

Inspection of a good school: Launceston College

Hurdon Road, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 9JR

Inspection dates:

10–11 March 2020

Outcome

Launceston College continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Launceston is a school in transition. The newly appointed headteacher has begun her tenure by taking stock of the things that the school does well. However, leaders are honest and reflective about the things that should be better. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve in line with what is typical nationally. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that not all pupils reach their full potential, particularly disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils value what they call the 'community feel' of the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are generally respectful and personable. Pupils say that staff are clear about the standards of behaviour expected. Consequently, pupils typically display positive attitudes to their learning. Those who do not do so receive support to help them.

Pupils know whom to speak to if they have a concern. Although the majority of pupils say that bullying is uncommon, there are some pupils and parents and carers who say that this is not always dealt with effectively.

'Adventure learning' is an important foundation of pupils' experience at the school. The extra-curricular programme makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' talents, wider skills and character traits. Staff have high ambitions for pupils' next steps in higher education and training.

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

Pupils study a broad range of subjects in key stage 3. The majority of pupils choose to study the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) in key stage 4. There is a range of progression routes, including apprenticeships, into key stage 5.

A small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow a bespoke curriculum. Pupils successfully develop the social and physical skills that will equip them for later life. The specialist support base is a nurturing environment where pupils are valued and made to feel proud of their achievements. Pupils who fall behind their peers in literacy and numeracy are given the support they need to help them catch up.

Over recent years, there has been a decline in the progress that pupils make by the end of Year 11. Leaders have begun to put plans in place to halt this. However, it is too early for these to have properly taken root, although standards in the sixth form have improved.

Leaders have identified that they need to develop the role of pastoral leaders to strengthen communication with parents. They are also working to ensure greater consistency in how staff use language and tone to help some pupils regulate their behaviour. Staff have recognised a sea-change in how leaders want the school to move forward.

Curriculum leaders are now planning more deliberately what pupils need to learn and the order in which they do so. Teachers have relished their involvement in designing these plans. In English, pupils consider high-quality texts from a broad canon of literature. Pupils also think about the context in which a text was written. For example, pupils talk about contemporary attitudes towards science in novels such as 'Frankenstein' and 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'.

However, some subjects are early into this journey, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders are not explicit enough in drawing out the key content that pupils need to know. Neither are pupils confident to say where they might have encountered topics in other areas of the curriculum. Therefore, it is more difficult for pupils to make sense of what they have learned. Pupils are not always clear about how new knowledge builds on what has come before or how it will prepare them for what will come next.

In some subjects, such as mathematics and science, teaching is very clearly targeted towards the end points that teachers want pupils to reach. In other subjects, this lacks clarity. Therefore, teachers' use of assessment does not precisely identify whether pupils are ready to move on.

While disadvantaged pupils receive additional support, teaching does not always pinpoint the subject knowledge and skills that pupils find more difficult. Where teaching is not adapted to remedy these gaps in understanding, pupils do not achieve as well as their peers.

Trust leaders work positively with the local governing body. They are now providing greater challenge to leaders. There is a systematic approach to the way in which leaders check whether actions are having the intended effect. However, subject leaders focus too heavily on what they are doing rather than the impact this has on pupils' learning.

Pupils discuss issues that are important to their well-being, self-awareness and their ability to relate to others. In 'immersive learning days', for example, pupils reflect on other religions and cultures and the work of community groups.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that the use of additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who need to catch up with their peers in literacy and numeracy may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders are diligent in their approach to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. Staff work with a range of partners, including the police, so that pupils are aware of the risks they might meet in their everyday lives. Staff are clear about how to use the school systems to report a concern. Where pupils require specialist support, leaders work effectively with other agencies so that problems do not escalate.

Staff are aware of pupils who are vulnerable and take time to forge positive relationships with them. They are knowledgeable about pupils' backgrounds and family circumstances. This helps leaders to tailor the support available appropriately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variability in how well subject leaders have planned the order in which pupils learn knowledge and skills, particularly in key stage 3. This means that pupils are not always able to make sense of what they have done before and understand how this relates to their later learning. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects sequence the curriculum in a way that explicitly draws out what it is important for pupils to know. This will support pupils to make connections both within and between curriculum areas.
- While there is now a systematic approach to checking the implementation of the curriculum, subject leaders' strategic plans are too heavily focused on what needs to be done rather than the impact of these actions on pupils' learning. Subject leaders need to check systematically how well teaching helps pupils to learn and remember more over time.
- Where the use of assessment is less effective, teachers either do not identify the end points that they want pupils to reach or precisely check whether they have done so. Therefore, some pupils have gaps in their subject skills and knowledge, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Leaders need to sharpen assessment practice across the curriculum, so that teachers can identify where misconceptions lie and rectify these.
- There is variability in the approach taken by pastoral leaders to key aspects of the school's work. Therefore, the implementation of leaders' revised expectations about

the management of behaviour and the effective communication with parents is not yet embedded. Senior leaders need to make sure that pastoral leaders have the right professional development to fulfil their roles effectively.

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 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2016.

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	139155
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10111601
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,265
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elaine Marshall
Headteacher	Jenn Burn
Website	www.launceston-college.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 March, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in March 2020, after acting in an interim capacity since September 2019. The chief executive officer of the trust was appointed in September 2019.
- The school runs a specialist provision for pupils with SEND. There are currently 18 pupils accessing this provision.
- The school works with the Wave Academy, an alternative educational provider.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the chief executive officer from the multi-academy trust. We met with a representative from the trust board, members of the local governing body, senior

leaders and staff. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the board of trustees on the telephone.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. 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 of their school.
- We considered 274 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 150 additional free-text responses.
- We took into account 70 responses from staff and 189 responses from pupils to the questionnaires issued at the beginning of the inspection.

Inspection team

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