

Gulval School

Gulval, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 3BJ

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal leads with a relentless ambition for excellence. He leads by example to create a haven where pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite towards one another, staff and visitors. Older pupils lead activities for younger pupils and serve as strong role models.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school's strong emphasis on modern British values helps pupils to understand and respect others who may have different views or lifestyles to their own.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers make sure that pupils always know what is expected of them. Pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Consistently strong teaching results in pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in the early years and key stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders use funding effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need. Consequently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is accelerating. Differences between their attainment and that of pupils nationally are diminishing.
- The provision for the early years is good. Most notably, the rich indoor and outdoor learning environment provides pupils with safe and stimulating places to learn and explore. Consequently, children display high levels of interest and engagement.
- Staff training and subject support networks facilitated by the Adventure Learning Academy Trust (ALAT) are leading to continually improving standards. Staff morale is high.
- New middle leaders share the principal's insatiable appetite for improvement; however, they do not yet have a sufficiently strong understanding of how well pupils are achieving in the area they have responsibility for.
- The varied and diverse curriculum offers pupils many exciting opportunities to learn. The use of the outdoors is a particular strength.
- The science curriculum, although broad, does not deepen sufficiently pupils' mathematical or scientific knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Although links across curriculum subjects are well established, pupils' writing in English is of a higher quality than in other subjects where sometimes presentation and the accuracy of grammar and punctuation falters.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that middle leaders, including in the early years, develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their respective areas.
- Further improve teaching and pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teaching in science and mathematics consistently deepens pupils' understanding and skills in these subjects, particularly for the most able
 - pupils develop the high level of accuracy in their writing in subjects across the curriculum as they do in English.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal's vision and moral purpose has created an inclusive school where expectations are high. Staff share the principal's ambitions for the pupils. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and make good progress.
- The principal's dynamic approach has inspired a renewed faith in the school. He has not shied away from making difficult decisions. Pupil numbers on roll are ever-increasing and have doubled since 2014. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent, whose view was typical, said 'The staff are excellent in seeing the value in every child and making each child feel good about themselves and their achievements.'
- The principal and executive principal have been a formidable force in driving school improvement. They have dealt with underperformance rigorously. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably.
- The school's curriculum, including homework, provides rich experiences that stimulate pupils' interests. Teachers make good use of the extensive grounds. For example, pupils grow and sell their own produce grown in the polytunnel and school orchard. Pupils engage with playground paintings of Cornish maps and mountain ranges at playtimes, making up games and testing each other's knowledge of key facts.
- Subject leaders, the majority of whom are new in post, are enthusiastic and share the principal's high aspirations for the pupils. The multi-academy trust is providing the training these leaders need to gain a clear understanding of their role in strengthening teaching and improving outcomes for pupils. However, this work is in its early stages.
- Middle leaders do not yet have a clear enough overview of the outcomes in their subject areas. New assessment routines do not yet enable leaders to have a fully accurate view of pupils' attainment and progress across the school and in various subjects.
- The pupil premium funding has been wisely spent and so has a positive impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. School leaders plan expenditure carefully and evaluate its impact so that pupils benefit. Similarly, the funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- The school's curriculum demonstrates leaders' commitment to providing high-quality and daily physical activities. All pupils take part in the '1K a day' challenge and 95% of pupils have participated in at least one of the many after-school sports clubs. Consequently, the sport premium is having a positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being.
- The principal has tirelessly built links with the local community. As a result, the school acts as a central cog in the wheel of the community. This supports pupils' outstanding social, moral and cultural development and equips them well to become responsible citizens.
- Parents were particularly effusive about the approachability of the principal and how he

actively seeks and responds to their views.

Governance of the school

- The trust board rightly have confidence in the principal's leadership and are now skilfully managing the delegation of some governance responsibilities to a local 'drive team'. This is increasing the governance capacity at Gulval. The drive team have closely monitored and effectively challenged leaders to improve pupils' attendance. The impact of their scrutiny can already be seen in the outstanding provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Governors have an acutely accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that funding, including the pupil premium, is used carefully to have maximum impact. They hold leaders to account closely.
- The challenge from the rapid improvement group (RIG) has supported continued improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. In addition, the group oversees a robust performance management system that draws on a wide range of sources. This work has supported the principal in establishing an effective team of teaching staff.
- The level of scrutiny and challenge from governance has supported the principal in moving the pace of improvement so that previous gaps in pupils' learning have been minimised.
- Governors have accurately identified the need to increase the leadership capacity in this growing school. A robust middle leadership programme is in place. Middle leaders are positive about the challenge and support they receive. However, this work is embryonic.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on pupils having the confidence to debate issues. It is central to the school's work. Pupils and staff are empowered to 'speak up'. As a result, pupils feel safe and are confident to report their worries or concerns.
- Leaders are fervent in ensuring that staff receive regular and up-to-date training in safeguarding. Consequently, staff know exactly what to do when they have concerns and are confident in following guidelines. Staff know the pupils well and are acutely alert to any changes in a pupil's demeanour that may indicate harm.
- Governors' involvement has improved the safety of the site, which is secure and well maintained.
- Staff take pride in knowing each pupil and their family well. Consequently, they can arrange the best support when it is needed. Parents and pupils comment on how they trust the staff and can confide in them.
- The procedures for checking the suitability of staff before appointment are robust and the statutory checks are carried out. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that procedures are rigorously adhered to.

- School administrators are assiduous in their record-keeping of attendance. This allows the principal to take swift action in dealing with pupil absence and lateness. Consequently, attendance is improving quickly to be in line with the national average. The attendance for the few pupils who are persistently absent is rising quickly.
- Leaders with specific responsibilities for safeguarding are diligent in carrying out their duties. They are unremitting in their work with other agencies who can help to ensure that each pupil is safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff share the principal's passion and high expectations. Teachers go to great lengths to make learning accessible and fun for the pupils. Relationships are warm between staff and pupils. Consequently, pupils have extremely positive attitudes to their learning. As one parent, typical of many, put it, 'The school has such a good vibe. All staff at all levels work above and beyond.'
- Teachers' effective use of assessment and their good subject knowledge ensure that pupils gain and consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects. Pupils excitedly told the inspectors about their discoveries as archaeologists in history lessons, for instance.
- Teachers give increasingly precise advice so that pupils know what to do next. Pupils respond eagerly to this advice and encouragement and, as a result, make good progress.
- Teachers establish clear routines for pupils and have high expectations of behaviour in class. This ensures that no time is wasted. Pupils' enthusiasm to learn and their responsible behaviour contributes to the good, and sometimes accelerated, progress that pupils make.
- The teaching of phonics is particularly strong. Daily phonics sessions in the Reception Year and in key stage 1 are highly effective in developing early reading and writing skills.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide extremely effective support to pupils. Their subject knowledge is strong. Consequently, they are well placed to provide pupils with the support and encouragement needed to become resilient and motivated learners.
- Teachers are effective in creating home learning activities that enthuse pupils and reinforce their key skills. Pupils and parents told inspectors that they find homework to be inspiring and engaging. One parent commented that it often creates a sense of adventure.
- Teachers value working with leaders to improve their knowledge and understanding of the new curriculum. An increased focus on developing pupils' mathematical reasoning skills is leading to strongly improving outcomes. Teachers are providing pupils with a breadth of experiences, including in science, so that pupils 'think scientifically'.
- Senior leaders and teachers recognise that more can be done to deepen pupils' thinking and reasoning, in particular for the most able pupils in science and mathematics.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils enter the school at the beginning of the day with broad smiling faces. Lessons are typically a hive of buzz and excitement. Play and lunchtimes times are well supervised. There is an air of harmony and happiness as pupils play together in the vibrant and enriched environment.
- Pupils have a powerful voice in this school. They are outstanding ambassadors for the school. Their eyes light up as they speak with immense pride and genuine enthusiasm about their school. They truly live out the school's values of 'Respect yourself, respect one another and respect the environment'.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, such as school council, lunchtime helpers and fund-raisers. The pupils told the inspectors 'We all have a role in making our school a happy place to be.' One parent commented: 'Children at Gulval are made to feel that they matter; each and every pupil is integral to the team. There is a strong sense of family and belonging.'
- Pupils know how to stay safe to manage risk. The outdoor learning curriculum is carefully planned to enable pupils to learn and be challenged in a safe and controlled environment. Residential and other activities such as 'Survival School' provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop resilience with physical challenges.
- Pupils say that bullying rarely happens in school but that on the rare occasions there are 'fallings out' adults deal with it swiftly. Pupils have tremendous confidence in staff. Records of behavioural incidents confirm this. Pupils told the inspector that 'It is far more likely that one of us would suffer from cyber bullying than bullying in school. We have to be careful and not give details over the internet and must always know who we are talking to.'
- The school supports an ethos of harmony and actively prevents discrimination. Pupils can articulate the similarities and differences between different cultures and speak eloquently about valuing people's differences; as one child mentioned 'Different is just interesting. Being happy is what is important.' One parent's comment, typical of many said, 'Differences aren't just accepted at Gulval, they are celebrated.'
- Pupils say that they feel safe and are well cared for. They told the inspector about their 'Safety days'. Pupils feel listened to and trust adults who work with them. Safety and moral aspects are successfully woven into the school's personal, social and health education curriculum (PSHE). For example, pupils consider stereotypes in 'Cinderella'.
- Gulval is an inclusive school. Leaders provide good-quality support for families. The school acts as a central cog in the wheel of the community. As a result, pupils are confident and considerate and know what it is to be a responsible citizen and contribute to society. This is reflected in their excellent fund-raising work.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are well attended and provide a healthy start and end to the school day. The leader has created a calm and nurturing environment for pupils.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the support their children receive. They say that they

cannot praise the school enough for how well it cares for its pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They concentrate hard in lessons and work with enthusiasm and determination. The transition between play and lessons is seamless because pupils are so enthused by their learning.
- Pupils want to work hard in lessons and do so.
- Pupils of all ages play and work well together in this harmonious school. For example, in lessons and at playtimes, pupils share resources and include others kindly in their activities so that nobody is left out.
- Pupils' attendance is improving rapidly. Leaders and administrators leave no stone unturned to get pupils into school. The school works closely with other agencies to ensure that families receive the support they need in getting their children to school. Although the school has adopted a number of awards to encourage pupils' good attendance, pupils say 'we love school anyway'. When pupils are away because of medical issues, they are supported to catch up with their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published outcomes for 2016 in key stage 2 show that pupils' progress was in the top 5% of schools nationally. Progress in reading and writing was particularly strong.
- The school promotes reading heartily. It is taught well and consequently pupils read with enjoyment. Key stage 2 outcomes for 2016 show that more pupils achieved the highest standard in reading than others did nationally at key stages 1 and 2. The dip in Year 1 phonics outcomes last year has been reversed. This year, the number of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics is in line with the national average.
- Better-targeted intervention for pupils who need to catch up is effectively tackling pupils' gaps in learning. The majority of pupils who did not meet the expected standard in phonics last year have caught up.
- The majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly in their personal development. Pupils achieve well from their starting points because of teachers' effective assessment, well-targeted plans and close work with families.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Effective support and intervention is speeding up the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that differences are diminishing. The differences seen in the 2016 end of key stage 2 outcomes in science, spelling and mathematics are not reflected in current pupils' outcomes.
- The school promotes physical education well. Pupils are challenged to learn new skills and achieve well.
- Pupils' writing reflects their wide reading. They use a rich vocabulary to make their writing engaging for the reader. Spelling and grammar is mainly accurate and reflects

pupils' good progress across the year.

- Writing across other areas of the curriculum is more variable and does not reflect a similar high standard. Writing in subjects such as history and geography is sometimes of a lower standard than that in pupils' English books. Writing in these subjects reflects repeated errors in spelling and a weaker application of grammar and punctuation skills than is seen in English books.
- The majority of current pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are making faster progress this year in mathematics than was the case last year. Teachers have rightly increased the amount of practice they give pupils in using and applying their mathematical skills. As a result, outcomes are good. Leaders recognise that there is still more to do to fully embed work to deepen pupils' mathematical thinking.
- In 2016, outcomes in science were broadly in line with national averages at key stages 1 and 2. Pupils gain an age-appropriate range of scientific skills, knowledge and understanding. However, the most able scientists do not receive sufficient challenge in deepening their understanding in science.
- Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year in 2016 saw a significant improvement from 2015 to be above the national average. However, leaders recognise that the progress of children's writing in the Reception class, although good, is slower than in other areas of learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year are good. Children make good progress from their starting points. In 2016, outcomes were broadly in line with the national average. This represents a significant improvement from 2015.
- The environment is well prepared and presented to meet children's needs. It provides a vibrant setting and, in particular, supports children's personal social and emotional development and their communication, language and literacy. As a result, children demonstrate curiosity, are motivated to learn and make good progress.
- The class teacher has the highest of expectations for children's behaviour. Consequently, children interact well, form strong relationships and sustain interest in their learning.
- Staff form effective relationships with parents. As a result, parents work closely with the school and contribute to their children's assessment. They say that school helps them to support their children's learning at home. This is making a positive contribution to the good progress their children make.
- Adults provide high-quality support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly with their personal and social skills.
- Adults provide focused support for the few disadvantaged children in Reception. Consequently, they make good progress from their starting points. Leaders are effective in deploying the pupil premium funding and make close and careful checks to ensure that the funding is supporting accelerated progress for the most vulnerable children.

- Adults use assessment well to plan activities to support children's development across all areas of learning. Consequently, children become successful independent learners and make good progress so that they are ready for Year 1.
- Teachers know the children well. As a result, they plan activities to meet children's needs, whatever their starting points. However, leaders recognise that greater precision is needed with teachers' initial assessments when children join the school.
- Leaders of the child development centre are highly effective in managing children's transition to their school placements. Staffs' high expectations support children's development. Adults' strong knowledge of the children in the care supports precise assessment of the child's needs so that children make good progress and have the right resources in place when they move into full-time education.
- Leaders have created a safe and secure learning environment. All adults are trained to keep children safe. Well-considered risk assessments for activities demonstrate staff vigilance in this important work.

School details

Unique reference number	140837
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10033109

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	Adventure Learning Academy Trust
Chief operating officer	Mary McKeeman
Principal	Paul Baker
Telephone number	01736 364747
Website	gulvalschool.org.uk
Email address	secretary@gulvalschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government's floor standards.
- The school converted to become an academy sponsored by Adventure Learning Academy Trust in June 2014.
- The trust removed local governance when the school became an academy. Until recently, governance has been delegated to the rapid improvement group (RIG). The trust has recently set up a local 'drive team' in order to distribute aspects of governance to a local level. The RIG report to the accountability, review and challenge group (ARC), who in turn report to the board of directors.
- The school is smaller than the average primary. There is a Reception class and four

mixed-aged classes.

- A child development centre is located on the primary school site and is managed by the board of governors. The centre is a specialist assessment nursery for up to 12 pre-school aged children with additional needs. It draws from a catchment across west Cornwall. This centre runs in-reach and out-reach support by a multidisciplinary team of professionals to support the transition process for children starting school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes across the school, mostly jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions took place with the principal, executive principal, chief operating officer, senior and middle leaders, a newly qualified teacher and a member of the 'drive team'. In addition, the inspector met with the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the teacher of the child development centre and the county lead for children's development centres in Cornwall.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including minutes from governance meetings, school improvement plans and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspectors gained the views of pupils throughout the inspection, including at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books together with the senior leaders, to establish the current quality of pupils' work and progress over time.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to two groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- An inspector conducted a walk around the school with pupils to look at curriculum displays, the promotion of British values and to find out how they feel about their learning.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and considered 33 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as the school's own survey results.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stewart Gale	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nathan Kemp	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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