home. Staff act as highly effective role models for pupils. In turn, pupils use this model in the way they talk, act and treat each other.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The consistently high quality of teaching is underpinned by teachers' excellent understanding of each pupil's personal and academic needs. Teachers use their deep understanding to plan interesting and exciting sequences of lessons that meet pupils' needs extremely well. The high expectations teachers set for pupils are enabling all to progress rapidly in a range of subjects.
- Lessons are very well planned and carefully tailored to meet the individual needs and aptitudes of pupils. Teachers make very effective use of the 'learning ladders' assessment system to identify what pupils know, understand and can do, to ensure that all pupils are given the right amount of support or challenge. The excellent subject knowledge of teachers enables them to track the progress of pupils through different aspects of the curriculum very closely.
- The school's chosen approach of teaching through 'facilitating learning' is developing pupils' deep reflection skills on their learning exceptionally well. Information is used to provide interesting or sometimes controversial views, and work which effectively promotes a deeper understanding and wider curiosity about learning.
- The teaching of English is extremely effective. This helps pupils to be both clear in expressing themselves and proficient and enthusiastic readers. Pupils' writing skills are promoted and very well developed in a range of subjects. Handwriting and presentation of work is of a consistently high standard. Pupils write confidently for a range of different purposes and contexts, for example to create a presentation on e-safety to deliver to parents.
- Teachers use their questioning skills exceptionally well to draw out information from pupils and guide their learning. The information is used to challenge pupils, stimulate their engagement and prompt further exploration. The quality of questioning, along with teachers' classroom management, has improved since the last inspection. No time is wasted; learning moves seamlessly from one lesson to the next.
- The wide range of approaches used in mathematics lessons is supporting pupils' learning and developing

their understanding of mathematical concepts very well. Clear instructions develop pupils' knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shape properties. Additional activities effectively challenge most-able pupils, for example through shape and logic patterns and puzzles. Occasionally, planned activities do not place enough emphasis on developing reasoning skills in order to secure pupils' deeper mathematical thinking.

- Work in pupils' books illustrates a wide range of interesting and varied tasks. Whole-school themes, such as 'Cogs and wheels' and 'Artificial intelligence', capture pupils' imagination and promote their inquisitiveness. Teachers' marking and feedback is thorough and provides clear guidance for pupils' next steps in learning. During lessons, adults check pupils' learning continuously by carefully observing, talking and listening to pupils. Pupils are very clear about how to act on any points provided.
- Other adults are a vital part of the team and its success in this small school. They support pupils expertly in lessons through high-quality support and challenge, helping with basic English and mathematical skills as well as subjects across the curriculum. Around the school, they support pupils during lunchtime, assist with supervision at break and run additional clubs.
- Homework is used exceptionally well to supplement lessons, reinforce learning or prompt further enquiry. The one complaint the inspector received from a parent during the inspection regarded the cost of extra paper, pencils, rulers and pens at home. It was costing a fortune; such was her child's enthusiasm to complete the tasks set.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have a very well-developed understanding of how to be a successful learner. In lessons they debate and discuss their learning in a considered and thoughtful manner. Pupils' deep understanding of others' views is reflected in the harmonious way they work and learn together.
- All parents who responded to Parent View reported that they feel their child is safe in school. Pupils also report they feel safe at all times. Pupils spoken to showed a deep understanding of what it means to say you feel safe.
- Pupils report they feel very safe because aspects of safety feature strongly in the school's curriculum, such as how to light fires at the Forest School. Pupils have a very mature and well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations in and out of school. They have been taught how to keep safe when using new technologies and are confident about what to do and who to talk to if they feel unsure about something.
- Care for those pupils who need additional support is thorough and well documented. Strong working relationships with a range of outside agencies, such as social care, help to ensure the safety of these pupils.
- Planned activities prepare pupils exceptionally well for life beyond school. Pupils manage budgets, purchase food, cook a three-course meal and wash up when organising a weekend away for those attending a local youth hostel. Such experiences bring learning to life for pupils in real contexts and develop their understanding of how to apply their learnt academic skills to everyday living.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils, including those in the early years, display exceptionally positive attitudes to learning across a range of subjects. Those who spoke with the inspector in lessons, around the school and in meetings were equally positive about all aspects of the school. Pupils are especially welcoming of the way the school looks after them and prepares them for life after Sithney, and beyond school.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically excellent. Pupils are extremely confident that any issue, no matter how minor, will be dealt with. They are extremely proud of the part they play in developing the unique reward system. It is therefore very effective. Pupils' conduct around the school is polite, calm, orderly and, most of all, friendly.
- The inclusive school culture and ethos permeate all aspects of the school's work including daily teaching. Pupils develop a very mature approach to managing their own learning behaviour. Their exceptionally well-developed reflection skills, teamwork and ability to cooperate with each other play a very strong part in their academic achievement and personal development.

- Parents who responded to Parent View were unanimous in their opinion that pupils are well behaved. Staff also state that pupils' behaviour is of a very high standard. Absence rates are consistently below the national average. Systems to follow up absence or missing children are thorough. There have been no exclusions for the past three years.
- Current and ex-pupils keenly shared their positive views of behaviour and bullying with the inspector. All hold a deep understanding of different types of bullying but report there is none at the school. Pupils recall only a few 'little oops' moments. The high number of pupils who join are welcomed wholeheartedly into the school community. Parents spoken to, whose children joined the school other than at the normal times, reported on the profoundly positive change in their children's confidence, attitude and progress since starting at the school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points throughout the school. School records show that children make excellent progress through early years from levels of skill generally below those typical for their age. School and national data of pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 show that, for the last two years, the proportion of pupils making the expected, and better than expected, rates of progress is above average when compared with the national figures.
- Pupils also make particularly strong progress during Years 1 and 2. Historically this was a weaker area of performance. However, since 2014, any previous underachievement has been rigorously tackled and pupils have more than caught up on lost ground. The proportion of pupils making more than the expected rates of progress from the end of Reception to Year 2 from 2013 to 2015 was well above average and has continued to accelerate.
- In response to excellent teaching, rates of progress are rapid for all groups of pupils currently at the school. This reflects the school's successful efforts to ensure that the quality of teaching is equally strong across the school. With only minor variations year to year, due to the small cohort sizes, disadvantaged pupils and those with disabilities or special educational needs achieve equally as well as all other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are catered for extremely well. They receive personalised support and challenge during daily lessons. Close liaison with external specialists and agencies enables bespoke academic plans to be devised. These are delivered with high quality. Consequently, these pupils make rapid gains in confidence and thrive academically, progressing at a similar rate to their peers.
- Most-able pupils respond enthusiastically to the stimulating challenges presented to them. Older pupils are provided with additional challenge when working with other pupils as part of the Southern Point Trust. Specialist mathematics teachers set advanced problems that challenge their understanding. Pupils spoken to demonstrated a good understanding of mathematical formula, for example to solve problems involving the area and circumference of circles.
- Pupils' reading skills develop rapidly due to the interesting and varied themes and topics covered. Strong, lively and engaging teaching of phonics is built on successfully further up the school through spelling, punctuation and formal grammar activities. High-quality, challenging texts sustain pupils' excellent learning and provoke challenging debates on topics.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils supported by additional funding is generally above other pupils in the school and nationally. In 2013 and 2015, all pupils reached the nationally expected level by the end of Year 6 in writing and mathematics. This relatively small group of pupils often have significant additional needs or challenging personal circumstances. Nevertheless, they still make outstanding progress from their starting points at the school.
- Parents often elect to send their children to Sithney following local recommendations. A large number of pupils arrive during Key Stage 2 following unhappy school experiences elsewhere. Regardless of their starting points, need or ability, pupils rapidly make up on any lost ground from the moment they start. When pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they typically reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics at, or above, the national average.
- Pupils make equally strong progress in all subjects. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge of writing to plan tasks that enable pupils to practise their skills in other areas. Year 1 pupils write confidently using adjectives to describe how light changes what we see in science. Older pupils carefully consider expanded noun phrases when creating a report of the Levant mining disaster, a significant piece of local history.

## Early years provision

## is outstanding

- The leadership of the early years is outstanding. Leaders ensure that children get off to a flying start through highly effective liaison with the on-site pre-school. Close working and sharing of information means that the transition process for children who move into the Reception class is seamless.
- Staff are careful and thorough in safeguarding children. They work carefully with parents at all times to make sure that children's personal and emotional needs are developed just as effectively as their academic learning. Children feel very safe and their attitudes and resilience to tackling new activities and learning are extremely impressive.
- Staff develop very supportive relationships with and between children. As a result, children relish the chances they get to learn with and from each other. This underpins their highly successful progress during Reception, especially in developing their communication, language and literacy skills. For example, children avidly wrote letters to fairies using the sound 'j', introduced to them that day. One fairy called John ended up on a jet-plane, telling jokes.
- Children also make large gains in developing their self-confidence and readiness to learn. Children greatly enjoy their learning and behave extremely well. This is because they are equally included in a stimulating range of indoor and outdoor learning experiences.
- The Forest School adds considerably to children's positive experience in Reception. Children develop their imagination and an awareness of space when climbing trees and branches. They develop good levels of basic control to cut up sticks and grip equipment. They learn about safety when collecting firewood.
- Children learn equally well when choosing their own practical work. This is because adults watch and listen carefully to each child during activities. The moment any child shows any sign of becoming disengaged, staff act swiftly to support. If necessary, staff adapt an activity, prompt a further challenge or move onto a different activity to restore or maintain their interest.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use the information they know about children to carefully plan the next steps in each child's learning journey. For example, staff noticed that children's fine motor control skills required improvement so planned activities to promote this aspect of physical development. The children carefully used scissors and sticky tape to delicately wrap a Christmas present to a friend. High levels of concentration, thinking and perseverance were evident.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111824
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10005870

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kirstin Pryor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Evans
<b>Telephone number</b>	01326 572910
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sithney.cornwall.sch.uk">www.sithney.cornwall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@sithney.cornwall.sch.uk">secretary@sithney.cornwall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2011

## Information about this school

- Since its last inspection, the school has federated with Garras Community Primary School. The headteacher leads, and a single governing body serves, both schools. Garras was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The school is a member of the Southerly Point Co-operative Education Trust. This is a group of 16 schools in and around Helston and Mullion that work and cooperate closely on educational matters.
- The school is much smaller than the average primary school. Currently, the school provides education for 83 pupils. A much higher than average number of pupils join or leave the school other than at the normal times. The early years comprises one Reception class of four- and five-year-olds who attend full time. Year 1 and 2 pupils are taught together in a mixed-age class. There are two classes in Key Stage 2.
- There are currently no pupils who speak English as an additional language. An average number of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government money to support pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is lower than the national average. A small number of pupils receive a service premium; this is additional funding to support children in service families.
- The proportion of pupils receiving special educational needs support is well above average.
- Due to the very small size of the school, the numbers in identified groups are often very small in number. To avoid the potential identification of these pupils, the report will refer to children in Reception and pupils in key stages and year groups.
- There is a pre-school on site at the school which is privately run and subject to separate inspection arrangements.

## Information about this inspection

- Pupils' learning was observed in 12 lessons or part lessons, of which nearly all were observed jointly with the headteacher. A series of short visits to classes was undertaken to observe the teaching of phonics and mathematics across the school. In addition, the inspector listened to several children reading in classes.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders and seven members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector conducted two telephone calls with a representative from the local authority and the Southern Point Trust. Representatives from the school were spoken with to gather their views about the school and their learning. The inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke informally with many in lessons and around the school.
- The views of 28 parents and carers expressed through the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the findings of the school's own questionnaire to parents were analysed. Discussions were held with a number of parents when they brought their children into school. The inspector also considered several letters from parents and former pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including information on pupils' attainment and progress, the school improvement plans and minutes of the governing body. The school's records of the monitoring of teaching, and information on the management of teachers' performance, were analysed. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including records relating to the behaviour and exclusions of pupils were examined.

## Inspection team

Richard Light, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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