

Pensans Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134726
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	360635
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	David Edwards HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Stephen Trow
Headteacher	Martin Higgs
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 November 2009
School address	Madron Road Penzance Cornwall TR20 8UH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed 14 teachers and held meetings with the headteacher, the chair of governors and other governor representatives, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school documentation including evidence from the school's self-evaluation process. They also analysed questionnaires completed by 89 parents, as well as others by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- how effectively the school has addressed and secured the necessary improvements identified at the time of the last inspection
- to what extent teaching sufficiently challenges as well as supports pupils, throughout the school, to secure and maintain their better progress and achievement
- how well strategies to strengthen the transition of pupils at each key stage are helping to improve the overall progress pupils are making in their learning
- how convincingly leaders are able to demonstrate a strengthened and sustained capacity for further improvement.

Information about the school

Pensans Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school which serves the immediate area in Penzance. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are at the early stages of learning English as a foreign language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national figure. Mobility rates in and out of school are high.

The school admits up to 52 children into the Nursery class at the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of children go on to join one of the two Reception classes. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are taught in a mixture of single-age and mixed-age classes. The school runs before- and after-school care on site.

At the time of the last inspection in November 2009, the school was given a notice to improve because safeguarding arrangements were judged to be inadequate.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires a notice to improve.

Pensans is an outstanding school. Safeguarding requirements have been addressed fully and the school is now a leader of high-quality practice in this area. Significant changes have taken place since the last inspection to the structure of the governing body and the way that it monitors the work of the school. As a result of additional training, governors possess now not only a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues, but also they make an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school. Similarly, staff, at all levels, are appropriately trained and updated regularly on safeguarding and child protection.

The quality of teaching throughout the school is good and often excellent. This is because teachers' subject knowledge is extensive and ensures that pupils of all abilities, but especially those with specific learning needs, are supported appropriately in their learning. Senior leaders have designed a highly effective system for assessing pupils' learning, which they use very effectively to measure how much progress pupils are making in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. This information is shared with pupils and their parents and carers at regular intervals and used to set challenging targets for pupils. The highly valued and well-trained support staff work closely with teachers to provide very effective support for pupils and especially those who find learning a challenge at times. Although pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is average by the time they complete Key Stage 2, pupils within each key stage are making good and often outstanding progress in their learning when compared with their often low and very low starting points. As a result, pupils' achievement overall is good.

The determination of the headteacher, supported extremely well by senior leaders, is a significant factor in the success of this school. His resilience and determination to face the challenges and overcome the barriers that hinder pupils' learning has been instrumental in making Pensans a vibrant learning community that is highly valued by pupils, staff, parents and carers, and the wider community. Senior leaders have shown an outstanding level of professionalism and creativity in their determination to address any weaknesses that the school's self-evaluation procedures have uncovered. Responsibility for school improvement is understood by all staff and plans are focused accurately on improving and sustaining good learning outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the school's capacity for further improvement is excellent.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Inspectors have identified no additional areas for improvement that the school is not already aware of and working to address because the school knows itself exceptionally well and it is working successfully to address areas identified for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attitude to learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They enjoy very positive relationships with all adults. They are proud of their school and regard it as a community. Pupils are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in lessons, demonstrating a sense of enjoyment and fascination, such as when comparing different rocks and soils.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They play well together and say that incidents of bullying are rare and they know who to talk to if they have concerns. Pupils' understanding of how to use information and communication technology safely is well developed. Pupils speak confidently about what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. Strategies to support pupils in attending school are rigorously implemented and attendance is average. However, there remains a minority of families for whom school attendance is not a priority and the school has identified that pupils who do not attend school regularly do not make as much progress as their peers. As a result, the school is committed to working closely with the local authority to rectify this issue.

From often low starting points, pupils are now reaching standards that are in line with national averages in English and mathematics. The rigorous analysis of pupils' test results helps teachers to identify more accurately pupils' individual learning needs. End-of-year test results for 2010 demonstrate a steady improvement in English and mathematics at both key stages. Observations of lessons carried out during the inspection and discussions with pupils about their work, and their books, confirm that pupils' attainment is in line with the national average and achievement throughout the school is good overall.

The early identification of pupils' learning needs and the consistent support for all groups of learners are notable strengths of the school. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to work collaboratively in lessons as well as independently. More-able pupils, those with particular gifts and talents, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities often make excellent progress because support is very well organised and matched to their individual learning needs.

Pupils are enabled to contribute very positively to the school and wider community. Strong links with partner schools in other regions within the United Kingdom, visits to places of interest locally and participation in national festivals, such as singing at the

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O2 Arena in London, allow pupils to gain first-hand appreciation of the richness of faiths, societies and lifestyles in other parts of the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan stimulating lessons that provide appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils. Good relationships between teachers and the well-trained support staff ensure that pupils make the best use of the learning opportunities provided for them. Pupils say they appreciate the effort teachers put into planning their lessons. One pupil summed up the views of the majority by saying 'I like everything we do. Teachers work really hard to give us a really good education.' A particular strength in lessons is how the marking of books to guide pupils and help them understand how they could improve their work is understood so well by pupils and this is implemented consistently in all classes.

Displays throughout the school celebrate a wide range of learning and advertise many opportunities for pupils to participate in additional activities designed to enhance pupils' enjoyment of learning. All aspects of the school grounds have been utilised to provide high-quality learning opportunities and the school has plans to develop these further.

The curriculum has been designed expertly to allow for innovation and close collaboration with pupils to provide memorable experiences for them and rich opportunities for high-quality learning and personal development. The acquisition of skills for life is woven seamlessly throughout the curriculum. As a result, pupils find

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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learning is irresistible and so they engage fully in the process.

The school has developed very effective links with extended services and partner organisations in order to provide extensively for pupils and their families. For example, speech and language support is bought in and used and managed well within the school. The introduction of a parent and carer forum to strengthen links within the community has provided additional opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to the work of the school.

Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Teaching assistants work very closely with small groups or individuals and contribute most effectively to the assessment of pupils’ learning. Assessment information is used very well by teachers to measure the progress pupils are making and identify what they need to do next to support pupils, when planning lessons. The transition of pupils to the next stage of their education is made as seamless as possible.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has drawn together a cohesive team of highly aspirational and dedicated professionals who are demonstrating a clear commitment to raising levels of achievement for every child in their care. By establishing a culture of shared leadership that is focused on rigorous self-evaluation, the headteacher possesses an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and areas where improvement is still required. Senior leaders work very closely with other local schools, often in a leading capacity, such as through their work in developing exemplary procedures and practices in safeguarding pupils and curriculum design. The determination demonstrated by all leaders in overcoming the barriers to learning that often stand in the way of pupils succeeding is a particular strength of the school. There are very effective procedures and practices in place across all areas of the school’s work in the care it provides for the safety of pupils. All adults are trained appropriately in safeguarding pupils and those responsible are vigilant in the keeping of records.

The school does much to support community cohesion. At its heart is a commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. To this end, the school has developed as a centre for providing a wide range of services and activities to pupils and the wider community. Pupils and their families are made to feel welcome and encouraged to contribute and participate in the life of the school in any way they can. Leaders are

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committed to improving communication with parents and carers further in order to encourage families more in the support of their children’s regular attendance.

The governing body plays a significant role in the leadership and management of the school. It is kept exceedingly well informed by the headteacher, verbally and through exemplary written reports. Minutes of all meetings are recorded clearly and are related directly to self-evaluation. As a consequence, the governing body is empowered to deploy its skills and abilities very effectively and the governing body is now able to hold the school to account better and contribute extremely well in setting the strategic direction of the school. As a result of this strong leadership, the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

Most children start school with skills levels and abilities that are well below national expectations for their age in all six areas of learning and particularly so in language and communication skills, and personal and social development. However, children settle quickly into the setting and make good and sometimes outstanding progress in all the areas of learning because teaching is of the highest quality and centred on their individual learning needs. In addition, highly effective links are made with parents and carers during initial home visits that lay down the foundations for the good communications the school enjoys with parents and carers throughout their time in school. Detailed assessments of children’s learning and development are carried out by all members of staff. These provide teachers with a comprehensive understanding of children’s strengths and next steps in learning.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has shown enormous enthusiasm

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and commitment to her role and has been very effective in building a strong team of well-trained adults who are committed to working together in providing an outstanding learning experience for all children. She demonstrates a secure knowledge of how children learn best and is highly reflective and ambitious for further improvements in the setting. The improved progress of recent cohorts of children is a direct result of the focus given to making the transition of children throughout the setting and on into Key Stage 1 as seamless as possible. There is no complacency within the leadership team. Leaders are aware of the need to provide more opportunities for children to develop their computer skills, especially during free-choice activities.

The learning environment is impressive and exceedingly well managed. Children have plenty of opportunities to learn both inside and out and activities are thought through carefully to engage and support children’s learning. For example, inspectors saw, even in the pouring rain, children clothed appropriately for wet weather playing and measuring quantities of water happily together in the purpose-built water feature.

The children’s welfare is a high priority. Robust safeguarding ensures all policies and risk assessments are in place. All staff are confident in working with children because of the high-quality training they receive on a regular basis.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of the 89 parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the school. There were many positive comments about the confidence parents and carers have in the school’s leadership and how much their children enjoy school. One parent summed up the views of the majority by writing ‘My child is very happy at this school and is making excellent progress. The headteacher and all the staff work very hard to make the school a warm and welcoming place.’

In essence, the findings of the inspectors reflected these positive views. A very small number of parents and carers would like to see further improvements in the way the school communicates with them about how classes are organised and how their children are progressing in swimming.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pensans Community Primary 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 305 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	73	24	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	80	18	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	61	69	28	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	67	28	31	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	65	73	24	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	60	67	27	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	55	35	39	1	1	0	0
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)	56	63	30	34	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	63	71	26	29	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	71	24	27	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	60	32	36	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	64	72	22	25	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	67	75	21	24	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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 pupils' 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.

11 February 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Pensans Community Primary School, Penzance TR20 8UH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were particularly impressed with your very good behaviour and your enthusiasm to learn in lessons. We have decided that yours is an outstanding school. This means that your teachers and all those who work in your school support you very well in your learning. Not only do you, clearly, enjoy your learning, but you make good progress in English and mathematics, so that by the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, your skills in these subjects are in line with national averages. The support and guidance you enjoy are exceptional because your headteacher, staff and the governing body do all they can to provide you with exciting learning experiences. Those of you who sometimes find learning challenging are given very good support so that many of you make good progress in all you do. I was not surprised, therefore, to read in the questionnaires that many of you completed about how much you appreciate the help you are given and the many activities and clubs that are on offer to you all.

Those of you we spoke with told us the school is a very safe place and that you understand about staying healthy through regular exercise and many of you enjoy eating a healthy meal at lunch times. We noticed that you work well together in lessons and have plenty of opportunity to learn, using your amazing school grounds that have been filled carefully with activities and experiences to support and extend your learning. A particular strength of your school is the way the curriculum provides you with lots of opportunities to develop life skills, such as learning how to mend a puncture on a bicycle! Overall, your attendance level in school is in line with the national average. Many of you have very good attendance records, but there are a few families for whom attendance is currently not a priority. You can all make the most of the fabulous learning opportunities provided by your school by ensuring you attend school as much as you can. In this way, you will be giving yourselves the best opportunities possible to achieve highly in the future.

Finally, well done, to you and your teachers; you have all worked very hard to make Pensans an outstanding school. We wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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