

Inspection of a good school: Connor Downs Academy

Mutton Hill, Connor Downs, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 5DH

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

Outcome

Connor Downs Academy continues to be a good school.

The head of school is Janice Eddy. This school is part of Aspire Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Vanessa Bragg, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Penny Shilston.

What is it like to attend this school?

Connor Downs Academy is a place where pupils shine. The motto 'open spaces, open hearts, open minds' threads through the school. Pupils learn in a calm, orderly and inclusive setting. They are respectful and take pleasure in helping one another. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and benefit from a wide range of experiences. As a result, they enjoy school and attend well.

Staff are determined for pupils to learn well following an ambitious curriculum. This is achieved through high expectations that pupils rise to. They have a thirst for learning and take pride in their work.

Pupils' wider development is a strength of the school. The school goes above and beyond to develop pupils as responsible, respectful and active citizens. 'Cultivating futures' is at the heart of the many opportunities provided by the school. This outdoor learning area encourages pupils to care for the environment. Pupils develop empathy through looking after rescued rabbits and chickens. They enjoy growing their own food from seed using recycled water to help them grow. Pupils learn about nature, including bird watching and pond dipping. They really value this space and time for reflection.

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

Across subjects, the school has considered and sequenced progressively the knowledge pupils need to know and remember. This starts in the early years, where children get off to a strong start. For example, in mathematics, children develop their knowledge of shapes as they design minibeast houses. This prepares them well for future learning in key stage 1.

The school uses a variety of strategies to help pupils learn. Teachers model new content clearly. They use assessment to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. In many subjects, prior learning is revisited regularly. This helps pupils build their knowledge based on what they know and remember. For example, in mathematics, daily 'spiral maths' tasks support pupils to go over previous learning. In a minority of subjects, some pupils do not get enough opportunities to revisit what they have learned before, to ensure they consolidate and remember this over time. Teachers are not always aware of gaps in some pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not secure knowledge into their long-term memory as well as they do in other subjects.

The school is ambitious to make a difference for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils benefit from precise learning plans. Teachers adapt learning to help them build their knowledge as well as their peers.

There is a strong culture of reading at the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to promote reading for pleasure. They value the 'treasure box' of books to promote a range of genres. Local author and poet visits inspire pupils about reading and writing. Staff receive regular training to teach the phonics programme well. Pupils show confidence when decoding and blending words because they are secure in their knowledge of sounds. Assessment is used effectively in order to identify and support those pupils who need help to keep up. This is supporting pupils to become confident and fluent readers quickly.

Pupils show excellent attitudes to their learning. Their work across the curriculum is of a high quality. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils live up to these. The school is calm and orderly with rules and routines well established. This starts in the early years, where children know to stop and listen when the original school bell rings at the end of social times. Any pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour are well supported. Staff build positive relationships with pupils to enable them to learn in a safe and nurturing environment.

Pupils' wider development is at the heart of the school. Opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences are mapped out. They benefit from a range of visits each year to enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils visit Pendennis Castle to bring their history unit on castles to life. To promote aspirations, parents and the local community support the annual careers fair. Pupils value the residentials they attend to develop social skills and build resilience. Pupils know they make a difference to their school through the many roles and responsibilities they have, such as well-being champions.

Staff value training to strengthen their subject expertise. Trust network meetings help to support the development of leaders at all levels. This helps to strengthen the implementation of the curriculum. Those responsible for governance have an accurate view of the school. Alongside the school and trust, they are ambitious for pupils to do well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of the wider subjects, pupils do not get opportunities to revisit prior learning in order to consolidate important knowledge. Teachers are not clear how much pupils have remembered before moving on to new learning. Consequently, some pupils are not securing knowledge into their long-term memory. The trust should ensure that pupils revisit learning often with the precise use of assessment to enable pupils to build their knowledge securely.

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 predecessor school, Connor Downs Primary School, to be good in June 2011.

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 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	142144
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10322293
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Penny Shilston
CEO of trust	Vanessa Bragg
Headteacher	Janice Eddy
Website	www.connordowns.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Connor Downs Academy is part of Aspire Academy Trust.
- The school provides a before-school club.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with school leaders, staff, parents, pupils, governors and a representative from the trust.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke to leaders and pupils about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector listened to pupils read to a trusted adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The inspector considered comments made by parents online during the inspection and met with some parents at the start of the second day. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Esther Best, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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