

Pencalenick School

St Clement, Truro, TR1 1TE

Inspection dates 1—2 July 2015

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, supported by his leadership team, has high expectations of both students and staff.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has made a number of substantial improvements. A highly effective staff training programme and robust monitoring of students' learning have improved teaching and led to an increase in the rate of students' progress.
- Students make good progress from low starting points. They achieve well across a range of subjects.
- In the majority of subjects, students eligible for the pupil premium perform at least as well as others and often do better.
- Teaching is lively and motivates students very well. Teachers understand the needs of their students and have strong, productive relationships with them.
- Students use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in all subjects.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Students are extremely proud of their school and very keen to learn. Attendance levels are high and students enjoy coming to school.
- Students are very safe and well looked after. Good use of educational psychologists and parent support advisers helps students' progress.
- The governing body is good at challenging leaders and holding the school to account. They know the school well and ensure that funding is spent appropriately.
- Staff are proud of the school and its achievements. They are highly supportive of the headteacher and leadership team.
- Parents and carers believe that their children are happy at the school; the vast majority would recommend the school to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always give students adequate written feedback. As a result, they are not always clear what they need to do to improve.
- Classroom resources are not sufficiently well deployed to ensure that all students make the progress they should.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons across a range of subjects. Many of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the school’s leadership team. In addition, the inspectors listened to students read.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, students and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the 38 questionnaires returned by staff and the 25 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- A wide range of documentation was examined including student assessment data, attendance and behaviour records, self-evaluation procedures and development plans. Inspectors scrutinised the school’s procedures for and records of safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of students’ work.

Inspection team

Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pencalenick School is an 11 to 16 special school for students with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. It became an academy school in September 2011.
- The headteacher is a national leader in education and Pencalenick is part of a teaching school partnership with Truro and Penwith College.
- A large proportion of the students are boys.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- A small minority of students attend off-site provision at Helston Forest School and BF Adventure.
- The school does not enter any students early for examinations.
- The present Chair of the Governing Body is an interim appointment and a number of governors are new.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of written feedback to students by ensuring that teachers:
 - give students better information about how they can improve their work
 - require students to respond to written feedback appropriately.
- Make sure that classroom resources are used effectively to support the needs of individual students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is keen to achieve the very best outcomes for his students and has the strong support and commitment of his leadership team. Staff are very proud of the school and its achievements, and highly supportive of the headteacher and the leadership team. Although staff found some of the changes introduced since the last inspection challenging, such as the move to a more academic curriculum, they are determined to make the new arrangements work.
- As a result of the substantial number of improvements made since the last inspection, teaching and learning have improved and students are making faster progress.
- Leaders at all levels understand that they are accountable for whole-school improvements. Middle leaders are effective and now meet regularly with senior leaders and governors to develop initiatives such as literacy and numeracy across the school.
- The leadership team is working hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The effective and innovative staff training programme is carefully matched to meet staff needs and the priorities in the school development plan. The wide range of training available, which includes teaching and learning blogs and regular coaching sessions, has led to tangible improvements.
- Teachers' performance is monitored rigorously by the headteacher to determine staff targets and training needs. There are plans to delegate some of this responsibility to senior staff.
- The curriculum has broadened since the last inspection and now includes more academic subjects. In 2015, Year 11 students were able to take GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, dance and art. Suitable training has been provided to ensure that teachers have the necessary specialist knowledge to teach these subjects effectively.
- For students choosing vocational options, there is an appropriate range of off-site provision and work experience. This is regularly monitored by the senior leadership team to ensure its quality and the progress of students who attend. Some Year 11 students have more extended work experience. The expanded range of curriculum options has improved students' engagement and helped the students to make good progress. At the same time, effective careers advice helps students to be clear about what they want to do next. On leaving Pencalenick, all students enrol on courses suitable for their needs and aspirations.
- The school prepares students very well for life in modern Britain. Values, such as respect and tolerance, form the basis of the school rules which are displayed in each classroom and referred to on a daily basis. For example, inspectors saw students discussing the rules when considering how to behave towards one another in a group discussion. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is also clearly embedded in the curriculum. The inspectors saw many good examples, such as a drama lesson on bullying and a religious education lesson on what it means to be Sikh. In addition, an active school council helps students to understand how democracy works and numerous charity events, such as raising money for Nepal, encourage students to have responsibility for others.
- The school works hard to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Recent measures to make sure that all students do as well as they should in mathematics is a good example. Students study different faiths and religions, and assemblies are used to promote the idea of equality and to tackle discrimination.
- Parents and carers are confident that their children are happy at school and the vast majority would recommend the school to others. One parent told of how her son had attended numerous schools and that Pencalenick was the first school that had 'listened' to her and 'worked with her' to ensure his needs were met. She said the school was 'amazing'.
- The school has highly effective systems in place to ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff attend regular training. Senior staff monitor the attendance, progress and behaviour of students attending the off-site provision.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are effectively used. Eligible students are identified and their progress tracked throughout the academic year. The students are supported by tailored, one-to-one support to improve their subject knowledge and by additional activities to improve their social skills. The careful targeting of funding has meant that these groups have made very good progress in most subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Training undertaken by governors to ensure they are more effective at asking questions and holding leaders to account has meant that they are now better placed to challenge the school to improve. The governing body has a good range of expertise and experience; members include a former headteacher and a finance manager. Governors are effectively organised into committees.

- Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and know how well students are doing. They are clear about the priorities for the school and recognise the need to support the headteacher in robustly challenging areas of poor performance. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know that teachers must have consistent practice when giving feedback to students.
- Since the last inspection, the governing body has engaged far more closely with the school and individual governors visit the school more frequently. They have standardised the records of their school visits so that their observations can be shared.
- The governors scrutinise the school's finances carefully. They monitor the performance management of staff to ensure that salary progression is related to students' achievement. They know how the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding are spent and are aware of the impact they have on students' progress.
- The governing body fulfils all its safeguarding responsibilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are exceptionally proud of their school. They are keen to tell visitors all about it and how much they enjoy school life. When asked by an inspector what they would do to improve the school, one student replied, 'Nothing – it is wonderful!'
- Students show impressive enthusiasm for learning. In lessons, they constantly ask questions or explore the resources provided, even when it is time for break. Students' work, in books and on display, is always neatly presented.
- Disruptive behaviour is rare and managed extremely effectively. Exclusions are also very rare. In the current academic year, there have been very few fixed-term exclusions. In these instances, students completed work at home and quickly returned to school.
- Given the heightened level of anxiety that some students exhibit, the school enables the students to manage their behaviour exceptionally well. The effective use of additional services, such as those provided by educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, further supports students to manage their behaviour, communicate and learn.
- Students' behaviour at lunch and break time is impeccable. In the canteen, students wait in an orderly queue and, after eating, clear away plates without being told to do so. Outside, staff set up structured play activities and model good play behaviours. As a result, all students are enthusiastically engaged in a social or play activity at lunchtime.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The environment is extremely secure and there are a large number of staff on duty at break and lunchtime. Staff engage consistently with students at these times to ensure safety and reinforce good behaviour.
- The off-site provision is regularly monitored to ensure the safety of students at all times.
- Students said that they feel very safe at school. They were confident that incidents of bullying are rare and the school's incident records confirm this. They know about the different forms of bullying and explained that learning about this is part of their lessons. Students know whom to go to if they have any problems.
- The vast majority of parents agreed that their children feel safe at school. Students enjoy school and, as a consequence, almost all attend regularly. The school has high expectations regarding attendance, so that on the first day of a student's absence the parents are instantly contacted. Medical issues are the main reason for non-attendance. In these cases well-tailored, individual programmes are created so that students can work from home.
- The caring ethos and positive relationships across the school contribute significantly to students' feelings of safety.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. In the majority of lessons, teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. In some of the best lessons, for example, the teachers identified three targets that could be achieved in the lesson and asked students to choose the target they felt confident they could manage. In one lesson, a student chose a higher target than the teacher expected because he wanted to be the 'very best'.

- Teaching is characterised by strong relationships and productive interactions between staff and students. Teaching is lively and motivates students very well. For example, in one lesson, the teacher used an outdoor space imaginatively to support the development of number identification. Teachers skilfully use questions to develop students' knowledge and understanding and check on how well the students are learning. In many lessons, the majority of questions come from the students themselves, who are keen to know more.
- Students are encouraged to learn independently and there were many examples of them doing so. Exceptional practice was observed when autistic students, with some of the greatest learning difficulties, were taught to follow pictorial instructions as part of the class routine. They were then able to work independently on a different set of tasks.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and their use of language to explain ideas and give instructions is also very good. Because teachers use subject-specific words appropriately, there are many good examples of students also using specialist language to show what they had learnt in previous lessons.
- The quality of teachers' marking is of uneven quality. In many cases, marking does not show students clearly enough what they need to do in order to improve their work. Where good feedback is given, teachers do not always check that the students have responded and made the necessary changes.
- Good use is made of learning mentors in the classroom. Learning mentors skilfully help anxious students to engage in the lesson, lead small group discussions and record students' progress.
- Although a good range of resources, including computers, books and worksheets, is available in the classrooms, resources are not always closely enough matched to the needs of individual students. For example, in one lesson all the students were instructed to do the same piece of writing on a computer. Two students were able to use the computer independently and made good progress while others struggled, or were unsure what to write, and had to wait for assistance.
- The school's effective literacy and numeracy strategies are well implemented by teachers in all years. For example, marking identifies literacy errors in students' work informs literacy targets. As a result, students make good progress in their communication, literacy and mathematics skills, which they use effectively in all subjects. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well to those less able readers and the use of a new reading scheme ensures that students read widely and regularly.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Because of their learning difficulties, students' attainment on entry is well below that expected for their age. Once in school, their achievement is good. The school's own data and inspection findings show that students are making the expected progress, and often more than this, in all year groups and in the vast majority of subjects. The achievement of the small group of students attending off-site provision is also good. Students make exceptional progress in English and good or better progress in mathematics.
- In 2014, some Year 11 students did not do as well as they should have in mathematics. The school made significant changes to secure improvements. A new specialist head of department was appointed and the curriculum changed. Students' progress in mathematics, across year groups, is now significantly better, with some students being entered for GCSE mathematics in Year 11.
- The progress of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium in English exceeds that of other students across all year groups. In mathematics, eligible students in most year groups make faster progress than their peers.
- All groups of students, including those eligible for additional funding and those with a diagnosis of autism or communication difficulties, achieve well. Changes to the curriculum, and specifically the move towards GCSE entry, have now ensured that the most-able students make at least good progress. High expectations and effective target setting in lessons ensure that students have clear and achievable goals. Consequently, good progress was observed in the majority of lessons.
- Students' reading is very good, with the majority of students making good or better progress during their time at school. Good progress is also made by those on vocational courses and those who attend the alternative provision. Close links with local colleges facilitate students' progression to post-16 courses and students are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

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

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| Unique reference number | 137478 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC041223 |
| Local authority | Cornwall |
| Inspection number | 462527 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy alternative provision converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 110 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Guy Chappell |
| Headteacher | Andy Barnett |
| Date of previous school inspection | October 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01872 520385 |
| Fax number | n/a |
| Email address | enquiries@pencalenick.org |

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