

Pencalenick School

St Clement, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 1TE

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not Previously Inspected	
	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:

- Students, particularly the most able, are not making consistently good progress from their starting points in English and mathematics to prepare them well for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- The quality of teaching is too uneven to promote consistently good learning and academic progress throughout the school.
- Some teachers are not making good use of assessment to challenge and support all students, especially the most able, to make as much progress as possible.
- Senior and curriculum leaders are not securing a consistently good quality of teaching and learning quickly enough. The governing body is not holding the school to account sufficiently to help it improve students' academic achievement.

The school has the following strengths:

- Students' learning and progress in subjects such as art and drama are outstanding because of teachers' high expectations.
- Gaps in learning are closing for students who are given additional support through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, and the least able students make good progress.
- The school meets the range of disabilities and special educational needs of the students exceptionally well and helps them to focus on their learning with confidence and self-esteem.
- Behaviour is good and students say they feel safe in school. They enjoy school.
- Students demonstrate strong social skills and make outstanding progress in communicating and interacting with others.
- The Principal, ably supported by senior leaders and the governing body, has successfully developed a positive learning environment and a curriculum that engages pupils in their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 12 teachers, most of which were observed jointly with members of the school’s senior leadership team. In addition, they listened to a few students reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, parents, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, an external consultant and an adviser from the local authority’s school improvement service.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and examined a range of documents, including information on the monitoring of pupils’ progress and the quality of teaching, the monitoring of pupils’ behaviour and attendance, systems for the performance management and development of staff, improvement plans and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- The inspection team took account of 18 responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View survey and questionnaires completed by 39 members of staff.

Inspection team

Sue Frater HMI, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Stephen McShane HMI

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in September 2011. The predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected in November 2008 when it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school provides for students aged 11 to 16 years with complex learning difficulties and disabilities.
- The school has residential provision that caters for 25 part-time boarders.
- The residential provision was last inspected in September 2013.
- The school is much smaller than most secondary schools and there are almost twice as many boys as girls.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.
- A larger proportion of students than found in most schools are eligible for support through the pupil premium. The pupil premium provides additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority, children with a parent or carer in the armed forces and for students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- All students are supported by a statement of special educational needs.
- One student attends off-site alternative provision at an equestrian centre for one afternoon per week.
- Students are entered early, in Year 10, for GCSE art.
- The school has specialist status in communication and interaction, and also for training teachers.
- The Principal is a National Leader of Education (NLE) and supports other special schools in the local authority and nationally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning and increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice in the school to raise teachers' expectations of students' independence and the quality of their work
 - making sure teachers use their assessments to match the learning objectives, activities, the pace and their questions, to students' differing levels of learning
 - giving students more opportunities to apply and refine their new skills independently, and to support each other in this
 - giving individual students regular feedback and targets so that they know what to do to improve their work.
- Improve progress in English and mathematics, especially for the most able students, by:
 - encouraging students to read more widely
 - developing their skills in handwriting and spelling
 - providing more practical activities and resources in mathematics lessons.
- Extend the skills of curriculum leaders in monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching and learning.
- Provide external support for the governing body in holding the school to account for students'

achievement in the context of this special school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' progress and their attainment are not consistently good throughout the school or across all subjects, particularly for the most able. This is due to the uneven quality of teaching.
- When students enter the school, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is low. Through a wide range of interventions, the school enables them to re-engage in their learning with confidence and self-esteem. As a result, the students make rapid progress initially.
- The school's information indicates that progress in English, and even more so in mathematics, requires improvement because it is not evenly sustained across the school, particularly for the most able students. This is because lessons are not always tailored to meet the students' differing learning needs. The least able students, however, make good progress due to specialist provision and support from learning mentors in lessons.
- The uneven progress across the school means that not all students achieve the school's targets. This limits their opportunities in further education, training or employment.
- Students make excellent progress in speaking and listening across subjects, due to the systematic development of communication and interaction. Their reading skills are developing through the introduction of sessions in phonics (the sounds that letters make), but they do not read widely enough to develop fluency and understanding. The school provided a successful home reading programme for six weeks which students enjoyed, but it is not regular enough to sustain progress. Learning mentors have not been sufficiently trained to ask questions when hearing reading which develop the students' skills in inference and deduction.
- Most students are developing a good range of vocabulary and learn to write independently. Students in Years 10 and 11 for instance, were able to imagine they were a character in a Charles Causley poem and wrote from the character's perspective. They were motivated by the theme of the poem and its links to Bodmin Jail, which they were to visit the next day. Across the school, students' weaknesses in spelling and handwriting are not systematically addressed, and this prevents them writing at length. Students develop mathematical concepts such as measuring and dividing objects into fractions. The most able can simplify fractions when shown, but they are not developing strategies to help them to transfer their skills in calculation to other problems.
- Gaps in learning are closing for students who are given additional individual support from learning mentors through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium, for example in reading and phonics.
- In lessons, students' progress is inconsistent across subjects. Their learning and progress in subjects such as art and drama are outstanding because of teachers' high expectations. They achieve well in GCSE art, even though they are entered early, in Year 10, for the examination. The early entry helps to maintain their interest. They achieve less well in subjects such as science where the learning objective is not clear and the work is not challenging enough.
- Most students achieve Entry Level qualifications in English, mathematics and science and the most able achieve a GCSE in art. Due to uneven progress throughout the school, too few of the most able students are entered for GCSE English and mathematics. The use of alternative education is promoting suitable progress and leading to an appropriate equestrian qualification. In 2013, all Year 11 students continued into further education at local colleges. Some continued their studies in more academic subjects such as art, photography and drama, while many took courses in areas such as developing life skills with no clear route into employment.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not promoting consistently good academic progress for all students.
- In too many lessons, teachers are not using assessment to plan clear learning objectives and activities or to inform their questions and the pacing of the lesson, to match the students' different stages of learning. They often rely on learning mentors to support the least able students, and do not challenge the most able to reach higher levels. Learning mentors are most effective when they ask students to think for themselves rather than giving them the answer.
- In some lessons, such as English, students know the levels they are achieving. They are given 'curricular targets' which explain what they need to do to improve their work, although the targets are not always written in language they can understand. In marking their work, some teachers write comments which help students to know how to improve it. This is not the case in all lessons.
- While good attention is given to developing students' speaking and listening skills, their reading, writing and mathematical skills are not developed systematically across subjects. In mathematics lessons, students are not given enough practical activities or resources to help them develop mathematical understanding that they can apply in different situations.
- In the good and outstanding lessons, teachers have high expectations of students' independence and learning. They make effective use of assessment to plan clear learning objectives and activities to challenge and support all students to make good progress.
- In a drama lesson for students in Years 10 and 11, for instance, the teacher explained what progress would look like so that the students were clear about the expectations. They talked with great enthusiasm about their participation in the Schools Shakespeare Festival and their recent rehearsal of *Macbeth* at a theatre in Plymouth. The teacher constantly assessed their progress during the lesson and asked probing questions to deepen their responses and understanding. In taking their lead from the teacher, the students constantly evaluated their performance in order to improve it. This resulted in a very high standard of work. Students were word perfect in delivering their lines. Their movement, gesture, facial expression and tone of voice indicated an in-depth understanding of the play. When asked to evaluate each other's performance, one student exclaimed, 'I am glad she [Lady Macbeth] is not my wife!' Humour and positive relationships gave the students the confidence and self-esteem to participate and to accept constructive criticism.
- Positive relationships are a feature of all lessons and help students to engage in their learning.
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The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- Students' attitudes to learning are consistently positive. Students listen attentively to teachers and to each other, and few lessons are affected by low-level disruption.
 - Good behaviour is built on mutual respect between students and staff, and a sense of being valued. Students contribute to lessons and events such as school council meetings with increasing confidence and self-esteem. They are considerate and polite. They develop strong social skills and learn to communicate and interact with others exceptionally well.
 - Most of the parents who completed the Parent View survey, staff and students agree that behaviour is good and students feel safe in school. Students understand the importance of good attitudes and behaviour in school life, adult life and work.
 - Leaders and managers have successfully established a positive ethos in, and around, the school. Students conduct themselves well in lessons and at lunch and break times. They are punctual to lessons and their attendance is in line with the national average for secondary schools.
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- Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They say the very few instances of bullying are dealt with effectively by the staff.
- Behaviour is managed consistently well across the school. A wide range of interventions support those with challenging behaviour, including support from a strong pastoral team. There are clear improvements over time for these students, particularly in managing their own behaviour.
- Students say they feel safe at school and at alternative provision. They understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Senior and curriculum leaders are not promoting fast enough improvement in teaching and learning. Curriculum leaders are beginning to develop leadership skills in monitoring lessons, students' work, teachers' planning and information on students' progress, but the evaluation of this information does not identify suitably specific and measurable targets for subject improvement planning. It is also not used well enough to hold teachers to account for students' academic progress and to support their professional development. School improvement planning similarly lacks sufficiently measurable targets.
- The checking of students' academic progress towards the target of two levels of progress is becoming more systematic, accurate and rigorous. This is beginning to help teachers to use the targets and assessments in planning lessons to meet the differing learning needs of the students. The process is at an early stage, however, and is not yet used consistently well by all teachers.
- Arrangements for the performance management of teachers have been reviewed appropriately with a clear link between students' progress and pay progression.
- Professional development is rightly focusing on the development of students' literacy skills across subjects, including the teaching of phonics. While progress in speaking and listening is outstanding, it is not yet good in reading and writing.
- The Principal, senior leaders and governing body consistently communicate high expectations of providing for the specific disabilities and special educational needs of all students. As a National Leader of Education, the Principal supports other schools in providing for students' disabilities and special educational needs. The Principal, together with the senior leaders, has successfully developed a positive learning environment in the school and a curriculum that has re-engaged students in their learning and which is enhancing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Key to this success is the strong emphasis that is given to developing students' communication and interaction skills, and their good behaviour. The Principal is aware that the same emphasis needs to be given to promoting students' good academic progress across the school by improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school provides a typical secondary school curriculum with the full range of National Curriculum subjects. It is flexible, however, in providing a range of interventions which meet the specific needs of individual students. It also enhances their educational experiences through visits and work-related learning which interest and engage the students.
- The school works well with parents. Those who met with inspectors said the school communicates well with them and helps them to manage their children's disabilities and special educational needs, including behavioural needs. Most of the parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to another parent.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- The external consultant is providing suitable support for the school in developing leadership and management skills in self-evaluation. The local authority provides appropriate support in monitoring students' progress.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- has not, until recently, had the information to systematically challenge senior leaders to improve teaching and students' achievement
 - is becoming better informed about the quality of teaching and students' progress, through the school's improving monitoring of teaching and learning
 - is beginning to challenge senior leaders to improve teaching and students' achievement
 - ensures the efficient management of financial resources so that staff and resources are effectively deployed, and has overseen the review of the performance management procedures to ensure teachers are more effectively held to account
 - ensures the school makes effective use of the Year 7 catch-up premium and pupil premium to promote good progress for the students it supports
 - would benefit from external support in helping it to know what questions to ask of the information on students' progress, in order to hold the school to account for students' achievement in the context of this special school.
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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	137478
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	430297

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

Type of school	Academy special converter
School category	Residential special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Kent
Principal	Andy Barnett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01872 520385
Email address	secretary@pencalenick.org

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