

Lostwithiel School

Bodmin Hill, Lostwithiel, Cornwall PL22 0AJ

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Until recently, weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have led to the underachievement of pupils at the end of key stage 2. In mathematics, pupils' progress from their key stage 1 starting points has been significantly below that of other pupils nationally.
- Over time, leaders, including governors and trustees, have not addressed this underachievement with the required level of urgency. However, recently implemented improvements are now resulting in greater rates of progress for current pupils.
- Minutes of meetings do not provide sufficient evidence that governors are stringent in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Middle leaders do not yet have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to bring about sustained improvements in their subjects.
- The school's plans to bring about further improvement lack rigour. Plans, including those for spending pupil premium funding, are not fully evaluated for the impact they are having on pupils' outcomes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable across year groups and subjects. There are gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge and teachers are not consistently providing sufficient challenge for their most able pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. Writing and mathematical skills are not developed appropriately across the curriculum.
- Safeguarding is effective but there are gaps in some of the school's training records.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make a strong start in early years. They make good progress from their different starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are above national averages. The teaching of phonics is strong. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is above the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. Pupils feel safe and enjoy attending. Leaders' actions to reduce absences have resulted in attendance now being above the national average.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are fully supportive of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise outcomes across the school by:
 - further increasing rates of progress across key stage 2 so that greater proportions of pupils, especially the most able, are working consistently at the higher standards
 - providing pupils with greater opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities that provide greater challenge for their most able pupils
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge across a range of subjects
 - ensuring that, in mathematics, teachers provide pupils of all abilities with opportunities to deepen their understanding and apply their skills in different contexts
 - providing pupils with greater opportunities to hone their writing skills across different genres and subjects
 - ensuring that teachers use the school's feedback policy consistently.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that leaders evaluate their improvement plans by considering the impact actions are having on raising pupils' outcomes and use their evaluations to modify future provision
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so they make a more significant contribution to school improvement
 - reviewing the school's curriculum so that it enables pupils of all ages and abilities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects
 - ensuring that minutes of governors' meetings show the work that governors are doing in holding leaders to account and monitoring the impact of their spending decisions
 - adding greater rigour to the school's methods for recording safeguarding training.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, the challenge and support provided by the Peninsula Learning Trust (PLT) have not been adequately robust. Owing to turbulence in the trust's leadership, trustees have been too slow to recognise weaknesses in the quality of teaching and the impact this has had on pupils' progress. Additionally, trustees have not had a sufficient level of strategic oversight. This has resulted in senior leaders having to take on additional roles, for example overseeing recent building projects. This has overburdened leaders and has reduced the speed with which they have been able to address identified weaknesses in teaching.
- Leaders, including governors and the trust, now demonstrate good capacity for future improvement. The newly appointed chief executive officer is an experienced primary leader and has quickly acquired a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and its vulnerabilities. Leaders can demonstrate that their actions have led to key improvements in the school, for example in developing pupils' learning behaviours and reducing rates of absence.
- The headteacher is ambitious for the school and holds a clear vision for its future direction. She is ably supported by an assistant headteacher and, collectively, they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths, as well as the areas that require improvement. School development planning generally addresses the appropriate priorities. However, success criteria are not consistently focused on the impact that leaders' actions are intended to have on pupils' outcomes. Similarly, the success of a plan is often evaluated in terms of whether an action has taken place rather than its impact.
- Leaders have not sufficiently developed the skills, knowledge and understanding of middle leaders. These leaders do not demonstrate a secure understanding of assessment information and how this can be used to update their action plans. Additionally, some middle leaders do not have a secure knowledge of their subject's curriculum. Therefore, they are not able to demonstrate good practice in their own classrooms. This is affecting their ability to have an impact on raising the quality of teaching in their subjects and, therefore, slowing school improvement.
- The headteacher has established a robust system for managing the performance of staff. She has high expectations and a secure understanding of what constitutes high-quality teaching. Senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and systematic. Consequently, they have an accurate understanding of where teaching is strongest and where it requires improvement. This process has been effective in developing teachers' skills and, crucially, eliminating incidents where, historically, teaching has been identified as inadequate.
- Leaders are not making use of their evaluations of initiatives and interventions to refine their plans and inform future provision. For example, discussions about pupils' progress are not recorded. As a result, leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), are unable to evaluate which interventions are proving the most effective in supporting pupils' learning. Similarly, leaders' monitoring of the recently introduced system for supporting pupils' emotional and mental health needs is not

formally recorded. Leaders are, therefore, not able to identify good practice or where further training may be required.

- Leaders, including governors, are not clear about the impact additional funding is having on raising outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Historically, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 have been significantly below those of other pupils nationally. More recently, leaders' actions have had an impact on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. Those currently in the school are making strong progress from their starting points. Similarly, rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils have improved and are now close to the national averages. However, leaders' plans for the spending of additional funding are not tightly linked to pupils' outcomes. Furthermore, leaders are not evaluating the impact that specific interventions are having. This is limiting the ability of leaders and governors to refine their plans and ensure that spending is having the intended impact.
- Leaders are making effective use of the physical education and sport premium funding. This is being used primarily to provide sports coaches to develop pupils' skills and levels of participation. As with other areas of leadership, development plans do not have a sufficient focus on the impact that spending is having on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's curriculum is developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. Leaders have actively involved pupils in identifying areas they would like to learn about and have used this information to design the school's topic overview. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and enjoy participating in a range of exciting activities. However, discussions with leaders and pupils, as well as the work in pupils' books, demonstrate that the school's curriculum is not leading to pupils developing the subject knowledge or skills expected for their age. Additionally, leaders recognise that the school's current procedures for how pupils record their work are inconsistent. This is preventing leaders at all levels from having a secure understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. Pupils also have a secure understanding of British values and can relate these to everyday school life. For example, they understand the importance of respecting other people's differences, as well as the importance of democracy and fairness in electing members to the school council.
- The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and would recommend it to other parents. They recognise the improvements made by the headteacher, especially around standards and communication. Parents spoken with by inspectors and those who filled in Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, spoke very positively about leaders' efforts to engage parents in their children's learning. One parent, summing up the view of many, wrote, 'We have been impressed with the efforts of the school to involve parents, such as "Family Fridays". The school staff are very approachable and friendly, always happy to answer queries and welcome us into the classroom to discuss our child.'

Governance of the school

- Until recently, PLT had not provided the school with sufficient levels of support or challenge. Owing to turbulence in the leadership of the trust, trustees did not respond rapidly enough to a decline in pupils' outcomes, especially in mathematics at the end of key stage 2.
- The appointment of a new chief executive officer has added significantly to the trust's capacity to support the school's improvement journey. This support includes training for governors, as well as network meetings for middle leaders. Planned work with external providers across Cornwall will further strengthen the trust's capacity.
- The local board of governors has a growing knowledge of the school's strengths and areas that require improvement. Discussions with governors show that they understand the importance of holding leaders to account. They have recently introduced a committee specifically to focus on standards and have increased the number of visits they make to check the information they are given. However, minutes of governors' meetings do not demonstrate that governors are providing leaders with sufficient levels of challenge or routinely evaluating the impact of their work. For example, minutes do not show that governors are monitoring the impact of additional funding on raising outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. This view was shared by all of the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- As the designated safeguarding lead, the headteacher has a secure understanding of the statutory guidance for keeping children safe. She has ensured that all staff, governors and volunteers understand their responsibilities. Training is up to date and staff are clear about the school's procedures for reporting any concerns. The headteacher recognises, however, that more thorough training records would enable her to identify future training needs better.
- The school's checks to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers are detailed and in line with statutory guidance. Records of these checks are regularly monitored by the headteacher, the trust and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.
- The headteacher has established effective partnerships with external agencies and parents. Referrals are made swiftly to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they require. In addition, charities visit the school to raise pupils' awareness of safe practices. For example, during the inspection, a representative from the RNLI visited the school to speak to pupils about how to stay safe near open water.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet good. This is because it remains too variable across different year groups and subjects.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to plan sequences of learning that develop pupils' skills and understanding. Teachers and

teaching assistants use questioning skilfully to explore and deepen pupils' understanding, and they communicate their expectations with clarity and purpose.

- Leaders have ensured that teachers now have a greater awareness of pupils' prior attainment, as well as any potential barriers that pupils face in their learning. Teachers plan activities that are tailored to meet pupils' different needs. However, across the school, teachers' understanding of how to develop activities so they provide sufficient challenge for their most able pupils is inconsistent. Work in pupils' writing and mathematics books show that, in a number of cases, the most able pupils are expected to do a greater amount of the same work, rather than move on to activities that deepen their understanding. Leaders recognise that this is limiting their progress.
- The school's focus on developing pupils' resilience is having a positive impact on pupils' confidence and willingness to 'have a go'. Pupils talk about how teachers encourage them to learn from their mistakes. However, the work in pupils' books shows that teachers do not use the school's feedback policy consistently. This is particularly evident in the amount of time that teachers give pupils to respond to their guidance. As a result, between classes, there is a variance in the impact that teachers' feedback has on developing pupils' understanding and skills.
- In mathematics, the school's drive to develop pupils' mental arithmetic and calculation skills is proving effective. Leaders had previously identified that, due to historical weaknesses in the quality of teaching, pupils across key stage 2 had significant gaps in their understanding of key mathematical concepts. Teaching has been focused on addressing these gaps, and the work in pupils' books shows that this is leading to greater proportions of pupils working within the expectations for their age.
- Teachers' understanding of a mathematics mastery curriculum is underdeveloped. As a result, teachers do not routinely provide pupils with activities that require them to think deeply about mathematical concepts or to apply their skills in different contexts. Where such activities are planned, they are generally targeted to the most able pupils. This is slowing pupils' progress and limiting the proportion of pupils working above the expectations of their age.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength. In both early years and key stage 1, teachers and teaching assistants display secure subject knowledge. They model the sounds that letters represent with accuracy and expect pupils to be able to do the same. This is leading to high proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are developing a love of books. In key stage 1, they build on their secure understanding of phonics and early reading skills, reading with fluency and comprehension. As pupils progress through key stage 2, they are able to apply their own knowledge in order to infer meaning from texts. They are also able to discuss the different writing styles of a range of authors.
- Teachers have ensured that pupils across the school have a good grasp of basic skills. Pupils write for a range of audiences, manipulating their use of language accordingly. Pupils' understanding of sentence structure and grammar is secure. This is leading to the majority of pupils writing at levels appropriate for their age. At times, however, teachers' planning lacks precision, especially for the most able pupils. Likewise, teachers are not planning sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across a range of genres and curriculum subjects. This is slowing the progress of the

most able pupils and limiting the proportion of pupils writing with greater depth.

- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is similarly inconsistent. Weaknesses in the school's curriculum, combined with gaps in teachers' subject knowledge, are having a detrimental effect on pupils' development of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, work in pupils' books shows that teachers' expectations in other subjects of the curriculum are not as high as in English and mathematics. As a result, in areas such as science, computing, humanities and the arts, pupils are not consistently working at the levels expected for their age.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The leaders' focus on the '5 Ps' — perseverance, passion, partnership, participation and pride — is at the heart of the school's ethos. Pupils understand how each 'p' plays a part in the life of the school and how it supports their learning. As one pupil told an inspector, 'It's important to persevere as this helps you get better.'
- Pupils feel safe. They talk positively about the ways in which leaders teach them how to stay safe within their local community. For example, pupils understand the dangers associated with the town's level crossing. Pupils also have an age-appropriate understanding of online safety. They know not to share personal information and would tell a trusted adult if they saw anything that made them feel uncomfortable.
- Pupils understand the difference between bullying and 'falling out' with their friends. They say that bullying very rarely happens but that, if they are worried or unhappy, any adult in school would help them.
- Leaders are developing pupils' leadership skills and pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given. For example, 'Stay Safe' mentors act as positive role models. They support pupils with their play and skilfully sort out any minor disagreements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous, polite and well mannered. They are proud of their school and of their community. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils conduct themselves well. The older pupils play with the younger pupils and involve them in their games. Pupils make good use of the school's extensive outdoor facilities. They manage their own behaviour and play safely and responsibly.
- In lessons, pupils' behaviour reflects their enjoyment of learning. They listen attentively to adults and their peers. Pupils respect the opinions of others and, when given time to do so, reflect on their own learning. Pupils like the different approaches that teachers use to reward their positive attitudes. Observations of learning, as well as discussions with pupils and parents, indicate that this is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and self-esteem.

- Leaders have worked proactively with parents and external agencies to improve attendance. Absence rates have fallen and are currently below the national average. Leaders have made good use of additional funding to reduce persistent absence, especially for the school's most vulnerable pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Owing to variance in pupils' progress across different classes and subjects, outcomes are not yet good. The school's most recent assessment information shows that, during this academic year, rates of progress in English and mathematics have increased. In these subjects, greater proportions of pupils are now working at the levels expected for their age. However, rates of progress for the most able pupils are more variable. This assessment information is reflected in the work in pupils' books.
- Published assessment information for pupils at the end of Year 6 shows that, in 2017, owing to historical weaknesses in teaching, a number of pupils failed to make the progress expected of them from their key stage 1 starting points. This was especially the case in mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils. Assessment information for current Year 6 pupils, as well as the work in their books, indicate that these pupils are making much stronger progress. Therefore, 2018 statutory assessments are likely to result in outcomes that are significantly stronger than in previous years.
- In 2017, published outcomes for the end of Year 2 were above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This was for pupils working at both the expected standards and at greater depth. Inspection evidence confirms that, across key stage 1, pupils continue to make strong progress from their starting points at the end of Reception.
- As a result of strong phonics teaching, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has, for the past two years, been above the national average. In 2017, all pupils had achieved this standard by the end of Year 2.
- Across the school, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Teachers plan work that is well matched to their needs. Teachers and teaching assistants guide pupils in learning activities. They provide them with a range of practical experiences that reinforce and consolidate pupils' understanding.
- Historically, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school has been significantly lower than that of other pupils nationally. However, leaders have ensured that teachers have a secure understanding of the external factors that may affect pupils' learning. They have put in place systems to reduce potential barriers that are leading to greater success for vulnerable pupils. Consequently, in the majority of cases, disadvantaged pupils are making progress that is at least comparable to that of their peers.
- Pupils' outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics have weaknesses that stem from curriculum weaknesses, combined with inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have not ensured that the school's planned curriculum systematically develops pupils' knowledge or skills across a range of subjects, for example, in science, computing, humanities and the arts. As a result, pupils at the end of Year 6 are not fully prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years teacher and other adults ensure that children get off to a good start in Reception Year. Children start school with knowledge, skills and abilities that are broadly in line with, and in some cases above, those typical for their age. From these starting points, they make good progress in their learning. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been at, or above, the national average for the past three years.
- The teacher and other adults foster positive relationships with children. Similarly, children show care and consideration towards each other. Adults have established a caring and nurturing setting where children feel safe. As a result, children enjoy school and develop good attitudes to learning.
- Staff have high expectations and work effectively as a team to assess what children already know and can do. They then use this knowledge to plan activities precisely matched to the early years curriculum and children's needs. Children make good progress in developing their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Teachers and other adults ask challenging questions and encourage children to think carefully about their responses before answering. Children use their prior knowledge to hypothesise about unknown situations. For example, children were able to talk about whether a pepper was a fruit or a vegetable, based on their knowledge of tomatoes and seeds.
- Adults provide regular opportunities to develop children's communication and language skills through real-life experiences, practical activities and role play. Leaders and staff have developed a vibrant, purposeful environment which supports children's development across all areas of learning.
- The early years team works proactively to make parents active participants in their children's learning. Parents are very positive about the school's work. They particularly appreciate the information they receive about what their children have been learning, as well as examples of questions they can use at home.
- Safeguarding is effective in early years and all statutory duties are met.

School details

Unique reference number	142241
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10047366

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dan Solly
Headteacher	Natalie Simmonds
Telephone number	01208 872339
Website	www.lostwithiel.cornwall.sch.uk
Email address	admin@lostwithielsch.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Lostwithiel School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are seven classes, one for each year group.
- The school became an academy and joined the Peninsula Learning Trust (PLT) in September 2015. PLT is a multi-academy trust consisting of eight academies – seven primaries and one secondary – in south Cornwall. Local governance is provided by the governing body.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. The majority of these visits were carried out jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, members of the governing body, (including the chair of governors), and the chief executive officer of the Peninsula Learning Trust. The inspectors also took into account responses to questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and listened to a selection of them read.
- Inspectors took account of 52 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a number of free-text comments. They also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonathan Dyer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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