

Caradon Alternative Provision Academy

West Street, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 6BS

Inspection dates

9–10 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has been through a period of considerable changes in staff that have disrupted the school's drive for improvement.
- Several middle leaders are new to their roles and have begun to draw up improvement plans, but not all of these contain actions to deal with weaknesses in assessment and planning.
- Teachers are not making effective use of assessment information to ensure that pupils are provided with activities that meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including the most-able. This was an area for improvement at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is not consistently good in all key stages and subjects. Pupils are sometimes provided with work that does not build on their previous learning or that they have already covered. As a result, pupils' progress requires improvement, particularly in the primary key stages and in science.
- Monitoring by senior leaders does not routinely focus on the attainment and progress of pupils. As a result, weaknesses noted in the quality of teachers' assessment and planning at the time of the previous inspection remain as areas for improvement.
- The school's governance arrangements include strategic and local organisations that monitor the school's performance closely. Governors have provided effective support through a period of staff change.
- Information on the website relating to Caradon Alternative Provision Academy remains limited: for example, there is little information on the school's latest results at national examinations.
- At the time of the inspection, the school's website did not contain the latest policies on pupils' welfare. As a result, the school's work to maintain pupils' welfare requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The relationship between staff and pupils is a special and strong feature of the school. It is a key factor in ensuring that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.
- The majority of Year 11 pupils achieved GCSE grades A* to G last year and all have moved on to study for further qualifications or to employment with training.
- The new headteacher has been quick to provide stability and support for staff, which has created a collaborative staff team. He has had a notably strong impact on improving pupils' behaviour and personal development in the school, restoring these aspects to the high levels reported at the time of the previous inspection.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - monitoring focuses on the progress of different groups to provide teachers with clear information to help them accelerate pupils' learning
 - all subject and phase improvement plans include actions to develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - the school's website provides information on pupils' achievement and up-to-date information and policies.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - use information on pupils' achievement and prior attainment to plan learning which supports and challenges them
 - ensure that pupils improve their work as a result of the feedback provided.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress, particularly in the primary key stages and in science, by ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to plan activities that allow pupils to rapidly develop their knowledge and skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes in the senior leadership team and staffing that have disrupted the school's performance. The new headteacher has worked well to bring stability, and to develop a supportive and friendly environment. He has re-established pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning. However, areas for improvement noted at the time of the previous inspection, such as ensuring that teachers set tasks that match learners' needs and improving pupils' achievement in science, have not been fully resolved.
- Monitoring by senior leaders does not provide specific information to help teachers to improve pupils' progress. Monitoring is completed regularly but does not sufficiently focus on the progress different groups of pupils are making in a subject. Leaders have used information to set performance targets that are aligned with the school's priority development areas, but not all staff have targets to improve the use of assessment in setting activities that precisely match pupils' needs.
- Many of the school's middle leaders are new to their roles this academic year and have had too little time in post to make a difference. With the support of the headteacher, new leaders of the primary phase, secondary phase, mathematics, English, and design and technology have produced plans to deal with weaknesses, but not all contain actions to address priority areas. However, middle leaders are helping to maintain the breadth of curriculum on offer and make the curriculum more relevant and engaging.
- Under previous leadership, teachers describe receiving more limited support and development. The new headteacher has shown a clear determination to raise the school's performance that has resulted in a more collaborative team approach. He displays a clear willingness to improve and a desire to draw on the wide range of expertise available across the school to provide more subject-specialist support.
- Leaders have developed the school's curriculum with an increased emphasis on personal, social, health and economic education that has helped improve pupils' behaviour and personal development. Pupils develop increasingly mature attitudes as well as a tolerance of others and respect for the law. In turn, visiting speakers, including community police officers, have been impressed by the thoughtful response shown by pupils.
- Pupils speak positively about their plans for the next stage of their lives. Year 11 pupils receive timely careers advice, guidance and information. The school has developed a close working partnership with advisers and local colleges that resulted in Year 11 pupils moving on to further education or employment with training at the end of the previous academic year.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The school's main website does not include helpful and accessible information for parents. The website does not include pupils' examination results, the curriculum specific to the school and all of the latest policies and procedures. Information on the website was updated during the inspection to comply with requirements. For example, the school receives very little direct pupil premium funding but governors have updated the website to provide an evaluation of its impact on pupils' achievement.
 - Governance arrangements draw on the specific skills and expertise of a range of professionals. The school's governance arrangements include strategic and local organisations that monitor the performance of the school. The executive headteacher provides the school board with detailed and informative monthly briefings that provide governors with a clear understanding of finances, rates of attendance, exclusions and safeguarding referrals at each school. Governors monitor the school's finances closely, including the effectiveness of the use of the sport premium for primary pupils, and they have successfully reduced agency staff supply costs.
 - Governors and the chief executive have acted with determination to deal with weaker performance in leadership and teaching. They have taken decisive action to address turbulence in staffing and stabilise the school's leadership. Their actions have supported the school and ensure that it is better placed to improve further.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. However, during recent changes there has been a lack of clarity over some specific areas of responsibility for pupils' welfare. Staff at the school were using an out-of-date safeguarding policy and some checks completed at central office were not included on the school's single central record. Despite this, on a day-to-day basis staff are responsive to pupils' needs; their work on the ground to share concerns with other agencies and services is well evidenced and effective.

- Staff have shown that they are not afraid to challenge other agencies or to report their concerns where they feel that agencies have been slow to respond. The newly appointed family support manager has held meetings with other agencies that provide a more detailed and informative analysis of safeguarding arrangements, including pupils vulnerable to more extreme views.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Some teachers set activities that do not meet pupils' knowledge and ability levels well. Information gathered during lessons and through marking is not always used to set activities that are closely in line with pupils' abilities and individual needs. As a consequence, pupils do not make good progress across subjects and key stages, particularly in the primary phase and in science.
- Assessments of pupils' starting points are not always providing an accurate picture of pupils' subject knowledge and abilities. As a result, work set on the basis of these assessments is not always at the right level.
- Pupils' books show that some pupils do not make good progress because they are given work that is too hard or too easy. On occasions, pupils are expected to repeat activities that they have already completed on a previous occasion.
- Where teaching is more effective, staff are quick to set activities that challenge pupils to think more deeply or provide marking that encourages pupils to give better responses. However, this does not happen enough in lessons and teachers' marking. As a result, pupils, especially the most-able, are not regularly challenged to make more rapid progress.
- Some longer-serving staff report that they have only recently been provided with guidance and support to develop their practice. Since the headteacher's appointment, staff across the school have built strong relationships; their willingness to work collaboratively and provide support for each other is evident.
- Teaching assistants help pupils to make good gains in their personal and social skills but do not always help pupils to develop their achievement. Where they work alongside pupils to develop their reading skills or use questions well to probe pupils' thinking, teaching assistants help pupils to develop their understanding well. However, on other occasions they are too quick to provide pupils with the answer rather than encourage pupils to work it out for themselves.
- The teaching of reading is a strong feature in the school. In English lessons, older pupils read and solve cryptic problems that quickly develop their reading comprehension skills. Younger pupils have been provided with individual support to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds, and develop their early reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **requires improvement**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Some of the procedures and policies to maintain pupils' well-being and safety were out of date at the time of the inspection. Senior leaders have reacted promptly to provide staff with up-to-date versions that comply with the latest guidance on keeping children safe.
- Pupils' social, spiritual and cultural development is strong. As a result, pupils show a tolerance of others and report limited bullying or victimisation. They report that they feel safe on the school site.
- For many pupils, their experience of education has previously been one of isolation and rejection. Here they are made to feel part of the school. One said, 'I feel I fit in here and I didn't before.' They feel that staff listen to them and will respond.
- Pupils are helped to develop a more respectful moral attitude. They are set clear boundaries and show respect and understanding of the school's rules and regulations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour has improved since the arrival of the current headteacher and is now back to the level found at the time of the previous inspection. Leaders have developed a staff team that shares a considerate and thoughtful approach to managing behaviour, and an improved system that rewards and encourages good behaviour.

- Adults use a range of strategies to maintain pupils' good conduct with a consistent approach that helps to reduce incidents of challenging behaviour. Adults skilfully change places when pupils are showing signs of anxiety so that they avoid building a confrontation with a pupil.
- Breaktimes are friendly and sociable events where strong caring relationships are evident. Adults and pupils participate in a wide range of activities, with something on offer that appeals to each pupil. Be it basketball, a card game, the pool table or simply a chat while eating a piece of toast, the net result is that pupils are ready to return to their lessons at the end of the break with a positive attitude.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are higher while in the school than in their previous settings. Attendance over this term and since the start of the academic year has been consistently above the majority of other alternative providers in the local authority.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Evidence in pupils' books shows that the progress of different groups of pupils, including the most-able and disadvantaged, is not good enough. Too often, activities do not build on pupils' subject knowledge and skills. Information available to teachers is not used effectively to set work at the right level and challenge pupils to make better progress.
- Pupils are not making good progress in science. Since September, younger pupils have had very limited, if any, time to study science. While improving, older pupils have too few opportunities to develop their scientific knowledge and skills through engaging activities, including practical investigations. The newly appointed leader of the primary phase has identified the strengths and weaknesses of the current primary provision and, with the headteacher, has developed appropriate plans to extend the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are not regularly receiving sufficient effective support that helps them to catch up. Additional adult support is helping this group of pupils to make better reading progress; staff have received specific training in helping pupils to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds that is making a positive difference. However, pupils who have special educational needs or disability, particularly in the primary classes, are making less progress in punctuation, grammar and mathematics.
- In 2015, the majority of pupils in Year 11 achieved GCSE passes at A* to G, together with a range of functional skills qualifications. Pupils who left Year 11 at the end of 2015 all found college placements or employment with training. The school has improved the quality of careers advice and guidance so that pupils in the current Year 11 have already begun to accept placements.
- Older pupils make good progress in English, particularly in their reading. Engaging activities develop their comprehension skills and encourage pupils to quickly scan a text to solve a cryptic puzzle. Positive relationships are used well to provide weekly opportunities for older pupils to develop their reading and communication skills as they read aloud one to one with an adult.
- The breadth of the curriculum on offer ensures that pupils are able to participate in many activities that are of interest to them and help to develop their personal and social skills. Older pupils enjoy using a mechanical pottery wheel and describe how adults have helped them to produce increasingly intricate ceramic bowls and vases. Pupils developed their understanding of modern British society as they created product designs for clothing and food while responding thoughtfully to a radio news bulletin.

School details

Unique reference number	139740
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10011160

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Casson
Headteacher/Principal	Haydn Pearse
Telephone number	01579 340405
Website	www.acornacademycornwall.org.uk
Email address	hpearse@acornacademycornwall.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2012

Information about this school

- On 1 June 2013, the previous school converted to academy status to become Caradon Alternative Education Provider and part of the Acorn Multi Academy Trust. The school is part of a group of seven alternative education providers in Cornwall managed by the trust.
- The school is on a single site in Liskeard, offering places for up to 31 pupils who have been permanently excluded, or who are at risk of exclusion, from their mainstream schools.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number have special educational needs. A larger than typical proportion of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- The executive headteacher works at the school one day a week, advises the headteacher and is a member of the management committee.
- During this academic year, a number of staff have joined the school including three class teachers, two teaching assistants, a learning mentor, family support manager and office manager. The headteacher, previously acting headteacher, was appointed in the autumn term of 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of lessons covering both primary classes, and most subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4. Inspectors conducted joint observations of four lessons with the school improvement partner and the headteacher. The team inspector and headteacher walked through the school to look at the school's promotion of spiritual, moral and social education.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally during lessons and breaktimes. They looked at the pupils' books and work, and examined their assessment records.
- A wide range of information provided by the school was reviewed, including management committee meeting minutes, reports to the board of governors, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding records, and records of behaviour incidents and when physical restraint had been used.
- Inspectors considered responses from five parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with one parent. Three members of staff responded to the staff survey.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the local committee, and the lead inspector spoke with the previous chair.

Inspection team

Mark Lindfield, lead inspector

Catherine Leahy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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