

Penair School

St Clement, Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TN

Inspection dates

19–20 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and his senior team have improved the school significantly since the last inspection. The school is well placed to improve further.
- Senior leaders have created a positive culture in which all staff are very committed to the success of the school and its pupils. Everyone is working together to improve the school.
- There is a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders are working hard with middle leaders to ensure teaching, learning and assessment meet the needs of every pupil.
- Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use skilful questioning to make them think hard. Pupils are rising to the challenge and, as a result, they make good progress.
- The standard of teaching in English and mathematics is high. Pupils make very good progress in both these subjects and they achieve high standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with that of other pupils nationally and better than other disadvantaged pupils across the country. This is the result of a comprehensive and well-managed programme which supports them academically and pastorally.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are typically very positive. The vast majority of pupils are well behaved in lessons and are keen to answer questions and take part in activities.
- Governors know the school well and are very committed to its success. They hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account appropriately. They have steered the school astutely through a period of repeated changes of headteacher and the contraction of the school.
- Governors and leaders are proud of their commitment to ensuring pupils with complex behavioural needs experience some success. There is a comprehensive support structure in place and, as a result, the great majority of these pupils do make progress and are well prepared for the next phase of their education or training.
- While teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, leaders know that some pockets of weaker teaching remain. They are continuing to work on these areas with staff.
- Pupils typically receive relevant feedback from teachers on how to improve their work. Many pupils benefit significantly from this but some lack the resilience to go back and correct mistakes. Consequently, their progress is slowed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further by eliminating the remaining pockets of weak teaching and ensuring that pupils achieve as well in all subjects as they do in the best.
- Develop pupils' resilience so that they can take full advantage of the feedback teachers give them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has been very effective in communicating his passion for the school and its pupils to all staff since his arrival in the autumn of 2015. Against a background of staffing and financial turbulence, he has created a significant impetus for improvement.
- The headteacher and senior leaders communicate a combination of a complete commitment to pupils, a clarity of expectation and an empathy for teachers who are working hard. The result is a staff who are very motivated and empowered to improve.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are proud of what they have achieved but know there is more to do. Their plans for future improvement are focused on the right areas, are challenging and are practical.
- Senior leaders have articulated a clear vision of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment to staff. Having made their expectations clear, they work skilfully alongside their colleagues to support teachers in developing their teaching skills. For example, teachers have worked together to increase their expertise in questioning pupils effectively so that they can really challenge pupils' thinking. The result is that pupils are now benefiting from high-quality questioning across the school.
- Senior leaders have a reliable and accurate understanding of the progress of every pupil because they have strong systems in place to track progress. The system extends from a whole-school level to each classroom. Leaders and teachers use this information well, rapidly intervening with pupils when they are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- The headteacher manages the performance of teachers well. He sets targets for staff which focus clearly on the needs of the pupils and he reacts robustly and fairly when staff have not achieved the standards required.
- Senior leaders use the pupil premium grant effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. They deploy it to improve teaching, learning and assessment in departments and in interventions to support individual pupils who are struggling to overcome barriers and hit their targets. The use of the funding to increase the focus on attendance has been a particular success. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly and hence these pupils are making better progress. Leaders monitor the funding closely and know the impact it is having for each pupil. As a result of this, they are currently planning further improvements in their spending plans for next year. The school also receives a small amount of catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils. This is used effectively to support an intervention programme. The pupils targeted are making good progress and most are catching up with their peers.
- Leaders have ensured the curriculum is well designed so that it meets the needs of every pupil. It is appropriately balanced, with a focus on literacy and numeracy. Leaders are working successfully to ensure that the raised expectations of the revised national curriculum are met. In mathematics, for example, teachers have recognised the higher standards pupils have on entry in Year 7 and are building on them. In key

stage 4, an increasing number of pupils are choosing the English Baccalaureate suite of courses but there are also strong alternatives across a broad spectrum of options. The link with a local post-16 provider provides good opportunities for vocational courses for appropriate pupils.

- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their school life. Pupils and parents are appreciative of the clubs and societies that are available and opportunities such as participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- Middle leaders are highly motivated and focused on improving the school. Subject leaders are accountable for the performance of their teams and are stepping up to the challenge well. They work collaboratively and share strategies to improve their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders' expectations of subject leaders have been raised recently. However, while most subject leaders are effective, there are a few areas where subject leaders are not yet completely comfortable with their role in ensuring quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Senior leaders are working alongside them to strengthen the impact of their work.
- Middle leaders who focus on the pastoral system work closely with colleagues who are accountable for academic progress. As a result, they are able to identify which pupils are underachieving and why. This applies, for example, where pupils have poor attendance or difficulties out of school. Thus, appropriate support can be put in place to address pupils' barriers to success. Pupils are then able to catch up and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funds they receive to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress from their starting points as the result of well-coordinated provision in which pupils' needs are assessed and addressed. Vulnerable Year 7 pupils who find secondary school life challenging are supported by a nurture unit in addition to their mainstream classes.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. They ensure they receive appropriate information and reports from senior staff and middle leaders to inform them of the school's performance and they are thus able to ask questions and hold leaders to account. They visit regularly during the working day to broaden and deepen their understanding of the school.
- The governing board is a blend of long-serving and more recently appointed governors who bring a range of skills and experiences to their roles. Working alongside the headteacher, they are successfully steering the school through a difficult period of financial contraction while maintaining a focus on the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are kept safe. They appreciate the strong safeguarding culture in place to protect pupils. Staff take their responsibilities very seriously. They are vigilant, well trained and know what to do if they become aware of

a concern. All the proper checks are made on new appointments and volunteers. Governors oversee the safeguarding arrangements diligently.

- School leaders provide very good support for vulnerable pupils. They work well with local authority officers to ensure that pupils who face substantial personal challenges receive the support they need to make progress at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection in 2015. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They expect them to think about the problem in front of them and make a considered response. In history, for example, pupils are given opportunities to consider complicated events such as the Vietnam War from different perspectives and draw out key ideas.
- Typically teachers are subject specialists who consequently have a strong grasp of the key concepts in any particular topic. They are good at teasing out pupils' ideas and they use well-targeted questioning to challenge and deepen pupils' understanding. The atmosphere in classes when this is happening is very positive, with pupils keen to join in.
- There are very strong assessment procedures in place. Consequently, teachers have a good understanding of exactly what it is that pupils can and cannot do and they adapt their teaching appropriately to address pupils' misconceptions.
- Many pupils benefit from clear oral and written feedback from teachers that tells them precisely how to improve their work. Pupils often respond well to this and their work improves as a consequence. Some pupils, however, do not make the most of this opportunity. They lack the patience and resilience to correct and redraft their work. As a result they do not make as much progress as they could.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics and English is strong. Historically it has been weaker in science. This is now improving, although some inconsistencies still exist. Where progress in science is slower it is usually the result of lower expectations and pupils being unclear how they can improve their work.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils and provide additional support for them. There are opportunities for disadvantaged pupils to get support with their homework and to be mentored by senior staff. Consequently these pupils make good progress.
- The most able pupils make progress broadly in line with their peers in other schools. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are now expecting more from them than they did previously and they are responding positively to the challenge.
- While teaching is typically good, there are occasions when the level of work set fails to challenge or stimulate pupils. Pupils tend to lose focus in these lessons and make relatively poor progress. Leaders are aware of this and are working with teachers to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately in all their lessons.

Personal development and welfare

- Pupils are taking an increasing pride in themselves, their uniform and their school. They enjoy coming to school smartly dressed and they enjoy their lessons.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are known as individuals and are well cared for. There is a well-developed and comprehensive network of support in place to support pupils when they need it. Non-teaching staff are there to provide day-to-day support. This allows pastoral leaders to focus on the significant personal issues that pupils sometimes face.
- Pupils who are vulnerable or who are facing additional difficulties in their lives are given the extra support they need to allow them to continue to flourish. School staff work with other agencies and parents to provide a safety net for these pupils.
- Most pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well, they listen carefully to teachers when they explain topics and they complete the tasks they are set. A few pupils, however, struggle to maintain concentration and do not heed the feedback they are given by teachers. These pupils consequently make less progress.
- The school is a courteous and tolerant community. Pupils understand the importance of fundamental British values. They listen to each other's views respectfully and are welcoming of those who come from different backgrounds to themselves. They are polite to adults and visitors and treat each other with good humour. There is a lesbian, gay and transgender group which meets regularly to support pupils.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay safe in the real and virtual worlds. There is a well-structured programme to remind pupils of the dangers present online. Pupils know what to do and who to go to if they have a concern.
- Bullying is infrequent and dealt with well by staff when it does happen. Pupils are confident that they will be listened to by staff if they are experiencing bullying.
- There is a wide range of clubs and societies on offer including sports, arts, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and academic groups. Take-up is high and pupils greatly enjoy these opportunities.
- Pupils benefit from a well-constructed programme of careers education and guidance. They have opportunities to think and find out about career opportunities starting in Year 7 and building up each year. There are strong links with the local further education providers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- It has improved significantly in the last two years. Leaders and teachers have insisted on higher standards of behaviour, and in the main they have been successful. There are areas in which they have not yet been completely successful. For example, some pupils' books are poorly presented and do not do justice to the work in them.

- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They are punctual, listen attentively and want to engage in their lessons. A little low-level disruption does remain in some classes. This is usually the result of teaching which fails to meet the needs of the pupils concerned.
- Pupils behave well out of lessons, and around the school site at breaks and at lunchtimes. They socialise well with their friends.
- Attendance is now in line with the national average and is continuing to improve. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which had been poor in the past, has improved markedly as a result of the emphasis placed on it by school leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils across the school are making good progress overall. There has been a marked improvement in the last two years. Pupils of all abilities are doing equally well. No group is lagging behind.
- Pupils are doing particularly well in English and mathematics. They are making progress well in excess of the national average. Three quarters of all pupils achieved at least a grade C both in GCSE English and mathematics in 2016. This is significantly above the national average of six out of ten. The most able do especially well in English, where, in 2016, the number achieving the highest grades was twice the national average.
- A small number of Year 7 pupils join the school needing to catch up in English and mathematics. These pupils make accelerated progress, especially with their reading and writing, and so are soon able to get the most from their lessons.
- Pupils also make good progress in history, geography and art as a result of the quality of teaching they receive.
- Pupils are now making better progress in science. In the past, this has been a weaker area but improvements are now being made. Some further development is required, however, before they reach the level of English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. This has been a significant success story for the school over the last three years. They are now achieving results comparable with all pupils across the country and better than disadvantaged pupils in other schools. This contrasts with 2015, when they made very poor progress. Their success is the result of a carefully crafted programme which has placed the progress of disadvantaged pupils at the heart of every classroom.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. They do at least as well as other pupils, and in some cases much better. This is the result of well-targeted support and intervention, so that teachers know exactly what pupils' needs are and how best to help them.
- Standards of literacy across the school are good. This is the result of a whole-school approach to spelling and grammar and an emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary.

School details

Unique reference number	136567
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10033144

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	875
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	David Matthew
Headteacher	James Davidson
Telephone number	01872 274737
Website	http://www.penair.cornwall.sch.uk
Email address	head@penair.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2015

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but the number supported by an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- More than nine out of 10 pupils are of White British heritage. There are few from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils take some courses at a local further education college.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour data, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and groups of pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 88 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a letter. They also took into account the 70 responses to the staff questionnaire and 61 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Non Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Carter	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Nash	Ofsted Inspector

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