

Nancealverne School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	112087
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	378418
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Sonja Joseph

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Evans
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Flindall
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2009
School address	Madron Road Penzance Cornwall TR20 8TP
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph

Additional inspector

Robert Arnold

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 lessons, amounting to about five hours of teaching in total, taught by 10 teachers. Learning walks, comprising short visits to lessons in a range of subjects, were carried out to assess the quality of behaviour and the work undertaken by specific groups of pupils. Approximately one third of lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Discussions took place with senior and middle leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and different groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at progress tracking and performance data, the school development plan, pupils' work and numerous policies, guidelines, plans and reviews. The questionnaire responses from 27 parents and carers, 47 pupils and 33 staff were also analysed.

Information about the school

Nancealverne School is smaller than the average-sized special school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Over two-thirds of pupils are boys. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Most pupils have autism spectrum disorder and additional behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Over one third has profound and multiple learning difficulties. A smaller proportion has severe learning difficulties. Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils with high medical care needs has trebled. The headteacher was appointed in 2009. The school has achieved Healthy Schools Plus status and the Bronze award in Investors in People. The Early Years Foundation Stage is one class of six pupils. The school has not met the current government floor standards.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Nancealverne is a good school that is determined to keep improving and to make sure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Overall effectiveness is good rather than outstanding because there is scope for improvement in relation to the use of assessment information and the opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills. The sixth form is good. Students report that they appreciate the good teaching and the helpful guidance available.
- Pupils' achievement is good and pupils enjoy their learning. They make good progress in acquiring academic skills and gain a range of qualifications. They also make good gains in acquiring life skills.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is typically excellent in response to the very clear and high expectations of staff. As a result, pupils are highly adept in managing their own behaviour and conduct.
- Teaching is at least good in each key stage and is sometimes outstanding. All lessons are led by enthusiastic teachers who successfully engage pupils in learning. In a few cases, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their ability to learn independently, particularly when writing or using mathematics.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governing body know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and have effectively related the evaluation and monitoring of the quality of teaching to performance management. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, especially the way in which teachers foster pupils' social skills and independence. This permeates the curriculum and prepares pupils very well for adulthood. The school collects a wide variety of information on each pupil's progress. This information is not used to its full effectiveness by leaders, including governors, to monitor the progress of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the use of assessment and monitoring information so that it:
 - informs teaching consistently to ensure that, in all lessons, pupils are

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- making the best possible progress
 - gives governors a clearer overview so that they can better challenge the school and support further improvements
 - strengthens the evaluation of teaching by middle leaders so that judgements are based on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve pupils' abilities to learn independently by:
- increasing the opportunities pupils are given to work independently, particularly when developing their writing and mathematical skills
 - making sure the level of support pupils receive is carefully balanced against the need to promote their ability to learn with little or no assistance.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Although attainment is low, including in reading, pupils' progress from their individual starting points is good and achievement is good across the school. For some individuals, achievement is outstanding and the gap in attainment between boys and girls has narrowed over successive years as a result of specific one-to-one intervention in mathematics and English. Evidence of the impact of this work can be found in all key stages and in all subjects from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy learning. The development of communication, language and independence skills is always a strong focus in learning and, consequently, pupils make good progress in these areas. This positive achievement is accomplished through good quality teaching. For example, in a communication therapy lesson for pupils with high levels of medical care needs, the teachers' very high quality skills in questioning and subject knowledge developed pupils' thinking and listening skills, extended vocabulary and ensured pupils persisted with a task.

Pupils throughout the school learn to communicate effectively using vocalisation or spoken word, alternative and augmentative communication systems, symbols or signs. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were using symbolic communication systems to work collaboratively to follow sequences in a story. Pupils acquire good skills in reading relative to their starting points, for example in recognising pictures, learning rhymes and reading the most common words. They discuss their favourite authors and are successful in accredited courses in English. The emphasis on meeting each individual's particular needs means that all groups make at least good progress. In the sixth form, students make good progress and consolidate their essential life skills such as budgeting, cooking meals and self-care. As a result, the vast majority are very successful in moving to suitable placements when they leave, having gained a range of accreditation and

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qualifications. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are making good progress and inspectors agree that this view is accurate.

Quality of teaching

Pupils, parents and carers concur with inspection evidence that teachers have a good knowledge of subjects and explain new work clearly. In all lessons, strong relationships between adults and pupils aid learning. Targeted and sensitive support ensures that pupils understand what to do and are helped to keep on task, with any misconceptions quickly clarified and feedback readily given. Appropriate access plans are in place for individuals and these ensure that pupils are supported with additional technology or software, as well as providing continuity of approach to their learning. Inspectors observed many examples of good teaching, including in the sixth form. Where teaching was at its best, the expectation for individual pupils was made very clear at the outset, using accurate and systematic assessment of each pupil's prior learning. This was then followed up throughout the lesson by precise, subject-focused questioning from the teacher so that the level of challenge remained appropriate at all times. The carefully planned curriculum, together with lesson planning that shows consideration of individual needs, enables all pupils to learn well in most lessons. However, assessment information is not used consistently well to inform planning.

Communication skills are successfully developed through all lessons, with adults ensuring instructions and questions are clear and maximise pupils' opportunities to respond. Teachers promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for example, giving pupils time for quiet reflection. The pace of learning is carefully controlled by teachers to ensure pupils' understanding is secure. In most cases, this works well, but on occasions pupils are not given enough opportunities to learn independently and at a faster pace. There are many examples of the effective use of practical activities and the successful linking of subjects for pupils, such as practising mathematical skills in food technology and vice versa. Where written feedback is appropriate for pupils, this is often regular and encouraging. Reading is taught systematically, developing pupils' knowledge of sounds and letters with frequent practice as well as exposure to a range of resources such as tablet computers, pupils' communication journals and visits from storytellers to capture interest. Specific interventions are used to boost the word recognition or comprehension skills of individuals.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour was judged as outstanding at the previous inspection and has remained so. The school's own analysis of pupils' behaviour in lessons, as indicated in incident logs, lesson monitoring and exclusion records as well as student discussions, shows that behaviour is typically outstanding over time. The curriculum supports pupils' outstanding behaviour and safety with key emphases on self-management and how to keep safe. The pupils say overwhelmingly that they feel safe in school and that adults are always available to support them if they have any

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concerns. Those pupils with the most significant difficulties demonstrate that they have a high degree of trust in the adults who support and care for them. These pupils behave very well and have high expectations of others, encouraging them to conform and engage.

Pupils demonstrate their mature attitudes and team-working in their tuck shop enterprise, demonstrating that they can carry out different roles cooperatively, including exercising leadership skills. A system of rewarding positive behaviour, including earning time for free choice of activities, encourages pupils to take responsibility and to respond to instructions from staff. For example, pupils were observed taking part in a range of free-choice activities which included sitting with a drink chatting to the teacher or a friend, thereby fostering their social skills and enabling staff to build relationships and support pupils informally. Pupils' self-confidence and happiness are fostered particularly well through the wide-ranging extra-curricular programme of sports, visits and after-school activities.

The school's records show no recorded incidents of bullying or racist or homophobic behaviour reflecting the effectiveness of specific personal, social and health education programmes. There have been no permanent exclusions for over four years, which is testament to the school's inclusive ethos. The result is an extremely calm, ordered atmosphere for learning.

The school has forged very strong partnerships with outside agencies, professionals and families to encourage pupils' good behaviour and support those pupils that the school considers to be the most vulnerable. Risk assessments, personal profiles and targets for behaviour all show that staff know their pupils very well and respond very effectively to their needs. Leaders ensure that there are good channels for pupils to express their views, including those pupils who have the greatest difficulties with communication. In their questionnaire responses, parents and carers commented in glowing terms about the care that the school provides for their children and the high standard of behaviour. Inspectors' observations bear this out.

Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, leaders, including the governing body, have made good progress in establishing new systems to sustain and raise standards further across the school. For instance, the school has enhanced the range of communication technology across all key stages and uses specialist staff to promote development of skills across the curriculum. In addition, the school has maintained or enhanced its range of accreditation available to pupils at Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form. The school has continued to develop its provision for the wide range of pupils, including the improvements to the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Such improvements indicate a strong capacity to sustain improvement.

Lesson observation is frequent and rigorous, and inspection findings closely reflect senior leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching. Thorough systems for

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supporting less experienced staff and the very good use of professional development and research ensure staff meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils.

Staffing changes mean that some middle leaders are new to their role, but they are beginning to use the school's new assessment systems to monitor the progress of pupils. Their abilities in gauging the quality of teaching are not always sufficiently evaluative to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and to guide further improvements.

Partnerships with schools nationally ensure that the assessment of pupils' achievements is accurate and can be compared with expectations in mainstream schools. The curriculum is good because it meets individual pupils' needs and enables all pupils to achieve well, regardless of their disabilities or difficulties. The school offers a very wide range of community, cultural and reflective activities which promote pupils' outstanding spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. There is no discrimination and equality of opportunity is a central tenet of the school's ethos. Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements. The school takes the protection of its young people very seriously and effective procedures and training are in place to keep pupils safe.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of **Nancealverne School, Penzance TR20 8TP**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were very impressed by the way in which you welcomed us and were so eager to show us the work of your school. We found out that:

- Nancealverne is a good school
- your behaviour is outstanding because of the way you work hard and the way you respect and look after each other
- you feel very safe and trust adults to help you and sort things out
- teaching is good and you receive good support to help you learn and ensure you make good progress
- your school is managed well.

To make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to make sure that the information they collect on your progress is used even better in all lessons to help you learn more and help the school decide what improvements to make. I have also asked teachers to give you more chances to learn independently, especially when writing. You can help by continuing to work hard.

I know that everyone is very proud of the things you have achieved in school. Well done! It was a privilege to meet you all.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Joseph
Lead inspector

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