

Inspection of school: Sithney Community Primary School

Crowtown, Helston, Cornwall TR13 0AE

Inspection date: 16 September 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Sithney Community Primary School is a small and inclusive school. Pupils are polite and confident. They are happy and enjoy coming to school. They behave well because staff have high expectations and model good behaviour. Staff have respectful relationships with pupils, which contributes to a positive learning environment.

Pupils are kind and considerate of their peers. They respect each other and listen to what others have to say. Older pupils show maturity and understand what makes a good friend. They say that the school has helped them develop the skills and language to deal with minor disagreements.

Pupils say that bullying is rare, but staff deal with it quickly and sensitively when it does occur. Pupils feel valued and safe. They appreciate the time staff give them to discuss any concerns or worries.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They acknowledge the work of all staff to create a nurturing environment in which they say their children flourish.

The curriculum provides pupils with a range of learning experiences that broaden their interests. In particular, pupils develop their knowledge of the local area and beyond.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to the school and its pupils. They know the pupils well and aim to meet each child's individual needs to help them develop the knowledge and skills for school and beyond.

Governors and leaders are supportive of the school. They understand their responsibilities and duties. Since the previous inspection, they have undertaken appropriate training to

develop their knowledge further. In the summer term, they recruited and appointed a new headteacher. She brings stability to the school's leadership after some turbulence. Governors are clear about the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They meet regularly with leaders to discuss plans to improve the school. However, these plans, particularly for the curriculum, lack sufficient detail for governors to test the impact of leaders' actions.

Leaders have carried out work to develop the curriculum further. As a result, the curriculum is well organised, and all subjects cover the areas required by the national curriculum. Leaders have prioritised mathematics and early reading. These subjects are a strength in the curriculum.

In mathematics, the curriculum is well organised and helps pupils to develop their knowledge gradually. Teachers undertake frequent training to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum well. The curriculum starts off well in the early years. This helps children gain the mathematical knowledge they need for future learning. Pupils feel well supported and appreciate the feedback staff give. They say that this is regular and helps them improve. In lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding, making adaptations when necessary to meet their needs. Some pupils say they find the work in mathematics too easy. This is because teaching does not always consider pupils' starting points and plan ambitiously for them.

Leaders prioritise reading and have made significant changes to strengthen early reading in the school in recent years. Pupils learn to read through a well-structured programme, starting in the early years. All staff have undertaken the necessary training they need to teach phonics and early reading across the school. Staff are knowledgeable and deliver the programme confidently and consistently. Pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds match the books they are reading. As a result, most pupils read with accuracy and emerging fluency. Leaders use assessment well to check pupils' progress and any gaps in their knowledge. Pupils who are behind with reading receive additional support to catch up. However, leaders do not systematically check the impact of this support to ensure that all pupils catch up quickly. As a result, some pupils in key stage 2 are not confident readers.

Leaders have developed the wider curriculum with the support of the trust. These plans highlight pupils' learning outcomes at each phase of the curriculum. Still, they are not precise enough and do not always specify the knowledge all pupils should learn. The wider curriculum provides a range of learning experiences and activities. However, they do not always ensure that pupils learn the most important knowledge at the right time, for all the subjects they are doing.

In history, curriculum plans are organised and sequenced chronologically. However, the curriculum does not build systematically on what pupils know or prepare them well for future learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning in history. They talk confidently about the projects they have undertaken and see the value in the subject. However, many pupils struggle to know whether what they are learning is related to history or geography. As a result, the curriculum limits pupils' ability to learn about the unique nature of each subject.

Teachers know pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable and provides regular training to staff. As a result, staff ensure pupils with SEND learn successfully alongside their peers. Staff make careful adjustments to activities throughout the curriculum. Teachers help all pupils to enjoy the curriculum and achieve success. Where necessary, leaders provide a bespoke curriculum for pupils with complex SEND needs. This curriculum is discussed with pupils and parents. It is ambitious in helping pupils to develop well in their next phase of learning and life beyond school.

In discussion with school leaders, the inspectors agreed that further curriculum development in the foundation subjects may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe offline and online. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns and appreciate the school's work in developing their knowledge of potential risks.

Keeping children safe is a priority of the school. The school has effective policies and systems in place. Staff undertake regular training and are aware of their duties and the importance of their role. Staff report concerns to the deputy safeguarding lead in a timely manner.

When necessary, leaders work with outside agencies and specialists to ensure pupils and families get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' strategic planning is sometimes not specific enough. As a result, they do not have a consistently clear oversight or know the impact of their actions. Leaders need to ensure that strategic plans are precise enough to inform governors fully and allow them to provide greater support and challenge to leaders.
- In the wider curriculum, subject leaders have not planned the content of and sequenced the curriculum well enough. It is not clear what pupils should know and by when in order to build their knowledge and skills over time. Leaders need to ensure the wider curriculum helps pupils to acquire knowledge in depth.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in the wider curriculum is not fully secure. As a result, teachers sometimes do not know what knowledge to prioritise and how to sequence it to help pupils learn. Leaders need to ensure staff develop their subject-specific knowledge further.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143998
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10199477
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Thomas
Headteacher	Sarah French
Website	www.sithney.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In June 2017, Sithney Community Primary School joined the Southerly Point Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, Sithney Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- The school has an on-site pre-school provision. It is managed by the governing body.
- There are breakfast and after-school clubs for pupils who attend the school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of governors, the chair of trustees and the executive leader.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and the assistant headteacher, who is also the subject leader for mathematics and the SENCo.

- Inspectors met with staff and considered their views of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. In each of these deep dives, inspectors had discussions with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding, checked the single central record and scrutinised the school's policies. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed a sample of case files.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. In addition, they met with pupils informally and formally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 68 free-text responses. They also looked at the results of the pupil and staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jen Gibbs, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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