



Falmouth School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112047
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278836
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Barbara Wintersgill HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Trescobeas Road
School category	Community		Falmouth
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Cornwall TR11 4LH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01326 372386
Number on roll	1213	Fax number	01326 377102
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Marie Sharp
Date of previous inspection	15 September 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Sandra Critchley

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	278836

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Falmouth School is a school of average size for pupils aged 11 to 18. It has a small sixth form. 95% of pupils are from White British backgrounds and fewer than 1% speak English as an additional language. The school draws from an area with some affluent households but much deprivation and high levels of unemployment outside the tourist season. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding feature that has made very good improvements since the previous inspection under the very effective leadership of the headteacher and the governing body. Although senior management's judgements on some aspects of the school were cautious, they know the school very well. The outstanding feature of the school is the dedication of its teachers and teaching assistants and the very high quality care for its pupils, in conjunction with many external agencies that work closely with the school. Personal development is good, though a minority of pupils lack self-discipline. Standards across the school are average but pupils make good progress as a result of the teaching they receive. Most pupils enjoy being at the school and benefit from the wide range of activities offered out of school hours. Teaching varies, with weaknesses in a small minority of lessons, but overall it has improved since the last inspection and is now good. In particular, assessment is used effectively to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. The school provides a curriculum that meets the very wide range of interests and abilities of its pupils. The school is well led and efficiently managed and offers good value for money.

The school is well placed to improve still further. This is demonstrated by its effectiveness in dealing with the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Senior managers know what has to be done to move the school forward.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good education for its students and the school has addressed effectively the issues noted in the last inspection report. Standards vary between subjects and from year to year, but students make good progress overall and achieve well in relation to their own starting points. Numbers and retention rates are rising, now that the range of courses more closely matches the students' aspirations. Students themselves say that they enjoy the sixth form. Teaching is good. Small groups allow teachers to offer individual coaching which sustains students' motivation. Most take advantage of the leadership opportunities offered by the enrichment programme. They are mature and responsible in their approach to their studies. The collaborative leadership and management of the sixth form are good, with clearly defined roles. A more rigorous system for the consistent monitoring of provision is being developed. A strategic plan for 14-19 provision in partnership with other local schools is at an early stage of development. Overall value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use established systems of monitoring and training to bring the overall quality of teaching up to the standard of the best
- Continue to work with parents and the community to improve the behaviour of the few pupils who persist in behaving badly

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average by the end of Years 9, 11 and the sixth form. Such standards represent good achievement, given pupils' and students' prior attainment. Significant improvement took place in the school's performance in 2005: this was no accident but the deserved result of a thorough programme focusing on assessment for learning, monitoring pupils' progress, and constantly reviewing and evaluating the quality of teaching. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties make as good progress as others. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is equally effective. Throughout the school, pupils confirm the positive difference teachers make to their achievement.

The school continues to set challenging targets for itself, and senior managers' detailed analysis of current performance indicates that pupils and students will meet or exceed expectations. Inspectors agree with the school's judgement about its good capacity to sustain current improvement and improve further thereafter.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils enjoy being at the school a great deal and their positive attitudes are demonstrated not only by their enthusiasm for most of their lessons but by the high numbers that participate in the wide range of activities offered after school. Attendance is satisfactory. It is improving, but authorised absence is above average due to parents taking their children on holiday in low season. Most pupils, parents and outside agencies speak enthusiastically about the school as a place where pupils are safe. They confirm that the school has taken effective measures to deal with the incidents of bullying identified in the last report. Pupils are very aware of the need to stay healthy. Most walk or cycle to school and, led by the dynamic student council, they have brought about modest improvements in the quality of food served in the canteen. Most pupils behave well and, when well taught, nearly all behave very well. Overall behaviour is satisfactory because a minority of pupils lack self-discipline and, if not consistently well controlled, can be boisterous.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Particularly impressive are the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, often at their own initiative, and their contribution to the community. Pupils involved in the award-winning Social Behaviour Team organise their publicity and operate a drop-in room during lunchtimes for peer counselling. Others organise a young women's group and one boy initiated an inter-school surfing competition. By contributing to the community, whether through drama and music or by working with the elderly, pupils develop qualities that will serve them well in their working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. As a result, in most lessons, pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Learning is helped by the good relationships between pupils and teachers. Senior managers know the strengths and weaknesses of teachers well and make good efforts to make improvements where necessary. Because there are regular checks on teaching by senior and middle managers, certain good practices are common to most lessons. Objectives are set and there will usually be an evaluation of how effectively they have been achieved. The use of assessment to support teaching is good overall. Pupils know their targets and usually know what they need to do to improve. Pupils themselves are appreciative of teachers' understanding of their needs. Pupils with learning difficulties are effectively supported in class by teaching assistants. Whilst the vast majority of lessons take place in an orderly atmosphere, a few teachers do not always exercise sufficient classroom control.

The best lessons challenge all groups of pupils in the class, and the varied activities engage their interests. Teaching methods allow pupils to think for themselves and to extend the ways they learn. For example, in an excellent Year 7 English lesson, a wide range of tasks culminated in very good evaluation of their learning by the pupils themselves using a 'marking ladder'. A few lessons do not sufficiently excite pupils' imaginations nor are relevant to their experiences. As a result, these lessons are too theoretical in content and lack colour and pace, making it harder for pupils to focus on their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall curriculum provision is good. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum throughout Years 7-9. There is good provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). All statutory requirements are met.

There is a flexible curriculum in Years 10-11, with a range of pathways that effectively meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. These routes continue into the sixth form. In addition to a common core, they can opt for a vocational programme which reflects the regional economy, or one that may include up to ten GCSE subjects. A potentially disaffected group attend college or work placements each week and this has demonstrably improved their behaviour in and out of school. Education for health and safety is good and all pupils undertake work experience.

Opportunities for enrichment activities are outstanding. A very wide range of activities is offered; they have a high take up and several lead to additional qualifications. Staff give very generously of their time to ensure that pupils develop self-confidence and community leadership skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is an outstanding aspect of the school's work for Years 7-11 and is good in the sixth form. No effort is spared to enlist the support and cooperation of other agencies for the benefit of pupils. Such support is given willingly because of the strong relationships the school has built up. The effects in terms of improved attendance and low exclusion rates are clear. Similarly, the creation of opportunities for less motivated young people to try out alternative learning experiences is commendable. Excellent guidance based on accurate assessment for learning ensures that pupils make good progress. The commitment and care provided by tutors and Year leaders is also exemplary; rigorous child support procedures ensure that all pupils, including those most at risk, are supported very well. This is a school that does not give up on its responsibilities – it is constantly looking for better ways to discharge them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a very strong commitment of the headteacher, senior managers and governors to ensuring the school meets the very varied and specific needs of the pupils who attend the school. For example, the decision to apply to become a specialist Business and Enterprise College is driven by the desire to support the regeneration of the local community and to build on the existing good vocational curriculum and very good links with local businesses. There has been an equally strong commitment to improving weaker areas identified at the previous inspection. Governors have a clear strategic view of plans for the future. The improved results at GCSE, and further expected improvements in 2006 and beyond, are a reflection of the strategies put into place in recent years that are now bearing fruit. In particular, these strategies are rooted in high quality self-evaluation, acting on weaknesses identified in the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress, and a determination to tackle forcefully the few major problems that have emerged.

Whilst there is consistency in the good quality of the senior leadership team, there is more variation at middle management level. Nonetheless, whole-school policies in areas such as tracking pupils' progress and taking appropriate action, and assessing pupils' work, are now being implemented much more effectively than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Recent restructuring of the senior team is now providing stronger support for middle managers. Further planned restructuring of middle management is indicative of forward thinking that is well focused on raising achievement.

A particular strength of the leadership and management is the outstanding links with local schools and other bodies such as the health service and the police. These very successful links promote pupils' overall well-being and the enhancement of their

education progress. Although a number of parents are critical of the school, the majority support the school's work.

The school has been going through a period of considerable change in the last few years, and is well equipped to continue its improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 March 2006

Dear Students

As you know, a team of inspectors recently visited your school and I am writing to let you know what we said in our report. We very much enjoyed being in the school. Thank you very much for making us so welcome and for telling us your views.

Your school is a good school with outstanding features. Your teachers and teaching assistants take excellent care of you. The school also works exceptionally well with outside agencies, such as the police and welfare officers, to support you in and out of school. Most of you told us that you enjoy being at the school, especially liking the many activities offered out of school hours. We were particularly impressed by those of you who take responsibility in the school, and by the contribution many of you make to the community, through drama and music or by working with the elderly. You make good progress as a result of the good teaching you receive. Your teachers help you understand how to improve your work and the good curriculum meets your very wide range of interests and needs.

Your headteacher and other senior teachers lead and manage the school very well. They know exactly what has to be done to make the school even better. We would like to see all lessons become as good as the very best. Also, there are a few students who do not behave well enough and need to improve. We would like to see you all, particularly the school council, think about how you can help your teachers make these improvements.

I hope that all of you and the whole town of Falmouth will celebrate your success. Well done!

Barbara Wintersgill Her Majesty's Inspector