

# Inspection of a good school: Porthleven School

Torleven Road, Porthleven, Helston, Cornwall TR13 9BX

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Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

## Outcome

Porthleven School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring school where, as the school vision says, 'I can be me'. Pupils are respected as individuals. As a pupil explained, 'We all get our fair share and are valued here.' Pupils behave well. The school is calm and purposeful. Staff sensitively support those pupils who find maintaining good behaviour a challenge. Pupils say that staff notice if a pupil is worried. They trust staff to help them and, should bullying occur, they say it would be quickly resolved.

Porthleven School is proud of its character as a school by the sea. Pupils are learning about lobster fishing by releasing hatchlings. They learn about protecting the sea and about staying safe by water. Residential visits give pupils chances to explore the water safely.

Very recently, leaders have put an ambitious curriculum in place so that pupils can learn more. New ways of teaching have begun in a range of subjects, including reading. Many things have started at the same time. Staff are enthusiastic about the changes. They want to do their best for pupils. Currently, however, what pupils experience and learn is inconsistent across subjects and across the school.

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

The school's newly planned curriculum is designed to make sure that pupils have the knowledge they need in all subjects. Some subjects, such as art, are at the early stage of development. Lesson visits and reviews of work show that teachers need more support to ensure that the new scheme is fully effective. Science is more securely established. However, teachers do not always expect enough of pupils. Although pupils enjoy science, they do not then remember, or have the language to explain, what they have learned. Senior and subject leaders know that there is more to do so that the curriculum is fully effective, but it is unclear how and when this will be achieved.

Leaders have invested in a new approach to teaching reading this year. Children from the Reception class, Year 1 pupils and some from Year 2 are now taught phonics and reading together. Staff have had initial training, and the leader checks what pupils know. However, the experience of different groups is too variable. Not all staff have the necessary underlying knowledge of phonics and reading fluency to make best use of the daily sessions. This limits the quality of the curriculum for reading for both early years and key stage 1 pupils.

All classes have well-chosen books read to them daily. Teachers help pupils to understand what they read. On occasions, the quality of what they are given to read is too limited to help them learn what they should. Pupils who need to catch up, some of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have regular extra reading time. However, leaders do not check what pupils learn in these sessions to see whether this approach is effective.

In contrast, the curriculum for mathematics is well developed across the school. Teachers explain work clearly and build pupils' knowledge securely. They use well-designed and challenging resources and explain learning using accurate mathematical language. They expect pupils to think hard and respond to questions with the same accuracy. Pupils' workbooks show how concepts are built lesson by lesson. Pupils can remember what they have learned, and teachers help pupils build new knowledge on secure foundations.

Teachers arrange interesting experiences for the children in the early years. Recently, children worked with natural materials with a skilled artist. However, it is not always clear what leaders and teachers expect children to learn when they plan activities for the two year groups. Equally, leaders do not check that all parts of the curriculum are regularly taught and accurately assessed. As a result, independent activities in the well-equipped setting do not always hold children's interest. Some boys find it hard to settle unless they are working with an adult.

The school's 'virtues', such as generosity, build on British values and underpin pupils' personal development. Pupils help their community by picking up litter. Older pupils have special roles in school, such as helping the younger ones at playtime. Some contribute through the school council and some as librarians. Pupils believe that the rules of the school are fair. They debate the rights and wrongs of issues such as the use of plastics. Pupils meet representatives of a range of religions. A new project is under way to further develop pupils' understanding of diversity. The school curriculum includes regular exercise through the 'daily mile'. Clubs and sports extend opportunities for pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are watchful for pupils' safety. They use their training and the school's procedures effectively to spot and report when a pupil could be at risk of harm. Leaders have links with a range of local agencies which support families. They are confident to make referrals of concern when needed.

Leaders check and record that adults are suitable to work with pupils appropriately.

The school provides extensive pastoral support for pupils' emotional health. It offers help and guidance for parents. This contributes significantly to pupils' safety and well-being.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders recognise that not all staff have the subject knowledge to implement the recent and extensive curricular changes well. Leaders should develop a well-planned programme of professional development to ensure that all subjects are implemented consistently well and pupils know and remember what they should.
- The reading curriculum is not well developed across the early years and Year 1. There are pupils in Year 1 and children in Reception who need to catch up in building their phonic knowledge and reading fluency. Leaders should ensure that there is a broad and rich curriculum for reading in the early years and Year 1. They should ensure that all staff delivering the programme for early reading have the right skills to do so.
- Not all resources for teaching comprehension skills are well chosen and sufficiently challenging. Equally, intervention to help pupils to catch up across key stage 2 is not clearly planned and checked. Leaders should continue the development of the reading curriculum in key stage 2 so that those pupils who need to catch up do so, and all develop the knowledge to understand what they read.
- Teachers are not developing pupils' scientific language and concepts securely enough for pupils to remember and explain what they know. Leaders should ensure that teachers deepen pupils' understanding of science, particularly scientific enquiry.
- Currently, the early years curriculum is not planned to take account of children's development across a two-year key stage. Leaders should develop a coherent and relevant curriculum which ensures that children in the early years gain the knowledge and develop the skills that they should. Leaders should also develop teachers' use of assessment to ensure that activities across the curriculum engage, challenge and support children in their learning.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Porthleven School, to be good in January 2013.

## 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 are the school and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143996
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10135496
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	263
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Kevin Thomas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Duncan Ratcliffe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.porthleven.cornwall.sch.uk/website">www.porthleven.cornwall.sch.uk/website</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the trust called Southerly Point Co-operative Multi-academy Trust. The school joined in June 2017.
- The headteacher acts as executive headteacher across this school and another school in the trust. There is a head of school who leads the school on a day-to-day basis.
- There is a nursery class and a Reception class that operate as an early years unit.

## Information about this inspection

- I met with school leaders, including the head of school, the executive headteacher and the special educational needs and disabilities leader. I also met with the CEO of the trust and a trustee representing the academy board. I held a telephone conversation with the chair of the local governing body.
- I reviewed the school's documentation in respect of the curriculum and the school's plans for improvement.
- I reviewed the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding. I also spoke to members of staff about their safeguarding role.

- I spoke to a group of pupils to gather their views of school and spoke to others at lunchtime. I took account of the 41 responses to the pupil survey.
- I met with staff to talk about their professional development and matters of workload and well-being. I took account of the 17 responses to the staff survey.
- I considered the 43 responses to the online parent survey and spoke to some parents and carers as they collected their children from school.
- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and art. I held discussions with subject leaders and made visits to lessons in all parts of the school. I looked at examples of pupils' work. I talked to groups of pupils and others as they were in their lessons. I listened to some pupils read.

### **Inspection team**

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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