

Falmouth School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137223
Inspection number	397459
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Sadler

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,023
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matt Boyling
Headteacher	Sandra Critchley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Sadler	Additional inspector
Kathy Maddocks	Additional inspector
Sheila Crew	Additional inspector
Martin Budge	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent nearly 16 hours observing 41 lessons taught by 38 teachers. It was not possible to observe the teaching of students in Years 11 and 13 as they were sitting public examinations during the inspection; however work completed recently by these students was scrutinised. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, groups of students and with individual parents at their request. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to students' attainment and progress, school development planning and to safeguarding students. The responses to questionnaires completed by students, staff and by 135 parents and carers were analysed.

Information about the school

This is a secondary school of average size which serves a medium-sized coastal town. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average, as is the proportion, mostly with moderate learning or behavioural difficulties, that are supported at school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs. The school has strong partnerships with a nearby 11-16 school, and with a short-stay school (pupil referral unit). These partnerships also extend to a local training provider and local primary schools. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The former school on the site converted to academy status on 1 August 2011, so technically this is the first inspection of a new school. However, a decision was taken to retain the former name of the school, and membership of the governing body, the composition of the student body and staff, including senior leaders, remain largely unchanged. For these reasons some reference is made in the text of the report to the predecessor school on the site.

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	2
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding as some improvements are required in teaching so that the outstanding achievement found in some subjects, for example English and creative arts, is extended to a wider range of subjects.
- Students' achievement is good and improving rapidly. All students, including those who might potentially make slower progress, achieve equally well. Attainment, especially in GCSE at grades A* to C, is above average and is rising sharply. Students are able to apply their skills well, their literacy skills being especially strong. Attainment at the highest grades of A* and A, in both GCSE and A-level examinations, is closer to average overall but is well above average in a number of subjects.
- Teaching is good and improving. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, through effective use of assessment, plan challenging tasks that meet the learning needs of all students. A minority of lessons lack pace, and feedback does not always clarify to students how to improve, which slows the rate of learning.
- Students' behaviour and safety are good with positive attitudes to learning displayed in the great majority of lessons. Students say they feel very safe and that there is little bullying. There is some immature behaviour in a few lessons in Years 7 and 8. Attendance is rising and is now above average.
- Leaders and managers have a strong drive for improvement, which is leading to rapidly rising attainment and improving teaching. School performance is managed exceptionally well. Self-evaluation is accurate and effective in identifying weaknesses, thus demonstrating that the capacity for further improvement is secure. The curriculum is excellent, as is the provision for

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students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The sixth form is good, and is improving rapidly. Leaders and managers rightly take pride in the school's ability to cater for the needs of almost all students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement, particularly some of the more able, to the outstanding levels already attained in some subjects by:
 - ensuring that the tasks set always enable them to attain their full potential
 - maximising opportunities for students to develop their skills of independent learning and study.
- In order to secure consistently outstanding teaching:
 - ensure that the pace of lessons enables all students to remain on task throughout, in particular so that other students are not distracted from their work
 - through marked work, improve feedback to students to ensure they have a better understanding of how to improve.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In most years, students' attainment on entering the school is in line with the national average. Students currently in Year 11 were significantly below that level, but are on track to make more progress than was the case in the predecessor school in 2011. The students in 2011 demonstrated strong improvement on the attainment of previous years which was above the national average. Attainment in the sixth form is also rising. Almost all students make at least the expected progress, and often better, in mathematics and other subjects, for example science, between Years 7 and 11. Proportions of students attaining at the highest grades are closer to the national trend, although they are above this level in a range of subjects including English and the creative arts. Achievement in English and literacy, including reading, is outstanding. Many examples were seen, for example, when students in Year 12 discussed the linguistic features of fiction written for young children that achieved excitement and accessibility. In a Year 7 science lesson, students of all abilities used their literacy skills well to write good accounts of their forensic investigation. Students are also confident in applying mathematical skills, for example when shaping square corners in acrylic sheet for product design.

In the vast majority of lessons, interesting tasks enable students to learn quickly. For example, in food technology, students in Year 8 had a good understanding of how varying quantities of ingredients changes the texture of baked goods. The same students could explain the health and safety issues presented by the task and the nutritional value of their product. Achievement is further enhanced by additional

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activities, for example, work of a high standard in the creative arts was observed at drama and jazz clubs.

All groups of students make equally good progress. In the case of disabled students and those with special educational needs this is often because of specialist help in subject areas, for example literacy. All students have access to additional help to improve aspects of their work, including lessons after school to boost examination performance, and as was observed during a very effective after-school homework club for students of all ages.

Quality of teaching

Typically, lessons are well planned due to teachers' good use of assessment to determine students' needs. A good example was seen in science where Year 7 students' writing was supported in a variety of ways dependent on their individual needs. Specialist terminology is taught well, for example concerning different abrasion techniques used in design and technology. In most lessons there is a good balance of tasks that keep students motivated, especially when the teacher makes clear the timings for each part of the lesson. Occasionally, however, the teacher talks for too long or the pace of learning slows; in some cases in Years 7 to 9 this leads to immature behaviour by a few students. Many lessons offer students opportunities to develop skills of learning independently and personal study, but on some occasions such opportunities are lost due to the teacher's cautious approach.

When planning lessons, teachers have regard to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, students learned how to construct food chains and webs and then learned about the impact that human activity could have on these natural relationships. In a Year 10 geography lesson concerning the theory of plate tectonics, students were asked to reflect on the power of natural processes when compared with human influence. Teachers encourage resilience by enabling students to overcome problems, for example when completing a timed assessment. Teaching assistants provide effective support by enabling students, especially disabled students and those with special educational needs, to make good progress and to complete tasks.

In most subjects, marking is used effectively to help students improve their work but there are examples where it is more superficial and lacks this feedback. Targets have been used very effectively, especially to enable students to attain at least a grade C in GCSE, but less emphasis is placed on enabling all those capable to attain the highest grades.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students of all ages have very positive attitudes to school. Those who joined the school in the sixth form are pleased that they did so. Behaviour in the dining hall and around the school is of a high standard. In lessons this is also very largely the case; students learn with energy and enthusiasm. Only occasionally do younger students

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exhibit immature behaviour. A minority of parents and carers express concern that their children's learning is slowed by the behaviour of others, but the inspection found that this is rarely the case. Parents, carers, students and staff agree that recent changes to the behaviour policy have led to an improvement.

Students feel very safe at school and their view that there is little bullying is confirmed by the school's records and by their parents and carers. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying or racism, and of the importance of confronting any they encounter. Students also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe, for example through diet and when engaging in potentially hazardous activities.

Students are punctual to school and to their lessons. Attendance, including in the predecessor school, has risen steadily over a long period of time and is now above average. Attendance in the sixth form, at 94%, is higher than is usually found. Exclusions are well below average as effective partnerships with other schools and agencies, including a short-stay school, have been successful in managing the very few students with challenging behaviour, and also in maintaining low levels of persistent absence.

Leadership and management

Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior team, and with the support of the governing body, a range of programmes to bring about rapid improvement has been put in place. Using data as an effective tool to establish priorities, this approach has led to rapid improvements in attainment, the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance. There is determination to continue improvement in order to become an outstanding school, which is a realistic objective. Consultation has been used effectively and appropriately, for example when introducing a new uniform. Ambitious plans are in place to rationalise and consolidate the school's site and accommodation. As part of rigorous performance management, teaching is monitored regularly and accurately and effective action is taken to further the professional development of staff and to rectify weaknesses. Subject leadership has been further strengthened to accelerate progress and to rightly place emphasis on the development of students' basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum is excellent, with a wide range of activities and continuous review to ensure that it meets the needs of all students. The good sixth form provides a wide range of courses, including those which cater for students for whom A-level courses are unsuitable. There is also outstanding provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through excellence in the creative arts and discussion of sophisticated literature. Partnerships within the local community, with other schools and further afield contribute much to the outstanding breadth of education available to students.

The excellent governing body provides strong challenge and support for the

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leadership of the school. It meets requirements to keep students safe in full, for example as shown by a recent review of the security of the site leading to the strengthening of boundary fencing. The equally good achievement of all groups of students and low levels of bullying demonstrate that equality of opportunity is secure and that discrimination is not tolerated. Parents and carers rightly have a high level of confidence in the school. 'Both our children are very happy at school and we have no hesitation in recommending it to prospective parents' is a typical comment.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



21 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Falmouth School, Falmouth TR11 4LH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. Special thanks go to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us to give us your views. This letter is to tell you what we found.

- Yours is a good school. It is improving rapidly and has a good sixth form.
- At the end of Year 11 you attain GCSE results that are above average. In the sixth form attainment is closer to average, but is improving. Overall, your achievement is good and in some subjects, for example English and the creative arts, it is excellent. You have especially good literacy skills.
- The teaching is good. You are given interesting tasks that meet your learning needs. Teachers and teaching assistants give good extra support to those of you who need this.
- Your behaviour and safety are good. You told us that you feel safe and that there is little bullying. In a few lessons in Years 7 to 9 there is occasional silly behaviour. Your attendance is improving and is now above average.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Many things are improving rapidly. You are offered an excellent range of courses and extra-curricular activities. Staff are encouraged to improve their teaching. All the requirements to keep you safe are effectively in place.

In order to make the school outstanding, we have asked the staff to:

- challenge more of you to attain the highest grades in GCSE and A level
- make sure all the teaching has lots of pace and that marking always tells you how your work could be improved. You can help here by asking, if you do not understand what you need to do.

Yours sincerely
Paul Sadler
Lead inspector

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