

Inspection of a good school: Warbstow Primary Academy

Warbstow, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 8UP

Inspection dates:

4 February 2020

Outcome

Warbstow Primary Academy 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?

Warbstow school is currently undergoing a period of change. Since joining the Aspire multi-academy trust, leaders have taken the opportunity to reflect on what they do well and what needs to be better. There has been some initial success. By the end of Year 6, most pupils now achieve well in comparison to other schools nationally. Staff encourage pupils to 'go for their goals'. However, there is still work to do to ensure that all pupils reach their potential.

Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the friendly and supportive environment that the school provides. They say that on the rare occasions that bullying happens, staff sort this out well.

Pupils are typically considerate towards each other and are confident to share their views. Pupils show good manners and know the three 'golden rules' expected of them. They like to be recognised as 'Warbstow Wonders'. Yet, at times, pupils can become over-excited, bordering on distracting, which interferes with learning.

Pupils say that this is a school which helps them to develop as people. They appreciate the opportunities that they are given. Pupils are proud of their sporting achievements and enjoy taking part in creative and musical ventures.

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

Trust leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They support school leaders to do the right things. The hub councillors of the school welcome this. They work effectively with leaders from other schools to ask searching questions of school leaders. However, the strategic plans for improvement are not sharp enough. This means that it is difficult for leaders to see clearly what differences their actions make. This leads to an overgenerous view.

There is an emerging understanding between staff of what pupils will learn in each subject. However, subject leaders' skills to improve their areas of responsibility are underdeveloped. Crucially, they do not check rigorously enough whether the curriculum is put into practice as planned.

There are some positive signs. In history, for example, staff make use of the distinctive features of the local area, such as the Iron Age hill fort close by, to captivate pupils' interest. Children in Reception explore the history of their school through photographs and are developing an early fascination with the past. However, at present, as in other subjects, there is a lack of clarity about why topics are covered in a particular order and why some activities are selected over others. Therefore, pupils do not build up the skills they need to become better historians as they move through the school.

Leaders aim to generate an excitement about reading. For example, pupils share a 'poem a day' and consider 'words of wisdom'. Where this is used well, pupils enthusiastically read poetry together. Children in the Nursery listen to stories and staff energetically bring these stories to life. Children join the main school for story time on a regular basis, which helps them prepare for the transition to Reception.

In Reception, staff build on the early enjoyment of reading as pupils begin to learn letters and the sounds they make. Where pupils fall behind, there are extra sessions in place to build pupils' confidence and understanding. However, in pupils' regular classes, teaching is not always directed well enough towards identifying where pupils' misconceptions lie so that these can be remedied.

A recent focus has been to support pupils to become more confident writers. As a result, older pupils show a strong understanding of how they can structure their writing effectively. They know that it is important to aim for 'quality rather than quantity'. Younger pupils are less confident about the features of different types of writing. They struggle to use their own words when bringing together their research. Where expectations are not high enough, pupils' work is unfinished and untidy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive support for their social and emotional needs. However, leaders do not check whether the curriculum meets the needs of such pupils well enough. There is support in place, but leaders cannot say with certainty how this is tailored to pupils' needs and whether it is working.

Leaders have revamped the programme to support pupils' personal development, using resources that are age appropriate. Pupils are respectful of individual differences and are knowledgeable about other religions. They are keen to talk about issues, such as how they can look after their mental well-being and the importance of looking after pets. They can sensibly discuss how they can resolve conflict. However, because this is in its infancy, pupils' understanding of some important issues is patchy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have received training and, therefore, understand the latest guidance on how to keep pupils safe from harm. They know how to report any concerns they may have and do so. Staff regularly discuss safeguarding issues and use this as an opportunity to reflect on and improve their own practice. The designated safeguarding leader works effectively with external agencies so that pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders have undertaken suitable risk assessments where necessary and have plans to ensure that the site is secured further. Pupils say that teachers 'are always looking out for us'. The evidence seen by inspectors shows that this is so.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The development of the curriculum is in its early stages. In some subjects, it is not clear what pupils should know and by when, so that they can build up their knowledge and skills incrementally. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans show how specific skills and bodies of knowledge fit together over time so that pupils learn and remember more as a result.
- Subject leaders are largely new to their roles. Therefore, their skills to lead improvement in their areas of responsibility are underdeveloped. Their understanding of how well teachers are following the agreed plans is not secure. Leaders need to continue to ensure that subject leaders are proficient in guiding and supporting staff so that all pupils achieve their potential.
- Leaders' strategic plans for development are not sufficiently precise. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders to see, with clarity, whether their actions are having the intended impact. Leaders need to become more adept at formulating plans that will help them focus on key issues and identify successful strategies.

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, Warbstow Primary Academy, to be good in May 2015.

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

Unique reference number	144062
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10122368
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jacqueline Swain
Headteacher	Stuart Ellis
Website	www.warbstow.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In April 2017, Warbstow Primary Academy became part of the Aspire multi-academy trust. This trust consists of 28 primary schools.
- Since September 2018, there have been changes at leadership level, including a new head of school and a new special educational needs coordinator. There have also been changes to subject leadership since this time.
- The school provides Nursery education for two- and three-year-olds.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- We spoke with the chief executive officer on the telephone and met with the strategic improvement partner from the multi-academy trust. We also met with representatives from the hub council, senior leaders and staff.
- We did deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. We discussed the curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited.

- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding, checked the school's single central record and scrutinised policies relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and reviewed a sample of case files.
- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. We spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their school.
- We considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 15 additional free-text responses. An inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the day.
- We took into account the nine responses from staff and the 35 responses from pupils to the questionnaires issued at the beginning of the inspection.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Miller

Ofsted Inspector

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