

Inspection of Fowey River Academy

Windmill, Fowey, Cornwall PL23 1HE

Inspection dates: 18–19 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Fowey River Academy is a small secondary school where pupils know each other well. After several years of frequent staff changes, the school is now much more settled. As a result, pupils are getting to know staff better and building relationships with them. Teaching staff expect pupils to behave well, and most pupils are meeting their teachers' expectations. There is still some misbehaviour. In the main, this is where pupils do not follow teachers' instructions quickly and so learning time is lost. Most pupils and parents feel that bullying is dealt with well, but some shared their concerns with inspectors.

New staff appointments have meant that pupils can study a wider range of courses in key stage 4 than before. Pupils enjoy an extensive number of clubs at lunch time and after school as part of the school's 'MixX' programme. This includes many different sports, languages, such as Italian, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The many staff changes and other distractions have affected the support leaders have given to teachers. Consequently, the quality of education is not good enough.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects in key stage 3. Teachers' plans include the breadth of knowledge pupils need. However, in many subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils understand the purpose of what they are learning. Nor do they draw out the links between subjects. Consequently, pupils do not remember what they are taught as well as they could. As a result, results at the end of Year 11 have not been strong, but they are improving.

Pupils' reading skills are not sufficiently well developed. The lack of focus on reading in school is not helping pupils to broaden their vocabulary. Although this is stronger in English, it is not the case in other subjects. Very few of the pupils who spoke with inspectors are currently reading a book.

In classes and tutor periods, pupils enjoy debating and discussing topics such as Brexit. The 'REAL projects' in Years 7 and 8 let pupils explore issues such as the environment and factors that affect communities.

The careers programme gives pupils an insight into the world of work. It helps them to understand college life, the courses they can follow and about apprenticeships. Many of the older pupils have visited universities and colleges. This is helping them to think about the opportunities that are open to them. In some cases, these visits have made a real difference to pupils' attitudes to school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their pastoral needs met well. However, in class, teaching is not matched well to their needs. Leaders have brought in external support to strengthen this area of the school's work. This is not yet bringing about the improvements needed to help teachers plan

their lessons to best meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

Pupils' attendance remains low. Staff are working with pupils and their families to explain the importance of good attendance. This is having some impact, although disadvantaged pupils are still absent more often than their classmates.

School leaders are unstinting in their work to improve all aspects of the school's work. There is much to do, and they have prioritised the most urgent tasks. Since the school formally joined the Leading Edge Academies Partnership in May 2019, even more rapid improvement can be seen. Through the partnership, the course choices for key stage 4 have widened. Staff are beginning to work with teachers in the other schools to develop their plans. Trustees, local governors and school leaders clearly have the needs of pupils and their families at their heart.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has carried out the checks that are required when appointing staff. Staff receive regular training about a range of risks pupils may face. They are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Pupils are taught about the risks they may face and how to keep themselves safe.

The safeguarding leader has a good overview of this area of the school's work. She ensures that appropriate actions are taken. Where necessary, she makes referrals to the local authority. The school works well with specialist services so that families get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils struggle to connect their learning. They often lack the understanding of the purpose of the topics they study. Consequently, they do not retain the knowledge they need. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well designed and implemented to help pupils to remember more.
- Pupils do not show a love for reading. There is a weak reading culture in the school. This results in pupils having a limited vocabulary and a lack of confidence in their reading. Leaders need to ensure that reading sits at the heart of the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEND are not always given the academic support they need in lessons. Pupils have support plans in place, but teachers do not modify their lesson planning carefully enough to support individual pupils in their classes. Leaders should ensure that teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils do not attend school regularly enough, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders need to ensure that the systems in place to help

and encourage pupils to attend more often are successful.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	140836
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10111482
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	556
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jackie Eason
Headteacher	Martin Dale
Website	www.fracademy.org
Date of previous inspection	July 2017

Information about this school

- In May 2019, Leading Edge Academies Partnership became the responsible authority for Fowey River Academy.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, several curriculum leaders, teachers and other members of staff. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer, trustees, members of the local academy committee and the chief operating officer.
- Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their experience of school. One inspector attended a house assembly, and another visited a tutor group.
- The inspection concentrated on the teaching of drama, English, mathematics and modern languages.
- The school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority were reviewed. Inspectors spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. They also asked pupils about how they keep themselves safe and what to do if

they have concerns.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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