

Falmouth School

Trescobear Road, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 4LH

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders have not always acted in pupils' best interests when taking them off the school roll. Such removal is 'off-rolling' according to Ofsted's definition. In some cases, the removal from the roll was against the wishes of the family, the advice of the local authority and the professional judgement of other agencies.
- Leaders have failed to engage effectively with external agencies to ensure the well-being of pupils.
- Leaders have failed to foster a climate based on positive relationships. Too many parents, pupils and staff express dissatisfaction with aspects of the school's provision.
- Leaders do not have a strategic oversight of the reasons why a larger than usual number of pupils leave the school other than at the end of Year 11.
- The quality of governance is weak. Governors do not hold leaders to account sufficiently for key aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders' self-evaluation clearly outlines what is to be achieved. However, it is less clear how this will be done and the impact of individual strategies to achieve these aims.
- Leaders' overview of the effectiveness of the provision in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is weak. The support provided for these pupils is not systematically planned, reviewed or evaluated.
- There is a lack of analysis of the patterns of bullying or derogatory behaviour. Therefore, leaders are unclear as to the frequency of these incidents and whether they have been resolved.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are confident and articulate. They behave well in lessons and around the site.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment leads to good academic outcomes.
- Leaders have employed effective strategies to improve attendance and to reduce the proportion of pupils who miss school regularly.
- The quality of sixth-form provision is good.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - leaders evaluate the pattern of, and account for, the high number of pupils leaving the school before the end of Year 11, so that they understand the reasons for this and work to reduce it
 - leaders repair partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority, to ensure the well-being of pupils
 - leaders improve the quality of the relationships between themselves and parents, staff and the community
 - the trust board and governors hold leaders to account more stringently
 - leaders systematically evaluate the impact of actions they take to support pupils with SEND and other vulnerable groups
 - leaders keep a clear record of the frequency of reports of bullying so that they can evaluate the extent of these and whether these issues are resolved.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that pupils with SEND and other vulnerable groups receive the support they need to flourish.

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

Inadequate

- While leaders articulate a vision of high expectation and the raising of pupils' aspirations, too many pupils do not receive the support they need to achieve these. In some cases, leaders have removed pupils from the school roll against the wishes of the family, the advice of the local authority and the professional judgement of other agencies.
- Leaders are unclear as to the reasons why a higher proportion of pupils leave the school other than at the end of Year 11. Many parents take the decision to educate their children at home. In some cases, pupils experience poor attendance or behaviour issues prior to parents' decisions to home educate. Leaders say that they do not endorse this course of action but have not explored this trend sufficiently so that they can mitigate it. There is no plan in place to understand and improve this pattern.
- Leaders have failed to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure the well-being of pupils. Leaders' poor communication with the local authority means that the local authority cannot be assured that pupils, particularly those with SEND, are receiving the support they need. There have been some recent improvements in the development of these crucial partnerships, but there is much still to do.
- A significant number of parents express considerable dissatisfaction with the school. Leaders have expressed a wish to improve relationships with parents and have commissioned external scrutiny of their systems and practice. However, leadership systems focus on the processes and the speed of the school's responses rather than an analysis of the correspondence received. Consequently, leaders do not have a comprehensive picture of the reasons behind parents' dissatisfaction so that common issues can be addressed. Many parents feel that their concerns are not dealt with effectively and that their only recourse is to make representations to other agencies.
- Leaders' recent restructure of the leadership team has brought greater clarity of roles and lines of accountability. However, the impact of this is not yet consistently evident. Some leaders lack the strategic acumen to understand that effective record-keeping is not for the purpose of external scrutiny but should be an intrinsic part of the school's self-evaluation.
- The majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey report that they are proud to work at the school. However, staff also express concerns that leaders have not been mindful of staff well-being. Many staff report that they do not feel well supported or fairly treated by leaders. Staff recognise that the school encourages calm and orderly conduct and is aspirational for its pupils. However, less than half of staff respondents indicate that leaders take steps to ensure that they are motivated and respected in their roles.
- The leadership of the provision in place for pupils with SEND is weak. Leaders have not ensured that the school's work, including statutory work, is of a high enough standard. Leaders' record-keeping is poor. Pupils' files are disorganised and do not contain up-to-date information. There is a lot of support in place for pupils, but it is not recorded accurately enough for the impact of the school's work to be checked and

shared with parents. These shortcomings have contributed to a considerable number of parental concerns.

- Leaders have a lack of understanding of the necessary requirements for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The objectives set for pupils, who require more specific support, are too vague, which means that teachers cannot support pupils effectively. SEND action plans are poorly evaluated. They do not have clear milestones or an indication of how leaders can assess whether the school's actions are having the intended effect.
- Leaders have embedded clear approaches to develop pupils' resilience in their learning. These expectations are incorporated into the 'Falmouth Way' and the 'Four Pillars of Learning'. Leaders provide training for staff and monitor the quality of teaching sufficiently. When teaching is not at the standard expected, it is identified, and plans are put in place to remedy the situation. However, there is too much focus on compliance with policies rather than how well teaching improves pupils' learning. Some teaching approaches are new and so variability in the application of leaders' expectations exist.
- Pastoral leaders are committed and clearly want to do their best for pupils. Leaders have made recent changes to pastoral systems and signpost support available to pupils. Newly appointed middle leaders know pupils well and provide regular updates to senior leaders on the number of incidents of poor behaviour. However, staff do not analyse patterns of behaviour, including bullying, systematically enough for middle leaders to examine the effectiveness of their work.
- Subject leaders are positive about their roles and have a clear understanding of how it fits into the overall teaching and learning strategy.
- Extra-curricular activities support pupils' learning well. Leaders value the importance of broadening pupils' experiences to raise their aspirations through the school's curriculum offer. Many parents and pupils value these opportunities and the benefits they bring.
- Leaders encourage pupils to take a broad range of subjects at GCSE, including those that constitute the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The number of pupils studying this combination of subjects is increasing. Leaders have introduced the 'Aspire' programme for high-prior-attaining pupils to extend their GCSE choices.
- Leaders show a commitment to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Leaders use the additional funding provided for this purpose well. As a result, disadvantaged pupils overall make progress in line with all pupils nationally. Where progress is not as secure, such as for high-prior-attaining pupils, in science and in the suite of subjects that make up the EBacc, there is an improving picture.

Governance of the school

- Trust leaders and governors are assigned to areas of the school's improvement plan. There is a scheme of delegation in place. However, the considerable overlap between members of the trust board and local governors means that, in practice, there is not clear enough delineation of these functions and objective accountability.
- The improvement plans available to governors lack detail. Therefore, in their meetings with school staff, governors are unable to ascertain precisely which strategies have

worked and which have not, to inform future planning. Governors rely too heavily on academic outcomes to validate the overall effectiveness of their work.

- Governors raise appropriate questions, and some have a wealth of expertise. They have completed the necessary training to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Nonetheless, too often, governors accept leaders' assertions without the necessary evidence to support these. Governors' questions generate follow-up activity; however, they do not routinely check actions are completed. Governors do not stringently challenge leaders on important issues, such as the exceptional levels of pupils leaving the school before the usual times. They do not fully understand the gravity of this issue.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make the necessary statutory checks and follow government guidelines to ensure that staff are safe to work with children. Training is up to date and includes protecting pupils from radicalisation and exploitation. Staff are aware of the potential signs of concern and use the school's systems to report them.
- When referrals are made, there is a clear chronology of the actions that have been taken. These include liaison with outside agencies.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. The majority of parents and staff agree. However, a large majority of pupils who responded to Ofsted's online survey did not feel that the school protects their emotional and mental well-being. Leaders recognise that this is an issue and have been proactive in trying to extend their capacity in this regard. Recent staff training has focused on helping staff to be better aware of these issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. The combination of these two factors means that pupils make good progress overall, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Overall, teaching meets pupils' needs. Teachers draw on their professional development sessions and their work with partner schools to refine and modify their practice well. Where teaching is most effective, it is characterised by strong subject knowledge and astute planning. Teachers use effective questioning to probe, develop and assess and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Pupils are clear about what they are learning and why. Teachers provide helpful outlines to support pupils to understand the sequential development of their knowledge and skills. Pupils, therefore, show an increasing understanding and ability to refer to subject vocabulary and theories.
- Teachers use assessment approaches well. Pupils show a clear understanding of what they need to do next and do so. Pupils say that they value this approach because it gives them the opportunity to hone their skills and often access high levels of challenge.
- Some approaches and expectations of teaching and learning are new and are still

evolving. Consequently, on occasions, expectations of pupils' presentation are too low, tasks are not well matched to pupils' starting points, or tasks are unconnected to what has been completed previously. On occasions, teachers' guidance is not specific enough for pupils to be clear about their next steps for improvement or pupils do not use the technical language required in their work.

- There is particular variability in the quality of teaching for low-prior-attaining pupils and pupils with SEND. Teachers' assessments for pupils who have an EHC plan are not always reliable because they do not indicate what pupils are able to do independently. In addition, tasks are not well-matched to pupils' starting points or needs. Where pupils struggle with basic mathematical concepts or literacy, it is not clear how teachers are supporting pupils to overcome these deficiencies.
- The Personalised Learning Area (PLA) is a haven for pupils to receive the social support they need. The nature of this provision has changed recently so that it provides a more extensive programme of support. As much of this is new, sustained impact has not yet been seen. However, the academic rigour provided is not high enough, often because staff do not have secure subject knowledge. There is little evidence of approaches being adapted to meet pupils', often complex, needs. Some pupils' work is unfinished or of poor quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. There have been a significant number of concerns raised by parents and third parties regarding leaders' approach to protecting the well-being of pupils. Leaders have not explored these issues sufficiently in order to rectify them.
- A significant number of parents and some pupils raise concerns about the way in which reports of bullying are dealt with. Only just over half of the pupils who responded to the survey said that they had an adult they could talk to if something was worrying them. Other pupils said that they are not always confident that concerns are dealt with effectively. School records show that staff take action and support is provided for individual cases. However, there is not a strategic overview of this issue. Leaders cannot be confident about the extent of such incidents and whether they are resolved effectively.
- Pupils show a strong awareness of the importance of being responsible citizens. There are plentiful opportunities to develop pupils' leadership skills. Pupils who take on responsibilities, such as representing the school council, are a credit to the school.
- Pupils regularly consider topics to support their personal development. They understand how to recognise risk in their everyday lives and how they can protect themselves, including when on the internet or using social media.
- Pupils are taught to consider themes important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In their tutor sessions they discuss, for example, the dangers posed by alcohol and what anti-social behaviour is. The quality of this provision has been improved through staff training and the use of age-appropriate resources.

- Pupils understand what British values are and talk about the importance of diversity. They can define democracy, as learned through their work on the youth parliament. Pupils talk about their understanding of extremism. However, they are less confident when discussing discriminatory attitudes or how they might protect themselves from those who might try to influence them with extreme viewpoints.
- Pupils understand their next steps in education or training because they are given good advice through an age-appropriate careers education programme. Leaders have evaluated the effectiveness of this and have identified the areas that are covered well and those that need to be developed further.
- There are two pupils who attend 'Wave', an alternative education provider. These pupils access provision that is suited to their needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and well-mannered, holding open doors for visitors and readily engaging in conversation.
- Senior leaders have raised expectations of how pupils should behave, both in lessons and around the site. Pupils understand these expectations and the consequences if they deviate from them. Some parents express concern about the school's approach because they feel it is uncompromising. Other parents support the clarity of expectation and the fact that routines are clearly established.
- Pupils say that pupils usually behave well. The school is orderly and calm, both during lessons and social time. Classrooms are diligent working environments. Pupils concentrate and are attentive. Lunchtime is a pleasant and sociable affair.
- The school's efforts to improve levels of attendance have resulted in a decrease in pupils' absence overall, bringing it into line with national averages. However, there are still too many disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who miss school regularly. The rates of pupils being excluded from the school are low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over the last three years, the progress pupils make by the end of Year 11 has been significantly above the national average. This is a result of the good standard of teaching that pupils experience. Current pupils continue to make good progress.
- In 2018, pupils made progress in line with the national average in both English and mathematics, with the proportion of pupils achieving a strong pass above the national figure. This positive progress has been the case over a number of years. Current pupils in English demonstrate an ability to produce strong written responses and pupils can demonstrate a secure mathematical understanding.
- The most able pupils are suitably challenged and make progress in line with their peers nationally. Despite humanities showing some signs of improvement, particularly for low and middle-prior-attaining pupils, this remains an area where the most able do not make strong progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make positive progress overall. Following the dip in the 2018

results in science and in other subjects that make up the Ebacc combination, leaders have ensured that the needs of this group have a higher profile. When pupils fall behind, they receive additional support. Consequently, there is no discernible difference in the quality of current disadvantaged pupils' work and that of their peers.

- While pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points overall, this is not the case for the small number of pupils who have an EHC plan. For pupils who attend part of their week in the PLA, there are individual stories of success, but overall the impact of the support they receive is unclear, due to the lack of strategic overview.
- The proportion of pupils who are entered for the EBacc combination of subjects is below the national figure. This is mainly due to fewer pupils choosing to take a language option. There is an increasing uptake in the EBacc suite of subjects.
- Leaders have introduced strategies to support pupils in key stage 3 and to improve their reading and literacy skills. Pupils who join the school with lower standards access 'master classes' and 'Back on Track' interventions and these support them to catch up.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. In addition to their academic studies, students consider wider issues relating to their personal development. They engage in work-related experiences, which suitably supplement their vocational programmes. The requirements of the study programme are therefore met.
- Students have a strong work ethic and are confident, assured learners. They use study time wisely. They appreciate the choice of courses offered, and the personal support they receive. There are many opportunities for students to develop leadership skills.
- Students make progress in line with others nationally in both academic and applied general programmes. Disadvantaged students' progress improved markedly in 2018. However, the progress of the most able students was relatively weaker. Leaders identify and support students who fall behind. They are aware of the subjects that are not performing strongly, and plans are in place to address this. However, there has not been rapid enough impact in improving outcomes in some areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form displays the same strengths as in the main school. This is why many students make the choice to continue their studies at the school. Teachers are knowledgeable and responsive to students' needs. Students are clear about how they can improve the standard of their work. Teachers use questioning skilfully to deepen students' response and recall.
- Students are supported well when making the transition to post-16 study. They receive careful guidance on which subjects to study. The 'Falmouth Futures' programme supports students to move into higher education or apprenticeships at the end of their courses. The school has built successful partnerships with higher education providers and many students secure places at university, including Russell Group universities.
- Students who start their programmes without attaining suitable qualifications in English and mathematics are given suitable tuition to help them improve their grades.

School details

Unique reference number	137223
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10081269

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	917
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	171
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Glyn Williams
Headteacher	Brett Miners
Telephone number	01326 372386
Website	www.falmouthschool.net
Email address	enquiries@falmouthschool.net
Date of previous inspection	23 November 2016

Information about this school

- Falmouth School is part of the Falmouth multi-academy trust formed in 2017. The trust consists of this secondary school and two primary partners.
- The chief executive of the trust is also headteacher of Falmouth School. There has been a recent restructuring of the leadership team. Four deputy headteachers each oversee an aspect of the school's improvement plan.
- The school is an average-sized 11–18 secondary school. An unusually high number of pupils leave the school roll in Years 10 and 11.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British, and the school has 11 out of the 17 possible ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average. In 2018, 17 pupils were entered for the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualification, at least double the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language in Year 11.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is lower than the national average, including pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- Two pupils access provision at 'Wave', an alternative education provider.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised pupils' written work. Observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team on the second day of the inspection.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the trust and governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum and pastoral leaders. Inspectors spoke with two representatives from the local authority and a representative from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' records.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, and the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 196 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 67 free-text responses, 64 responses to the staff questionnaire and 54 responses to the pupil questionnaire completed at the time of the inspection. The lead inspector considered a further three letters and 12 emails. Two inspectors made phone calls in response to this correspondence.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen McShane	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Lovett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Lee	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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