

Inspection of school: Upton Cross ACE Academy

Upton Cross, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 5AX

Inspection dates:

11 March 2020

Outcome

Upton Cross ACE Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher's high expectations are shared by a close staff team. Her introduction of new ideas and ways of working are helping to drive improvements. As a result, pupils are achieving more. Pupils enjoy their time at school and play their part in creating a welcoming and friendly school community.

Children settle quickly into the lively and exciting early years class. The same sense of friendliness and togetherness can be found in all classes. Parents and pupils are clear that bullying is very rare. Staff and pupils treat each other with kindness and courtesy. To spend time at the school is to see how staff show equal care and attention to all pupils.

Pupils behave well and are positive about their time at school. They are happy to discuss and share their ideas with others and talk about their work. Pupils make good use of the many outdoor spaces, including ponds to study wildlife, woodland spaces and an outdoor kitchen area. Parents are very positive about the school. Pupils appreciate the wide range of opportunities that this small village school is able to offer them, for example visits to the theatre, performances from visiting musicians and through the school's links with Africa.

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

Leaders, including the trust, are working well together to drive the development and implementation of the curriculum. Leaders have a comprehensive action plan that sets out the school's vision to improve. They have identified the right aspects for development.

The school provides a curriculum that interests and motivates pupils. High-quality training is successful in building the subject knowledge and confidence of staff. Adults use their good subject knowledge to provide sequences of work that build on what pupils know and can do. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are wrapped into the life of the school and are provided with activities and support that help them to achieve well.

The early years setting is a strength. Staff provide a very caring environment within an engaging and stimulating curriculum. All children achieve well and show good levels of concentration and behaviour. Staff support children's early reading and number work exceptionally well.

Leaders are constructing a more ambitious reading curriculum in key stage 1 and 2. The school's revised approach to teaching phonics is working well. Well-trained staff work confidently with younger pupils to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds. Leaders' careful monitoring ensures that sequences of lessons are tightly focused. This approach is effective in helping pupils who struggle to catch up and develop their early reading skills well.

Staff use their good questioning to encourage pupils to explain their thinking or extend their ideas. Older pupils are regularly encouraged to explain the meaning of words they come across when reading books. Across the school, teachers regularly encourage pupils to voice their ideas to develop the quality of their writing. However, on occasion, staff do not pick up when pupils do not understand their work. At times, the curriculum does not demand enough of pupils for them to excel in their learning.

Leaders' work to improve subject planning is paying off. The science curriculum has developed pupils' understanding of key concepts and improved their scientific enquiry skills. For example, pupils in Year 5 and 6 learn about blood circulation, using the school hall to pretend to be blood cells moving around a body. The mathematics curriculum is clearly thought out. The way that sequences of lessons are organised builds pupils' mathematical knowledge. Pupils enjoy mathematics.

Curriculum subject leaders are developing their knowledge and skills through regular meetings with other subject leaders. However, some of this work is at an early stage. For example, leaders' actions plans for individual subjects, and the plans to improve provision for pupils with SEND even further, are not as clear as they need to be. Plans do not set out what areas of the curriculum the school will adapt to ensure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are remedied.

Governors are fully supportive of the school and work alongside senior leaders and staff to secure improvements. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve.

The school provides a wide range of activities, trips and visits that engage and interest pupils. Pupils talk confidently about environmental issues. The outdoor area and a range of sporting activities help to promote pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe and are aware of online safety. The school promotes pupils' understanding of other cultures well and weave the lives and beliefs of inspirational humans into the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure relevant checks are completed and staff are suitable to work with children. Regular meetings review safeguarding procedures so that teachers have a good understanding of their roles and responsibility in protecting children from harm. Staff understand and make appropriate use of procedures to report any concerns and allegations to the relevant agencies. Pupils feel safe in the school, they show a good understanding of how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. Staff place a high importance on maintaining pupils' emotional and personal well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Subject leaders' action plans, including those for pupils with SEND, do not clearly identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding that they seek to improve. As a result, pupils are not provided with work that is aimed precisely at resolving their weaker conceptual knowledge and understanding. Leaders need to ensure that action plans set out how the curriculum will change, or be adapted, and the expected gains that these changes will accrue in improving what pupils know and understand.
- Staff do not make the best use of ongoing assessment to ensure that pupils produce their best work. This prevents a minority of pupils from excelling in their learning. On occasion, when pupils do not understand their work, teachers do not resolve this quickly enough. Leaders must ensure that staff use their assessments precisely so that they quickly identify and resolve pupils' misconceptions, and the curriculum is sufficiently demanding for all pupils.

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 or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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, Upton Cross Primary School, 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	144523
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10122395
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Peter Woodward
Headteacher	Emily Goodey
Website	www.upton-cross.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Atlantic Centre of Excellence Multi-Academy Trust in May 2017.
- Upton Cross ACE Academy School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- An above average proportion of pupils either join or leave the school other than at the normal times.
- Children start the school's early years provision in a pre-school unit, which they attend for part of the week, before moving into the early years class on a full-time basis.
- The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinators, all the teachers and some support staff.

- We met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. We also met with representatives of the local governing body.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and science. We met with senior and curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils. We visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work and talked to pupils. We listened to some pupils read
- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. We checked the school's single central record and scrutinised policies relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. We met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed a sample of case files.
- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. We spoke with pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- We considered the 56 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Lindfield, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Spencer Allen

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