

# Curnow School

Drump Road, Redruth, TR15 1LU

**Inspection dates** 24–25 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Because they are so well taught in every class, pupils make excellent progress during their time at this school. They are extremely well prepared for the next phase of their education, and their lives after school, by the time they are ready to leave.
- Teachers' very high expectations, together with their unceasingly enthusiastic approach in lessons and elsewhere, means that pupils look forward to coming to school and are always highly engaged in learning, inside and outside the classroom.
- School leaders, including governors, are uncompromising in their pursuit of excellence. As a result, standards have risen and the achievement of almost all pupils is outstanding, as is the quality of teaching. There is strong drive for continuing improvement in the school.
- Individuals and groups of pupils make considerable improvements with behaviour because staff are always positive and ensure that the atmosphere is well ordered. School leaders provide an environment which is as secure as it can be. Pupils confirm that they feel safe while at school.
- Sixth form provision is outstanding. Students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well. Their teachers have designed highly effective programmes which provide rich opportunities for using the skills they have learned in classrooms over many years in the wider community.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent six and a half hours in classrooms observing 13 teachers teaching 14 lessons.
- One inspector joined pupils for lunch in the dining room and observed others playing in the playground.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils to gain their views about the school and to talk to them about their progress, their likes and dislikes. One inspector spent time in the school library listening to pupils read and discussing their choices of books and magazines.
- The school's documentation was scrutinised; in particular, documents relating to its systems for self evaluation and curriculum planning. Pupils' work files were viewed as well as materials on safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors paid particular attention to the information the school presented about how well pupils are achieving.
- Meetings were held with governors and with a representative of the local authority as well as with school leaders and teachers. The views of staff were gathered through responses to the staff questionnaire. The views of the 10 parents who provided responses to the Parent View questionnaire were taken into account.
- On visits to classrooms and other areas around the school, inspectors noted the quality of pupils' art work as well as the displays which capture the range of school-based and community-based learning activities.

## Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Curnow School provides for pupils who have severe learning difficulties. Some have physical and sensory difficulties while others have an autistic spectrum condition. Pupils come to school from the surrounding towns and villages.
- The school has very close links with other professionals. Therapists and a nurse work with pupils at the school in a specially resourced unit known as The Hub.
- There are many more boys at the school than girls, especially in the sixth form. The overwhelming majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and English is the home language of nearly everyone.
- A large number of pupils in the sixth form have all their lessons in classrooms on the site of a mainstream academy a few miles from the main site. Plans to move younger children to a mainstream primary school site are at an advanced stage.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational need and approximately one third of pupils are known to be entitled to receive support through the pupil premium funding.
- School leaders provide support to other schools and children's centres in the locality, especially in the areas of assessment and curriculum planning.
- In recent years, the school gained specialist status in communication and interaction. The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use every opportunity to drive standards of teaching and achievement even higher by ensuring that excellent planning follows rigorous self evaluation when the school is organised on three different sites.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

#### is outstanding

- From their earliest days in school pupils achieve exceedingly well. Younger pupils work extremely well because the resources made available are precisely matched to their interests and needs. This excellent start is successfully built upon as pupils move through each key stage.
- Pupils' literacy and communication skills develop very well from low starting points. In a well-organised library session pupils keenly browsed the shelves and chose favourite books and magazines. They read enthusiastically, picking out key words and sentences and naming different characters. Many use signing to strengthen communication.
- Almost all pupils make very rapid progress, including students in the sixth form. Many make progress at a much faster rate than that typically seen for pupils with similar needs in other schools. Enthusiasm for learning is evident in the very high levels of participation pupils demonstrate in every lesson. In a lively music lesson, sixth form students concentrated well and clapped the rhythms of a song in preparation for a shared session with mainstream peers later that day.
- Older pupils and students in the sixth form gain accreditation for the work they complete in school and offsite, for example when attending link courses at the local further education college. They gain ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) awards by working hard to reach challenging targets.
- There are no variations in rates of progress amongst pupils in different groups. Those who have the most complex difficulties achieve well. Pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium make as much progress as others, and the few girls at the school achieve as well as boys.
- Many pupils know their targets and are able to talk about what they have to do to make even more progress. Those who have the most complex difficulties are successful in following good visual instructions, for example when preparing a simple snack. They show great satisfaction at being so independent.

### The quality of teaching

#### is outstanding

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection because teachers frequently check how well everyone is doing, by asking searching questions or encouraging pupils to talk to others about their work. Teachers and their assistants use information they gain in this way to shape lessons so that an even deeper understanding of the subject or activity is assured.
- As a result, teaching is never less than good and very often outstanding. Teachers act upon the incisive comments and advice which they receive when school leaders observe their lessons, and as a result, the quality of all teaching has risen.
- Teachers are adventurous and innovative. In a particularly strong and lively mathematics lesson, the teacher built up pupils' confidence in making sets by questioning them about their own lives, for example, their drinks preferences and personal hygiene habits. This meant that pupils learned well because they were able to relate to real-life examples and could recognise and talk about similarities and differences.
- Teachers use every opportunity to reinforce literacy, numeracy and communication skills. In a carefully planned and very well-taught PE lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to count, use directional words and to talk about personal achievements as well as the success of others.
- Every lesson is carried out with a spirit of enthusiasm. Pupils are encouraged to learn actively, move around the room when it is appropriate to do so, talk to others about what they have learned and to use all resources available to develop understanding of a task. This was noted in a lesson for very young children as they were encouraged to explore and use highly appropriate equipment while telling others about what they were doing.
- The work of learning assistants is well directed and targeted towards those who need most help,

with the result that they support pupils to great effect. Teaching is strengthened even further as a result of effective work by assistants.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils work extremely hard in lessons and there are very few interruptions to learning because of difficult behaviour. Typically, they are polite and helpful to each other and they listen carefully to instructions and advice from staff. In a good lesson on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) one pupil was seen to act very considerately, telling another pupil what the lesson was about and what he had to do, on this pupil's return to the classroom.
- The Curnow Code is displayed in classrooms and corridors and provides clear information to pupils and staff about the school's expectations. Pupils are eager to receive a 'Headteacher's Award' at the weekly achievement assembly, and they know that to be successful they have to show that they have worked hard or been really helpful or kind.
- Because pupils want to do well and the atmosphere around the school is so positive, their behaviour improves during the time they are at school. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and their attendance levels are good.
- Parents and carers, pupils and staff all agree that bullying of any sort is virtually unheard of. Pupils say that they know who to talk to if they feel worried or unsure. They have produced eye-catching, informative posters and leaflets which remind them what to do to stay safe when using the internet. These are prominently displayed around the school, and provide strong evidence of the school's active approach to promoting internet safety.
- On those rare occasions when incidents of difficult behaviour do occur in class, they are dealt with efficiently by well-trained staff. Teachers and assistants get pupils back into learning as quickly as possible by making very effective use of the specially designed teaching areas, 'safe spaces', to carry out individual teaching, and, when it is deemed appropriate to do so, the pupil is returned to the main classroom.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Leaders and managers have an extremely clear picture of how well everyone is doing. They have developed excellent systems for scrutinising all aspects of the school's work. Consequently, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve even further. Leadership and management in the sixth form are outstanding.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because teachers are regularly observed by senior leaders, with helpful feedback provided on how they can do even better. The positive impact of professional development and training for staff can be seen in the very strong contribution that learning assistants make in lessons as they encourage pupils to do even better. When new teachers are appointed there is no dip in the high standard of teaching because of conspicuously effective induction, coaching and mentoring by senior leaders.
- There is an uncompromising approach to driving up standards of pupils' achievements as much as possible. Staff are committed to ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Exceptionally good procedures are in place for reviewing teachers' performance and each one has a pupil progress target. Governors ensure that there is a close link between the achievement of targets and pay progression for senior leaders.
- School leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that the curriculum includes activities and tasks that are very closely matched to the needs of all. Literacy, numeracy and good communication are promoted at all times. Younger pupils speak confidently about places visited and what they have learned. Innovative programmes are in place for introducing older students to the world of work whatever the complexity of their needs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well promoted. In well-planned lessons they learn about different lifestyles and beliefs. Very effective teaching about sharing ideas and valuing the opinions of others, looking after each other and caring for the

environment underpins the positive atmosphere in which pupils learn together so amicably.

- School leaders ensure that the pupil premium is targeted at providing additional teaching support and rich learning experiences for those pupils who are known to be entitled to receive it. These students achieve as well as others, building on the success of the Year 7 catch-up activities.
- As plans are under way for the school to move to operating on three sites, leaders are aware of the importance of ensuring that the excellent quality of education currently being provided is built upon. They understand the need to use rigorous approaches to evaluating the school's work, followed up with excellent quality action planning, to ensure that high standards are maintained.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors perform their duties exceedingly well. They have a detailed understanding of strengths and weaknesses and how the school needs to develop in the future for standards to be driven even higher. This is because they have high expectations, visit regularly, talk to staff, pupils and parents and carers, and scrutinise commissioned reports into current work and future needs. All statutory safeguarding procedures are in place. Governors use resources efficiently to promote equal access to all areas of learning for every pupil. They are involved in discussions relating to how the pupil premium funding is spent, and the impact of this on achievement for this group. Governors also have a very clear awareness of the school's systems for managing staff performance and help to ensure that pay progression is linked closely to the quality of teachers' work. The governing body has undertaken training and its members have the knowledge and skills needed to carry out their roles.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112086
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	401231

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Colwill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Bob Coburn – executive headteacher Ms Gina Briggs – operational headteacher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7–8 December 2009
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