

Inspection of a good school: Restormel Alternative Provision Academy

Great Eastern & Great Western, The Sidings, Brunel Business Park, St Austell, Cornwall
PL25 4TJ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 September 2021

Outcome

Restormel Alternative Provision Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe Restormel as a haven. Typically, pupils arrive having struggled to remain in education at other schools. However, they quickly benefit from this calm and orderly academy. Staff work hard to secure trusted relationships. They design and deliver bespoke packages of support. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), settle and experience success quickly.

Leaders have high expectations. Staff do all they can to change the negative perceptions some pupils hold. Pupils re-engage in their learning because lessons meet their interests and needs. Pupils know staff care about how well they do. This helps them to achieve well over time.

Parents agree that Restormel is a sanctuary. They recognise the difference the academy makes to their children. Pupils build strong attachments to the academy. Many come back to share their successes with staff.

Pupils report that there is no bullying. They say that everyone gets along well. They know who they can talk to. Challenging behaviour is managed well. Leaders record serious incidents appropriately, including cases of peer-on-peer abuse, and racist and homophobic incidents. Leaders take effective action to follow up these issues when they happen. Consequently, pupils agree that staff keep them safe.

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

Leaders have established a well-sequenced and coherent curriculum for pupils. Subject leaders are knowledgeable and passionate. Subject planning demonstrates that the curriculum covers the scope and ambition of the national curriculum. Pupils with SEND have full access to the curriculum. Staff assess pupils' holistic needs and academic ability when they first arrive at the school. Teachers ensure that pupils benefit from learning that builds on what they can do and remember, and meets pupils' needs and interests.

Consequently, the ambition of leaders' intent is realised in the outcomes that pupils achieve. Pupils go on to appropriate and sustained education, employment or training.

Leaders demonstrate passion for the offer they give pupils. Recent changes to senior leadership have led to greater consistency in expectations of pupils. Staff feel valued. They recognise that leaders look to promote their well-being. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum well. They give an honest assessment of where curriculum intent and implementation are better. For example, the sequencing of learning in geography and history is not as strong as in the other subjects. Plans to address this are early in development.

English is a well-planned and effectively taught curriculum area. Literacy and reading are given priority. Pupils have daily literacy sessions where they learn with pupils who have a similar level of ability. This allows those who are still learning to decode words the chance to learn new sounds in a timely and systematic way. Most-able pupils can focus on more complex literacy texts. Pupils make significant progress in their reading. Some learn to rekindle their love of stories and books.

Pupils are positive about the opportunities they get in the wider curriculum. For example, they can go sailing, learn outside and explore how to keep safe in one-to-one sessions with their key workers. Pupils have access to a range of appropriate qualifications and work experience. Careers advice is a central element of the curriculum. Leaders ensure that students visit a range of further education settings. This includes access to information about apprenticeships, as well as more traditional college options. Consequently, the school meets the expectations of the Baker Clause.

Systems and processes for holding senior leaders to account need improving. Local leaders provide very useful information to local governors, known as the pupil performance standards committee (PPSC). However, governors and trust leaders do not challenge leaders sufficiently about the information they receive. This means the trust and governors risk being unaware should there be a decline in the quality of education provided.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a thorough understanding of the needs of pupils, including those with education, health and care plans. Pupils with SEND get full access to the school's curriculum offer, albeit with adjustments made depending on their ability and individual needs. The SENCo has supported improvements to SEND provision effectively. For example, she has identified that several pupils arrive with unidentified SEND. She has tackled this by providing staff training on meeting the needs of pupils with autism spectrum disorders. Staff say this has helped them understand pupils' needs better.

Pupils often present with behaviour that is challenging. Staff are well trained to manage this effectively. They rightly prioritise building trusted relationships. This helps pupils to feel safe and accepted. They learn to become remotivated. Consequently, over time, behaviour rapidly improves.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The vice principal, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, leads safeguarding with authority and a passion to protect pupils. She has a secure grasp of what is expected of her. She also knows and understands local processes well. Staff receive considered training. As a result, staff know the local challenges that pupils face particularly well. There are strong systems for managing safeguarding and responding to pupils' needs. Staff follow local processes diligently. Concerns are followed up in a timely way.

The vice principal has built effective relationships with other agencies. For example, she ensures there is open communication between the academy and local authority. Leaders are appropriately persistent if they are unhappy with the response when working with other agencies. This helps maintain an appropriate line of sight on the most vulnerable pupils that attend the academy. Safer recruitment processes meet statutory expectations. Appropriate checks are made when new staff are appointed. These are recorded appropriately on the single central record.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The arrangements for governing the academy are clear and understood by members of the PPSC and leaders. Leaders provide useful and detailed information about pupils' education and experience to the PPSC and trust. However, because this information is detailed and pupils do very well at the school, PPSC members and trust leaders do not do enough to check that the information is truly reflective of pupils' experiences. Consequently, the processes in place would not pick up a decline in the quality of education in a timely fashion if local leaders lacked authenticity or were stretched. Leaders should look to improve the level of challenge provided by the PPSC and the trust.
- Curriculum intent is strong and improving. Leaders are ambitious and clear about what they want pupils to achieve in their time at Restormel. Their ambition is set out in detail in curriculum planning. However, this is better in some subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, art and personal, social and health education (PSHE), than others. Leaders should look to improve the coherence and sequence of intended learning for pupils in history and geography.

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/outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Restormel PRU, to be good in February 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	139761
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10199732
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christian Jenkins
Principal	Mrs Joanna Rand
Website	www.wavemat.org/our-academies/restormel-academy-st-austell
Date of previous inspection	4 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Restormel Alternative Provision Academy provides education for pupils who present with behaviour that is challenging, at risk of exclusion or who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school. Pupils are of secondary age. Some pupils are dual registered. This means that they remain on the roll of a mainstream school.
- The academy can take up to 40 pupils. However, at the time of this inspection, there were 23 pupils for whom the academy was providing education.
- In April 2021, a new principal and vice principal were appointed. The new vice principal was promoted from another leadership position in the academy.
- The academy is part of WAVE multi-academy trust. There are 11 other schools in the trust. All provide specialist education.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior and subject leaders, including the principal, SENCo and vice principal, who is also the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also met with two

representatives of the PPSC, including the chair. They discussed leaders' evaluations, priorities for improvement and the curriculum.

- Inspectors did deep dives into three subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. They met with senior and subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and talked to pupils. They reviewed subject planning and spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement and paperwork relating to the work of the PPSC. They scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum and safeguarding. They scrutinised reports provided by external advisers.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by analysing feedback provided from former parents and the schools own parent's questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding by discussing policy and process with staff, checking safer recruitment processes, exploring the processes around pupils on part-time timetables and scrutinising records made relating to safeguarding on the school's record-keeping system.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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