

# Sennen School

Sennen, Penzance, Cornwall, TR19 7AW

## Inspection dates

2–3 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Sennen is a popular, effective school that lies at the heart of its community. It continues to improve and grow in size as parents acknowledge the good teaching, high quality care and support and stimulating range of learning activities provided for the pupils.
- Pupils achieve well overall, especially in mathematics, in which a skilled emphasis on problem solving is accelerating progress.
- The skilled headteacher and assistant headteacher have worked closely and determinedly together to sustain high staff morale through a period of change.
- Informed and consistently effective leadership has secured good teaching and pupils' learning across the school.
- Teaching continues to improve. It is often outstanding in the Years 4, 5 and 6 class and good across the rest of the school. It securely promotes pupils' good achievement.
- Attendance is above average and by rising steadily year on year reflects the pupils' increasing success and enjoyment of school.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They are particularly happy that everyone at the school is so friendly. Pupils and parents gratefully acknowledge the warm and caring relationships they have with staff.
- The governing body is very knowledgeable about the work of the school. Governors play a very effective role in checking its performance and in encouraging links with other schools and the community to widen pupils' learning activities and to bring further improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to ensure that children's learning is outstanding, especially in writing.
- Pupils' independent learning skills, particularly their ability to check and improve the quality of their own work, are not developed in a sufficiently step-by-step way as they move through the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 10 lessons and was accompanied by the headteacher during some of these observations.
- The inspector observed morning playtime and lunchtime breaks and also attended two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with a group of Year 6 pupils and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and breaktimes. The inspector also met with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector held meetings with school and visiting specialist staff, including senior leaders.
- The inspector also took account of 10 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection and also received 11 staff questionnaires. The inspector also spoke informally with a number of parents as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, planning and leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average, but this varies and is higher than this in some year groups. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups) also varies significantly across the year groups, but is below that found nationally overall. Currently, there are no children in local authority care or children from other groups attending this school.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the normal times is above average.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are accommodated in a mixed-age class with Year 1 pupils. Other pupils across the school are taught in two other mixed-aged classes; a Years 2 and 3 class and a Years 4 to 6 class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A pre-school group for children aged from two to four years also operates on the school site and is subject to a separate inspection.
- The headteacher leads the school for three days each week and an assistant leads the school for the remaining two days each week.

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

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and pupils' progress and more systematically develop the pupils' ability to check and improve the quality of their own work, especially in writing, as they move through the school by:
  - more specifically requiring children in Reception and Year 1 to think about and to account for their learning choices before moving to their chosen activities
  - encouraging pupils in other classes to respond to teachers' marking and guidance by commenting and writing about improvements made and offering their own ideas about how to progress further.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's skills on entry to the school are typically close to those normally expected, but they vary significantly from year to year within the very small year groups. At times they are lower, especially in personal, social and language development. Consequently, the school evaluates data of children's performance very carefully and plans work that helps them to improve in relation to their needs and starting points. This has secured good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school has continued to introduce successful initiatives to improve the quality of teaching. These have included more systematic development of the pupils' understanding of letter sounds (phonics). This has improved pupils' reading skills bringing above average performance in the phonic screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2012 with similar levels maintained in 2013.
- Pupils' progress has accelerated in the school. This has led to a significant rise in standards, with attainment at the end of Year 6 being sustained at a slightly above average level over the past two years in both English and mathematics. Although improving, pupils' writing skills are more variable.
- In all parts of the school observations of pupils' responses in lessons, of their work in books and of teachers' checks of their developing skills show their good and increasingly even better progress.
- A key improvement lies in the significantly increased proportion of pupils also reaching higher than average levels of attainment reflecting the improved challenge now given to more-able pupils. For example, pupils in the Years 4, 5 and 6 class showed a good understanding of terms such as improper fractions and properties of three-dimensional shapes during their mathematical investigations.
- Pupils' good achievement extends across the range of abilities and needs and shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and achievement and in tackling discrimination. For example, pupils new to the school and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, such as hearing impairment, often making accelerated progress in response to close individual support.
- Pupils in receipt of pupil premium support also benefit from additional adult assistance. This grant is also used effectively to include them fully in the range of school activities. As a result, these pupils make similarly good progress as other pupils in school in English and mathematics. It is not possible to compare attainment levels due to the very small numbers of pupils involved.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved well since the previous inspection with all pupils across the range of ability, but notably more-able pupils, challenged with equal effectiveness.
- In all classes, learning activities and the amount of adult support are carefully matched to pupils' differing ability, as for example, the strengthened teaching of phonics which is lifting pupils' reading skills. On such occasions, teaching assistants are very well used to support and teach all groups of pupils.
- There are some examples of excellent teaching, particularly in the Years 4, 5 and 6 class, but not yet enough to result in outstanding pupils' achievement over time.
- Pupils' communication skills are taught consistently well as they move through the school. A key element in this effective teaching lies in the care taken by all staff to identify clear learning objectives at the beginning of lessons and to question pupils closely and discuss their developing skills.
- For example, in a lesson in the Years 2 and 3 class, pupils were enthused by the practical nature of the investigation of electrical circuits, and their learning was extended by the teacher's

insistence that they explain their ideas.

- Teachers' marking of the pupils' work is also of a consistently good quality with next steps for improvement being regularly given to the pupils. This includes in Reception, where well-documented 'Learning Journeys' clearly demonstrate the good progress that children make in response to effective teaching.
- While such strategies typically enable pupils to make at least good contributions to their own work, raising pupils' independent efforts towards accelerating their learning is not yet developed with equal consistency in all classes.
- At times, for example in Reception, the children's ability to think about their freely chosen learning activities and to enrich their own learning by building on what they have done before are not emphasised well enough.
- In other classes too, opportunities are not always taken to extend the pupils' ability to evaluate the quality of their own work or to suggest ways of improving for themselves and this constrains progress.
- Teaching through lots of practical activity across a wide range of activities in and out of school, especially through physical education and music, has successfully raised pupils' enthusiasm in learning with regular specialist teaching of skills, daily 'take ten' sessions and coastal visits, raising fitness and interest levels.
- Teachers and their capable assistants know the pupils well and give close and effective support, especially to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and this is raising achievement. More-able pupils too, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6, are enthused by timed problem-solving activities to quicken their progress, as for example when choosing suitable adverbs to enrich their writing.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Year-on-year improvement of pupils' attendance, securing it at an above average level over time, reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school, effective links with parents and rigorous encouragement of regular attendance by the headteacher.
- When questioned, pupils' love of school is seen in their swift mention of many friendships with other pupils and warm encouraging relationships with adults. Pupils say, 'This is a small and friendly school with nice teachers and happy people.'
- They are adamant in describing an improving school readily describing plentiful sporting activities, improving health and well-being in response to good teaching and genuinely appreciating increased opportunities to work with computers and learning to play a musical instrument.
- Pupils behave well, move around the school and use equipment sensibly and welcome the various outdoor play areas available when the weather permits. While most pupils sustain interest and contribute well in lessons, a few need reminders to think more about their learning.
- Discussions with staff and parents and school records also show that behaviour has been typically good over time. One parent reflected the views of others when saying, 'Pupils look after each other at this school.'
- Pupils know about the different forms that bullying can take and are especially aware of cyber bullying. They confidently say that bullying at school is rare and feel very confident about telling an adult should any incidents occur in the knowledge that they would be dealt with very quickly.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good. They understand how to keep themselves safe and are particularly aware of road safety and dangers associated with living so close to the sea.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The experienced headteacher provides strong leadership. The partnership work with the assistant headteacher ensures that the vision for improvement continues to glow brightly.

- Their shared expertise has also led to a significant widening of the learning opportunities provided for the pupils. These include increased sporting activities, including regular swimming sessions in a leisure centre, which not only reflect efficient use of additional funding for physical education, but also show increased success, for example in 'tag rugby'.
- Learning opportunities at the school also strongly promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through local and wider community links, for example with 'pen pals' in Australia and with a culturally diverse school in Burnley.
- Governors provide excellent support and challenge and help to ensure that no stone remains unturned in the drive to sustain rapid improvement. The high level of staff morale, evident in staff responses and in their close teamwork, further reflects the unity of purpose in moving the school forward.
- Strengths in safeguarding the pupils' welfare, promoting their good attendance and behaviour and in developing a supportive partnership with parents also continue to provide the foundations needed to accelerate pupils' academic progress.
- Improved teaching and learning stem from supportive and regular checks of staff performance, shared between senior staff and governors, which make purposeful links between staff salary progression and the school's and pupils' needs.
- Improvements have included the sharpened use of checks of pupils' developing skills to ensure earlier identification and tackling of individual needs. These have brought effective stretching of more able pupils alongside the carefully considered deployment of adults to quicken the progress of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium. Although improving, leaders have not yet fully embedded the consistent development of pupils' writing and independent learning skills as they move through the school.
- Over time, the local authority has provided high quality support in helping the school to improve. In recent years, leaders and managers have strongly continued the development of the school without the need of additional assistance and so the local authority only continues 'light touch' support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has sustained the 'resilience and the determination' identified at the previous inspection and has made full use of good guidance from the local authority to secure the strong ability to support and challenge the work of the school for itself. Governors also take full advantage of regular training to make sure that strategic and financial decisions, such as creating an extra class and developing the shared headteacher role, continue the vision of bringing 'the best possible standard of education' for the pupils. Governors are also highly proficient in fulfilling their statutory obligations, including safeguarding pupils' welfare. Under exemplary leadership, governors' sub-committees and frequent, well-focused visits to the school are extremely well organised. These equip the governors with an accurate knowledge of the quality of teaching, which enables them to raise pertinent questions and make informed contributions and decisions about staff deployment, performance management and rewarding good teaching through salary progression. They are also aware of what support has been provided to tackle underperformance in the past. Carefully compiled records of meetings also show that governors scrutinise the use of additional funds very closely, for example to ensure that pupils supported by pupil premium funding achieve as well as other pupils. By these means governors play a very supportive role in securing good teaching and pupils' achievement and sustaining a strong capacity to improve into the future.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111804
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	426734

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

<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>	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Caroline Amos
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tony Phillips
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22–23 February 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01736 871392
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