

Inspection of a good school: Pennycross Primary School

Arden Grove, Pennycross, Plymouth, Devon PL2 3RL

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 November 2021

Outcome

Pennycross Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pennycross pupils feel valued and listened to. Staff make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included fully in the life of the school. Pupils are prepared well for their next step in education. Leaders' expectations are high. Pupils respond by trying their best in lessons and behaving well. They listen to adults attentively and respect the school rules.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are happy and show great care for each other. Staff apply the school behaviour rules consistently. Consequently, incidents of bullying are rare. Staff deal with the occasional incidents that occur quickly and efficiently. Most parents agree that staff take good care of their child.

Leaders encourage pupils to be responsible and to make a positive contribution to the world around them. With teachers' help, pupils play an important role in making changes in their local area and globally. Pupils on the eco-council take care of the school grounds by picking litter after school. Pupils contribute to environmental debates about climate change and raise money for charities. They enjoy positions of responsibility and take great pride in their roles as school councillors, prefects and house captains.

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

The headteacher has built a strong team. Together, they have overhauled the curriculum and improved the pastoral support for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic, and learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. Recent changes to the governing body have resulted in a shared momentum of focused school improvement. Most parents and carers recognise that the school has improved recently, after a previous dip in its performance.

Leaders prioritise reading. Children get off to a flying start in the early years. They learn phonics as soon as they start school. Books match the sounds they are learning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 get lots of practice spelling words in sentences correctly. Older pupils who

remain at the early stages of reading, and those who have fallen behind, get extra help to catch up quickly. Before reading the ambitious class novels, staff provide pupils with additional reading sessions to introduce them to the new vocabulary they will encounter. Consequently, pupils gain a secure understanding of what they are reading.

The English curriculum is well thought out for most pupils. Teachers take a consistent approach across the school. Staff help older pupils to select appropriate reading books. Pupils who have fallen behind are supported effectively by knowledgeable staff. They catch up quickly. Teachers receive effective support from leaders to make suitable adjustments to the planned curriculum for pupils with SEND. Pupils' additional needs are identified swiftly. This means that most of these pupils are reading and writing in line with leaders' expectations. However, teachers do not adapt the curriculum well enough for some pupils who are typically strong readers and writers. Often, their work is too easy. This holds these pupils back from reaching the high standards of which they are capable.

Most subject curriculums are improving. For example, in early mathematics, children are learning to work confidently with numbers up to ten. They are prepared well with the important knowledge and skills they need for mathematics in Year 1. In other subjects, such as art and design, teaching is based on secure subject knowledge. However, some subject leaders have not planned the curriculum with sufficient attention to age-appropriate knowledge. Occasionally, the curriculum is too focused on skills and forced cross-curricular links. This means that some pupils have gaps in their subject knowledge.

Assessment is embedded across most subjects. Leaders have placed a high priority on making sure that learning sticks. Teachers routinely check what pupils have learned and remembered in many subjects. They correct pupils' misconceptions immediately, so pupils have a thorough understanding of what they are learning and how to improve in most subjects.

Leaders have ensured that there is a high-quality personal, social and health education curriculum in place. Pupils learn about the protected characteristics and fundamental British values. They express their views on what they have learned with appropriate maturity. Pupils talk about diversity and tolerance with sensitivity and understanding. They learn how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to keep mentally and physically strong. Leaders prioritise pupils' well-being through activities, such as yoga and mindfulness sessions. Pupils learn about world religions and cultural differences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding leader and his deputies make sure that pupils are safe. Recruitment checks are thorough. Staff have received suitable training so that they are alert to any signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Leaders are knowledgeable about how to manage incidents of sexual harassment and abuse. They have ensured that staff are trained to undertake this important part of their safeguarding duties effectively. Leaders ensure that pupils and their families get early help. They work effectively with a range of external agencies and keep precise records of their work.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum leaders, in some subjects, have not identified the important knowledge pupils need. This has resulted in gaps in some pupils' learning. Leaders must ensure that subject leaders take greater consideration of the knowledge pupils need to learn and that curriculum plans include this information.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is ambitious enough for the more accomplished readers and writers. Activities are often too easy. This has resulted in some pupils not achieving the high standards of which they are capable. Leaders need to ensure that the reading and writing curriculums are suitably challenging 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 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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 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 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	113297
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10204986
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	391
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julia Baldie
Headteacher	Stuart Tulloch
Website	www.pennycross.plymouth.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has experienced significant changes in leadership since the last inspection. In January 2021, a new headteacher took up post. In September 2021, he was joined by two assistant headteachers.
- Since the previous inspection, there is a new chair of governors in post.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) took up post in July 2021.
- The school's pupil admission number and the number of pupils on role have significantly increased since the last inspection.
- The school do not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, governors, subject leaders, teaching and support staff, parents and the SENCo. The inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at the curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils read.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, minutes from governing body meetings, and documentation relating to behaviour and bullying.
- The inspector examined safeguarding records and met the designated safeguarding leader.
- The inspector considered the responses to the staff's and pupils' surveys. She also took into consideration the 38 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parents' written comments.

Inspection team

Sue Costello, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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