

Penair School A Science College

St Clements, Truro, TR1 1TN

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	No previous inspection	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Achievement is lower in English than it is in mathematics, particularly for boys and less-able students, because teaching is not consistently good.
- Standards are not high enough in all subjects. Not all students do well enough in humanities and Spanish.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus do not achieve as well as others because their welfare and progress are not regularly checked.
- The progress made by those students eligible for pupil premium funding is too slow as the funding is not always used effectively enough to support them.
- Some teachers do not use all the available assessment information to plan lessons and set appropriate homework that meets the needs of all students. As a result progress in some lessons and during independent study at home is too slow.
- Not all teachers have high expectations of students or encourage them to produce high-quality work.
- Senior leaders and governors do not check rigorously enough the real impact teaching has on the learning and progress of all students or hold teachers fully to account for their progress.

The school has the following strengths:

- The school is strongly inclusive and works extensively and closely with parents and carers and the local community. As a result the school is held in good regard by parents and carers.
- Attainment at GCSE grades A* to C in the majority of subjects is just above average resulting in outstanding achievement in mathematics and at least good progress being secured in science.
- Behaviour is good. The majority of students are respectful and courteous towards other students, staff and visitors to the school. They say they feel safe.
- Many students are involved in community events, fund-raising and out-of-school activities and this helps them to become good citizens.
- Attendance is rising and reflects the students' enjoyment of school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons, of which 11 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition they made a number of shorter visits to lessons and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the school leadership and management team and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with two groups of students representing all age groups. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other members.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 74 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents and carers.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roger Pope	Additional Inspector
Marian Marks	Additional Inspector
John Malone	Additional Inspector
David Nebesnuick	Additional Inspector
Svetlana Bajic Raymond	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Penair Science College converted to become an academy school in April 2011. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is a larger-than-average sized secondary school.
- The school has a specialism in the sciences. It holds awards for Artsmark Gold, International Schools, Investors in Careers, Investors in People, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools.
- It is a member of the Truro Roseland Learning Community which includes Truro College, the Richard Lander, Roseland, Penair, Pencalenick schools and all local primary partners.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The government provides additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Provision for students on alternative programmes is arranged in conjunction with Truro College, The Roseland College, Cornwall Marine Network and Cornwall Education Business Partnership.
- The school was a National Training School, a lead school for the gifted and talented, and shares best practice with other schools within its partnership, regionally and nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and raise achievement, especially in English between Key Stages 2 and 4, by making sure that all teachers:
 - use assessment information when planning their lessons so that activities meet the needs of each student and are appropriately challenging
 - consistently and thoroughly mark students' day-to-day work, giving clear guidance on what students need to do to improve it
 - give students clear guidance on homework and explain how it will be assessed.
- Improve the rates of students' progress, including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, by:
 - carefully checking the impact of specific initiatives designed to help these groups make accelerated progress so that they achieve as well as other students in the school.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of all school leaders, including governors, by:
 - ensuring that all leaders evaluate rigorously the progress of different groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, and use this information to provide challenge to both subject leaders and staff
 - focusing closely on the progress made by groups of students in lessons when evaluating the quality of teaching
 - making sure that governors know enough about the quality of teaching and the achievement of students to ask searching questions and hold leaders to account for the progress and attainment of the students.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' attainment when they join the school is just above average. By the time they leave the school, at the end of Year 11, the proportion achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is also just above average. The school therefore does not add enough value to students' learning.
- In 2012, attainment at GCSE grades A* to C was above average in English and mathematics. Students made outstanding progress in mathematics between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in both 2011 and 2012. In contrast, the proportion of students making expected progress in English was below average during the same period of time. This is because the work has not always been challenging enough and marking does not always explain what students have to do to improve.
- Outcomes in science are consistently higher than in other subjects. Students outperform other students nationally and consistently make good progress. Almost a third of Key Stage 4 students study three separate science GCSEs and do well, especially in physics.
- Students do less well in history and in Spanish. This is because of teaching that requires improvement or because not enough time is dedicated to the subject.
- The school does not typically make use of early entry for students for GCSE and therefore this is not a factor in limiting students' achievement, particularly the most able.
- The literacy lead and team have introduced a number of initiatives across the school and there is evidence of good impact on students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. However, they are inconsistently applied.
- The pastoral care for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is very good and they are well supported to ensure that they can access the curriculum. However, achievement for these students requires improvement because they do not make sufficient progress. This is because not enough emphasis is placed on monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's support for these students on their attainment.
- Leaders are using the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding to provide additional staffing and a range of initiatives. However, the targeting of specific students and the monitoring of the impact of these actions on students' progress require further work, as in some instances progress is too slow or eligible students have not received appropriate support.
- The rate of progress in English for those students eligible for pupil premium funding is as expected when compared with that of eligible students nationally, but remains below that of other students in the school. In mathematics, the rate of progress is well above that of their peers nationally. Current assessment data indicate that the gap in attainment is narrowing, bringing the progress of eligible students in mathematics in line with their peers. However, there is still almost half a GCSE grade's difference between the attainment of eligible pupils and that of other students in both English and mathematics.
- A small number (18%) of students are able to extend their choices of subjects by attending work-related studies at Truro College and other providers. The progress for these students is monitored carefully and is good.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because expectations of students' progress are not high enough. Teaching over time has not resulted in achievement which is consistently good enough in all subjects.
- In lessons where progress is not rapid enough, it is because little consideration of the students' prior knowledge or skills is taken into account in the planning of the lesson. As a result, the work set is not challenging enough and students complete the same activity at the same speed. Teachers sometimes limit the chance for students to work independently by talking too much and not inviting students to contribute more and explore their full understanding of a topic.
- In some lessons, day-to-day work is not regularly or thoroughly marked and as a result students are not sure what they need to do to improve it. Equally, some teachers do not give students opportunities to respond to their comments.
- Homework is inconsistent both across the school and in some departments. Students are sometimes unclear as to what they are expected to complete at home and how it will be assessed.
- In the best lessons, students are actively engaged in their learning, working together and using a range of high-quality resources to explore real issues. Teachers plan carefully, showing good levels of subject knowledge and expertise and use the support of teaching assistants to actively support learning in the lesson. Progress in these lessons is rapid and good learning is seen with students leaving classrooms with more knowledge, better skills and better understanding of a subject than when they entered.
- For instance, in a mathematics lesson, while studying graphs, students were given a series of activities within a competitive setting. Boys particularly thrived as they worked in pairs to solve problems before moving onto more challenging scenarios. Through their collaborative work many progressed onto the extension task with enthusiasm. Upon completion, students acted as learning mentors supporting their peers in developing and improving their understanding.
- In good and outstanding lessons, students are encouraged through 'bookmarks' to assess how well they have done and show in their response that they understand how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There is a very strong inclusive ethos at the school which is evident in the tolerant and respectful attitudes between the staff and the majority of students. There is also a high level of commitment to working with all of the pupils and staff go to great lengths to help students experiencing significant levels of difficulty. There are close partnerships with parents and carers and a wide range of support agencies from outside the school.
- Students say they have a positive experience of school and enjoy good relationships with their teachers and value how they support them in their learning.
- Most students behave well in lessons and around the school. They treat others with appropriate respect and courtesy. Students say they feel safe and that adults will help them to overcome any difficulties they might experience. Students can describe the different types of bullying and are confident that any rare instances of bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff.
- Students exhibit positive attitudes to learning although some are too passive and, as a result, do not develop the independent learning skills that are important for their future success.
- Students understand the dangers of the internet and say they feel safe at the school.
- The school is making a concerted effort to improve attendance, especially for those students who are frequently absent. Attendance is rising and is just above average.
- A good range of activities helps build students' confidence and self-esteem. They are keen participants in fund-raising and help other students with their reading and writing. This

benefits the students as they learn themselves while teaching others.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement as leaders measure success mainly in terms of attainment and not students' progress, which means that they do not evaluate effectively enough how well different groups of students are doing. As a result not enough teaching is consistently good or better and students only make nationally expected progress in English.
- There are inconsistencies in the way subject and other leaders report to senior leaders. Students' achievement is formally assessed at least termly, but not all leaders receive sufficient challenge about the progress of students in their subjects, and in turn, they do not hold teachers in their departments to account robustly enough for students' achievement.
- The management of teachers' performance is now related more closely to students' results. Senior leaders are more effective in challenging underperformance. However, the monitoring of teaching does not always focus sharply enough on the progress students make in lessons and so does not always result in consistently good or better teaching practices.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school, meets all requirements, and is enhanced by the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. It contributes very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for developing literacy is well advanced in many areas but leaders have identified that numeracy across different subject areas is underdeveloped.
- A team of 'Directors of Learning' has recently been tasked to monitor the progress of all of the students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and has a specific role to provide information to the rest of the staff about the impact of teaching on the progress of those students. This is now raising awareness among the teaching staff of the pupil premium and its purpose but the impact of their work is yet to be fully seen.
- Leaders have created a very harmonious community. However, the promotion of equal opportunities requires improvement because the achievement of some groups of students, particularly those who are eligible for the pupil premium, is not yet good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are passionately committed to the school and to promoting high-quality care for students in an inclusive atmosphere. They have effective committee systems for undertaking their statutory responsibilities, and make sure that all safeguarding responsibilities are met and that all appropriate policies are in place. However, although they receive extensive information about the work of the school, it has not been focused sufficiently well on students' achievement and the quality of teaching, and this has limited their ability to ask challenging questions. They are aware of how the pupil premium funding has been spent, but are not fully informed about its impact. Likewise, they are aware of procedures for teachers' appraisal, the types of targets that are set for teachers and the range of training opportunities available, but have not related these closely enough to students' achievement. They check that pay progression is linked to teachers' performance.

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

Unique reference number	136567
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	412342

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sophie Hosking
Headteacher	Barbara Vann
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 November 2009
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