

Inspection of St Germans Primary School

Lower Fairfield, St Germans, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 5NJ

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has not established an effective safeguarding culture. Important information is not shared well enough between staff. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are insecure. Attempts to improve this, and other parts of provision, have been negatively affected by the pressures of managing a shrinking budget.

Pupils rightly believe that more could be expected of them. They say that low-level disruption affects learning. New approaches to managing behaviour are not consistently applied. This means that pupils' self-motivation varies.

Most pupils and parents say that bullying is not an issue, but others do not agree. The school takes bullying seriously. However, weaknesses in managing concerns contribute to a perception that bullying is not tackled consistently well.

There are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is implemented. Often, expectations are too low. This affects learning, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nevertheless, pupils learn some parts of the curriculum well. For example, learning is better in mathematics or when reading in key stage 2.

Pupils like going to school. They appreciate the opportunities to learn outside and beyond the classroom. For example, they speak positively about the camps, trips and clubs available to help them learn.

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

St Germans is in a period of transition. Necessary changes in leadership, the need to reduce costs because of a falling roll and staff absence have contributed to a rapid decline in standards. Several elements of leadership and management have been negatively affected by the need to reorganise the school. For example, the ability of the school to assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND is poor. Staff morale is low. Their well-being is affected. This all means the school lacks the capacity to address the range of weaknesses in provision at the speed that is needed.

The curriculum has some areas that are effective and secure, but this is not consistently the case. For example, although reading is prioritised by leaders, the teaching of phonics is sometimes weak. Pupils learn their sounds, but do not consistently learn to put them together to read independently. This means that pupils who struggle to read take home books they cannot read confidently or well. They do not enjoy reading.

Provision in the early years is poor. Changes in the organisation of the school have not been thought through well enough for the Nursery and Reception children. Staff are stretched by the range of needs within the cohort. Opportunities to learn through play do not reflect the needs and interests of children or promote effective learning. Children often play in an unconstructive or limited way. Staff do not

engage well enough with them to ensure that sessions are purposeful, because they are managing too many complexities at the same time. Communication and language are not promoted well enough, particularly for those with SEND. Consequently, children are not being well enough prepared for Year 1.

Nevertheless, there are parts of the curriculum that are much better. Where this is the case, the curriculum is well planned and knowledge is taught in a systematic and coherent way, such as in mathematics. However, the school has not been able to carry out robust checks on the quality of learning of late. This means weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum, such as in early reading, the provision for pupils with SEND and in the early years, have not been addressed.

St Germans is a caring school. Pupils' personal development is promoted in a range of ways. Pupils enjoy learning outside and through trips and visits. Staff are well trained in approaches to support pupils with their mental health. However, staff are not doing all they can to work together to put pupils' interests first. Too little is expected of pupils and so they are not as independent or thoughtful as they could be. For example, some pupils struggle to understand why provision may be different for others because of their protected characteristics. Pupils' well-being is also negatively affected by weaknesses at the school. For example, not enough is being done to understand why attendance has been poor and how to improve persistent absence.

The local authority is aware of the challenges the school faces. It has provided some support to manage the complexities of reorganising the school to make ends meet financially. It has also challenged the school about the impact of the curriculum on lower attaining pupils. However, this has not helped to address a decline in standards and weaknesses in provision in some parts of the school. Most governors are new to their roles. They have the skills and experience to do a good job. However, they are also learning their roles and the amount there is to do at the school. This means that they are not well placed to provide the governance needed to rapidly improve provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school has failed to ensure a culture where pupils' interests are put first. Necessary changes to the organisation of the school have led to low staff morale. This means staff are not working together effectively to safeguard pupils. The school has not ensured that all staff have had the latest safeguarding training. Changes to the way that records relating to safeguarding are kept are not universally used. This means there are gaps in the records relating to safeguarding. Relevant information is not always shared in a robust way. This means that the most vulnerable pupils are put at risk, because the school's ability to identify need and secure the help that is needed is hampered.

Changes in the organisation of the school have revealed weaknesses in the school's processes to safeguard pupils. For example, risk assessments relating to the buildings are sometimes nearly 10 years out of date. Other processes, such as those relating to mitigating risks when pupils are on trips and visits, are not effective. This means that when staff and parents have raised concerns, they have not always been dealt with in the proper way. Collectively, this means members of the community have lost confidence in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have a robust safeguarding culture. Staff are not working together effectively to ensure that pupils are safe. Systems and processes have too many weaknesses. Records are not as detailed or complete as they need to be. The school should take rapid action to improve how staff work together to safeguard children.
- The early years curriculum is not designed or implemented adequately. Provision is not well enough tailored to the needs and interests of pupils, or delivered well enough to ensure children learn well across the prime and specific areas of learning. At times, children are left floundering or unable to make progress because staff are not deployed effectively. Children with SEND do not have their needs met well enough. Leaders should take immediate action to improve the early years curriculum.
- The school has several elements of provision that need improving. However, the burden of reorganising the school and managing the declining budget has affected the school's ability to address these areas robustly. The school should develop its capacity to take rapid and effective action to improve, especially the early years and arrangements to safeguard pupils.
- Elements of the curriculum are still embedding. Whereas there are some strengths in planning, such as in mathematics and history, this is not consistently the case. The implementation of the curriculum is too varied. Lower ability pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school should regularly check implementation of the curriculum to provide a basis for further improvement.
- The early reading curriculum is not secure. Pupils do not blend their sounds consistently. This means that lower attaining pupils cannot read the books they are given to take home. They do not learn successfully and, therefore, develop poor attitudes to reading. The school should improve the delivery of the early reading curriculum.
- Not enough is expected of pupils in lessons and when moving around the school. Some pupils say they are not challenged, and others report that low-level disruption affects their learning. New approaches to managing behaviour are not widely understood or applied. As a result, pupils' engagement in lessons varies and they do not consistently try their best. The school should look to secure the consistent application of the new behaviour policy.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	111982
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10288126
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting chair of governing body	Scott Horner
Headteacher	Ingrid Bennett
Website	www.st-germans.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. The school has recently been reorganised from four to three classes because of a falling roll.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The governing body manages a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher and senior teacher. They also spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the local authority and two representatives from the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and free-text responses. They also reviewed responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluations, the school improvement plan, risk assessments and other related health and safety documentation, external reports into the school's effectiveness, minutes of the governing body and information about the school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Page

Ofsted Inspector

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