

Threemilestone School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111877
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325483
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	350
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Dyer
Headteacher	Clare Jacques
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Polstain Road Threemilestone Truro TR3 6DH
Telephone number	01872 263322
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and admits pupils from the outskirts of Truro as well as from the local village. The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, at just over half the national average. A similar proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly associated with speech, language and communication difficulties or specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is higher than in most schools.

The school provides an after-school club 'Pebbles' and supervision is offered before school from 08.15 in the morning. Its Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Threemilestone is a friendly school which provides a good quality of education and care. Its stimulating curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and their personal development is good. In the words of one parent, 'My child always comes home happy and talks about the exciting day she has had at school.' Opportunities for pupils to take part in regular exercise, sport, dance and singing are extremely successful in promoting pupils' healthy lifestyle. Many of these activities contribute to pupils' good knowledge of their local culture. Pupils' knowledge of the different cultural and religious traditions in wider Britain is less developed.

The high quality of teaching ensures pupils make good progress and leave school with above average standards. Attainment in science is especially high, while pupils' performance in English has been weaker than in other subjects, particularly in writing at Key Stage 1. The school has introduced a range of strategies which have been successful in raising attainment in English across the school. There is some inconsistency in teaching and in a few lessons activities are directed too closely by the teacher and pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas. This limits the achievement of some of the more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because individual programmes and intervention groups are matched closely to their needs. Skilled teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning by taking responsibility for running groups and supporting individual pupils who need extra help.

The school has established close links with the community and with other agencies to provide pupils with good guidance and support and to extend the curriculum. These include the police, therapists and the music tuition service. Parents hold extremely positive views about the school and are particularly pleased with the high quality of care and the good leadership and management. They appreciate the headteacher's concern about the welfare of each child and that she 'knows all the children by name'. A small number of parents expressed concerns about planning for mixed-age classes. Inspectors found curricular planning to be thorough and considered the school's organisation of classes to be a realistic response to the different sizes of particular year groups.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. It has introduced good systems for checking pupils' progress, although data are not yet analysed thoroughly to check that targets are sufficiently challenging, especially for the more able pupils. Several improvements made to the quality of teaching and to the curriculum since the last inspection have improved pupils' learning and raised standards. Combined with the school's ability to identify and tackle weaker areas, this demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

A good range of stimulating and carefully planned activities ensure children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Letters and sounds are taught well to develop early writing skills. Most children are beginning to form letters correctly and a few can write sentences in their 'News Books'. Regular opportunities are provided for children to take responsibility and work together, and these promote their good personal development. Children get along happily,

for example one child was heard to say to a friend, 'Come on, let's go and make our own treasure map,' after going on a treasure hunt. The classrooms are organised well and resources are easily accessible to provide a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated learning. Outdoor space is accessible from the classrooms, although the school does not make the best use of this area to support learning. Teachers keep detailed assessments of children's progress and use them effectively to plan the next steps in learning. Children have clear targets which are shared and reviewed regularly with parents. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support based on a thorough assessment of their individual needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Staff work closely as a team and have established good routines and procedures to promote the care and welfare of children. The Reception teachers have built strong relationships with the pre-school and other feeder settings which ensure children settle in well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve opportunities for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that the high standard of teaching found in most lessons is consistent across the school, particularly so pupils have sufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas.
- Promote a greater understanding of the wider British community by encouraging pupils to learn more about the diverse ethnic groups and religious beliefs.
- Analyse data more thoroughly to ensure targets are sufficiently challenging, particularly for more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with standards that vary from year to year but are generally in line with the expected starting point for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress. There has been some underachievement in the past, particularly in writing, and by the end of Year 2 standards are broadly average. In Key Stage 2, the pace of learning quickens and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average. Given pupils' starting points on entry to the school, and that a higher than average proportion join or leave in the course of each academic year, this represents good progress. In science, a particularly high proportion of pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels in national tests at the end of Year 6. Standards in English have been lower than in other subjects and robust action taken across the school has been successful in improving the quality of pupils' written work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the targeted support they receive, which includes intensive numeracy and literacy support, individual speech and language programmes and specific resources for pupils with dyslexia. Targets are generally used well to raise pupils' performance, although for a few pupils they are not sufficiently ambitious.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by their good behaviour and attendance. Their excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle is supported by regular daily exercise and by their participation in such activities as cycling, dance, choir and sports. The school has achieved Healthy School status in recognition of this work. Pupils know how to keep safe and understand the principles of road safety and safe use of the internet. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development is good. The school places a strong emphasis on promoting social skills and pupils' consideration of others. In assemblies, different emotions are discussed, time is allowed for reflection, and self-esteem is developed when pupils sing the school song. Pupils value the system of rewards, certificates and house points which is used to recognise effort and achievement. While pupils have a good knowledge of their own culture and are aware of different cultures around the world, they have less understanding of the diverse cultural traditions and faiths in modern Britain. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the school community, such as through the school council and as 'playground buddies', although these opportunities are mostly available to older pupils. They contribute much to the local community through raising funds for charities and by performing in local festivals. Pupils develop good skills for their future economic well-being, especially with respect to information and communication technology (ICT), independence and teamwork.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons generally proceed at a brisk pace and contain a good variety of stimulating activities. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and work hard. They particularly appreciate how staff are understanding of any difficulties and are willing to offer extra help and explanation. As one commented, 'Teachers help you till you get it right.' Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and plan lessons well. They make clear what pupils are expected to learn, and at the end of the lesson check whether it has been achieved. Teaching assistants use their time and skills to good effect, for example by taking responsibility for running groups and for implementing individual programmes for pupils who need extra help. In a few lessons, activities are directed too closely by the teacher and pupils have insufficient opportunities to explore and develop their own ideas. This limits the achievement of some more able pupils. Homework is set regularly, and pupils feel they receive the right amount of work and that it contains enough variety.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection with the introduction of topics which often cross several subjects and focus on developing pupils' skills. Pupils enjoy these topics and also speak fondly of, for example, the annual creative arts week and residential trip to London. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their ICT skills through the use of laptops, a designated computer suite and interactive whiteboards. Science has a high profile and is supported by use of the school pond and vegetable garden. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities which include musical instrument tuition, school choirs, Cornish dance and sports. The school uses links with the community effectively to enhance the curriculum, for example by working with a local film-maker to help pupils produce a DVD on a science project, or by linking with a local secondary school to provide lessons in a modern foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and valued. As one commented about the school, 'It's like a friendly street, everyone knows your name.' Strong safeguarding and health and safety procedures are in place to ensure pupils are kept safe. Any incidents of bullying or racism, although rare, are tackled effectively. Pupils report adults are very approachable and appreciate the 'Suggestions' and 'Bully' boxes where they can register any worries or concerns. Mentors or 'Angels' provide good support for pupils who are experiencing problems and for groups of children with specific learning needs. The school works closely with external professionals such as the speech and language therapy service to ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive additional support. The school has recently improved its arrangements for academic guidance. Pupils are set achievable targets and know which areas of their work they need to improve. Pupils are often involved in assessing their own learning and marking offers praise and encouragement. However, there is some variation between classes in the use of marking and suggested corrections are not always followed up.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has established an open and caring ethos where all pupils are valued and included in the life of the school. She has developed excellent links with parents, who rightly hold her in high regard. Leadership and management are characterised by a strong team approach which involves all staff in discussing and implementing change. A collective focus on providing a high quality of education has resulted in a reorganised curriculum and significant improvements in teaching and learning since the last inspection. Effective arrangements are in place for evaluating the school's performance, including the regular observation of lessons. The school has also strengthened its use of data to check how well pupils are progressing. This has been most successful in identifying those pupils who need additional help and in planning intervention to help them catch up. Senior leaders recognise that the next step is to analyse data more thoroughly and to use it to ensure targets are sufficiently ambitious, especially for more able pupils. Resources are used efficiently and linked closely to the school's review and forward plan for each subject area. Staff benefit from good professional development, and this has been recognised by the school's achievement of the Investors in People award. The school is very effective in promoting community cohesion at a local level, although links with diverse communities in wider Britain are less well developed. The school has good plans to develop this area further. Governors provide a good level of support and have a clear understanding of the school's performance. Good systems are in place to ensure statutory requirements are met and finances are managed prudently.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Threemilestone School, Truro, TR3 6DH

As you know, I visited your school recently with some other inspectors. Thanks to those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. You were very polite and helpful.

Here are the main points.

- Your school is a happy place and provides a good standard of education.
- You enjoy coming to school because of the interesting lessons, trips, visits and clubs on offer.
- Many of these activities help you to lead really energetic and healthy lifestyles.
- Teaching is good and all staff work hard to help you learn.
- Those of you in Reception classes settle well and get off to a good start.
- You make good progress in your work, particularly between Years 3 and 6.
- You leave school with standards that are above average, and which are especially high in science.
- Your parents are extremely pleased with how well the school is run and know you are well cared for at school.
- Those of you who need extra help with your learning get good support to help you catch up.

I have asked the school to do a few things to make it even better.

- Make better use of the outdoor space in the Reception classes.
- Make sure teachers help you more often to come up with your own ideas in lessons.
- Help you to learn more about the different religions and cultures in Britain.
- Set targets which help you to reach the highest possible level in your work.

You can help by always trying your best, by thinking how you can come up with interesting ideas in lessons, and by taking an interest in different religions and cultures in Britain.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector