

Inspection of a good school: St Merryn School

St Merryn, Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8NP

Inspection date: 19 January 2023

Outcome

St Merryn School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Merryn is a school where pupils value learning and staff enjoy working. Leaders keep their mission statement, 'bright futures built on firm foundations', at the centre of their actions to drive school improvement. They expect the best from every pupil. Pupils give their best effort to meet leaders' high expectations.

Pupils value their friendships. They learn to resolve any minor fallouts quickly. Pupils could not recall a time when bullying happened. They say that staff listen to them and would help them if it did happen. Staff know pupils' needs very well. They support pupils to make the right choices and learn from their mistakes. As a result, learning is rarely disturbed by poor behaviour. Classrooms are calm and purposeful.

Leaders provide a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. They make adaptations to enable all pupils to attend. Clubs offer opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests, especially within the creative arts. Pupils perform in front of community audiences to showcase their talents.

Parents and carers are proud of the school. They say that staff are approachable and deal with any concerns well. Parents are particularly pleased with how the school prepares pupils for the next step in their education.

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

Leaders have carefully designed the curriculum. It is ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers break learning down into small steps. This helps pupils to learn successfully. There are many opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning. As a result, most pupils build knowledge securely over time. However, the organisation of the curriculum in some foundation subjects is not as precise as it could be. Some teachers are unsure about the most important knowledge pupils need to learn, for example in history. Consequently, pupils find it difficult to make links between their current and previous learning.

Leaders make sure that pupils with SEND have learning targets that help them to build their knowledge and access the full curriculum. They check that pupils receive effective support based on their needs. Parents appreciate the care and individual attention that staff give to vulnerable pupils.

Children get off to a strong start with their reading in the Nursery Year. There are many opportunities for them to recognise letters and become familiar with the sounds they make. Pupils across the school enjoy reading. They read widely and often. Pupils approach words they are unsure of with confidence. They have secure strategies to work out unknown words and check they make sense. Adults skilfully spot pupils who fall behind with their reading. They provide extra support to help pupils to catch up. Pupils read books that match their reading ability. This helps them develop into confident and fluent readers. Parents appreciate the useful information leaders share with them about the school's approach to phonics.

Pupils fulfil their responsibilities around the school with delight. These include helping at lunchtimes, being a subject ambassador and being on the school council. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and always try their best. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the school values: 'resourcefulness, risk-taking, relationships, reflectiveness and resilience'. Pupils reflect on these values as part of their everyday routines. They take part in a range of trips and residential visits to broaden their knowledge of the wider world. For example, on a recent visit to London, pupils visited a Gurdwara to learn more about world religions. Pupils know it is important to treat everyone the same and that differences make people unique.

Pupils behave well. This begins in the early years. Children thrive in a well-organised environment with clear routines and expectations. Pupils in all year groups take care of each other. They are kind and considerate. At social times, pupils make sure that no one is alone. They organise games to help everyone feel included. Pupils learn how their actions impact others. Respectful relationships exist throughout the school. Pupils consider it to be a happy place to learn.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the support and guidance leaders provide. Those responsible for governance know their responsibilities well. Trust leaders provide suitable support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Consequently, pupils feel safe. They say there are many trusted adults they can speak to with any worries. Leaders know the risks that pupils face in the local community. They support pupils with these, for example by teaching pupils from an early age how to keep safe in the sea. Staff know the signs that may indicate that a pupil is at risk. Leaders use established systems for recording and reporting concerns. They act on concerns quickly and work with other agencies to get pupils and their families the help they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The organisation of the curriculum in some foundation subjects is not as precise as it could be. Some teachers are unsure about the most important knowledge pupils need to learn. Consequently, pupils find it difficult to make links between their current and previous learning. Leaders need to make sure that the most important knowledge pupils need to learn is identified with precision in all subjects. This will help pupils to know and remember more.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 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.

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	137623
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10227951
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	149
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Parker
Executive Headteacher	Kaye Pitcher
Website	www.stmerryn.kernowlearning.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a head of school alongside an executive headteacher. The head of school started her role in January 2023.
- The school is part of Kernow Learning Trust.
- There is an on-site before- and after-school club.
- There is nursery provision for three- and four-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors spoke with school leaders, including the executive headteacher and head of school, subject leaders, pupils, governors and representatives from the trust.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding leader. The inspector also spoke with staff, governors and pupils, and evaluated record-keeping and staff training. They considered responses to the staff survey.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, responses to the pupil survey and comments made by parents online during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Kevin Butlin

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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