



Pencalenick School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112084
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278842
Inspection dates 28 September 2005 to 29 September 2005
Reporting inspector Charles Hackett RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	St Clement
School category	Community special		Truro
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Cornwall TR1 1TE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01872 520 385
Number on roll	133	Fax number	01872 520 729
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Kent
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Andy Barnett

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pencalenick is a special school that provides for up to 120 secondary-aged pupils who have a wide range of learning and emotional difficulties. This is different from when the school was last inspected in 2000, when the school took pupils who predominantly had moderate learning difficulties. Pupils come from all over the county of Cornwall and are provided with transport to and from school. Up to 30 pupils can stay in the residential unit for each week; at present there are 25 boarders. The majority of pupils join the school in Year 7, although a few enter later in their school lives having experienced difficulties in mainstream schools. Currently there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language and all pupils are of British origin. The socio-economic home backgrounds of pupils vary but overall are similar to those found in most schools. There are five pupils who are presently in the care of the local authority. The main part of the school, including the boarding facilities, is a 'listed' building and this limits the school's ability to make adaptations to enhance its provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pencalenick is a very special school in far more ways than simply because it is categorised as being a special school. It provides its pupils with an excellent education, not only helping them reach their academic potential but also having an immense impact on their personal development. Pupils leave the school extremely well placed to get on with their lives successfully.

The school has worked very effectively, knows it has to improve the quality of its work since its last inspection and pupils' outstanding achievements show this clearly. The school has a very accurate picture of what works best and why, yet has modestly judged its effectiveness as only good. Inspectors disagree and feel this judgement is merely a reflection of the school's aspirations for perfection. Much of the excellent drive to raise the school's effectiveness comes from its inspirational headteacher. In the three years that he has been at the helm, the school has changed dramatically. As a result, pupils' achievements, their personal development, teaching and the quality of care are now all excellent. The quality of education has been transformed to cater for the needs of each individual child. The school's philosophy, to build on pupils' strengths rather than focus on deficiencies, succeeds very well.

The curriculum offered is good, particularly the excellent opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work and life at college. Additional developments are being introduced, including increasing the use of a range of therapies and increasing the emphasis on creativity. These have been well set out in the school improvement plan and will enhance the curriculum even further.

The board of governors supports the staff team very well; monthly meetings between the chairs of their committees and senior staff ensure that they are aware of strengths and areas to be developed. Because of the high standards it achieves and the way money available is used very effectively to bring about improvements, the school is judged to provide excellent value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 9

The residential provision in the school is good. The latest report by the Care Standards Inspectorate earlier this year stressed many good features of the provision. These included the excellent relationships pupils have with the staff. These were very evident at both an evening meal and breakfast observed by inspectors. Pupils chatted very amicably to each other and staff about their activities and were clearly enjoying the social occasions as they relaxed in one another's company. Pupils talked about their activities and were very relaxed. Resources in the units are good and they give pupils the chance to play games inside and outside, use computer games or simply watch television. However, there is a lack of space to give children the chance to be on their own. Pupils, themselves, comment on this as the major disadvantage of boarding. With the exception of two single rooms for boys with autistic spectrum disorders, all other boarders share dormitories, with up to five pupils in each. Whilst the rooms are bright,

in good decorative order and personalised, especially those used by girls, they lack space and privacy. Similarly, bathrooms and showers offer very limited privacy. Undoubtedly, though, because the building is 'listed', improvements are difficult to make.

What the school should do to improve further

- To bring about even further improvements to its effectiveness the school should:
- Improve the quality of the accommodation for boarding pupils by providing more opportunity for pupils to be on their own, including having options for single bedrooms and private bathing facilities.
- Continue to implement plans to develop the curriculum further through the use of different therapies and increased opportunities for pupils to be creative.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make very good progress in their learning and leave school exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their lives. This reflects the philosophy of the school where the emphasis is placed on seeking to extend the potential for each child to achieve rather than focus on their particular difficulties. These high aspirations for each child to succeed include children in the care of the local authority, who achieve as well as all other pupils. Pupils throughout the school achieve very well in a wide range of subjects. This is demonstrated in their successes in passing examinations at the end of Year 11. Their achievements have increased over the last three years. Last year pupils passed their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in mathematics and art and one talented pupil was supported to achieve a grade A in dance. Pupils have also been successful in passing lower-level examinations in English, mathematics, science and computer studies. These academic successes are supported by excellent achievements of almost all pupils in achieving bronze or silver awards in the Youth Award Scheme. Almost half of last year's group also received certificates for their coursework linked to work experience placements. A scrutiny of the individual records of pupils shows how well they are improving in many subject areas. This is typified by the excellent progress many have made in English, a subject in which at the time of the last inspection progress was judged to be unsatisfactory. Pupils' excellent progress is shown by their success at achieving the whole-school targets set for improving reading. In 2002 the school aimed for 60% of pupils to improve their reading ages by over 12 months. Having achieved this, targets have been increased in subsequent years to the extent that for this present year the target is for 95% of pupils to achieve this.

Previous questionnaires and responses from parents prior to the inspection show they share an overwhelming belief that their children are achieving far more than they imagined they would. Almost half of pupils' parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and with the exception of one were very positive about the impact of the school on their children. This was typified by one parent who wrote "the school always puts the child first and always manages to get the best out of them".

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils have a very positive attitude to school and the work they do. Their enjoyment is reflected in their good attendance, with several pupils who have not gone to school regularly before, coming in every day. Behaviour is very good and has improved considerably over the last four years. The number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped considerably and there has only been one permanent exclusion in the last year. The school recognises that there are cases of bullying but pupils feel that these are dealt with well by staff.

There are regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider their actions and the world around them. In assemblies pupils contribute their ideas, recognising, for example, the need to make right choices. Their moral and social development is excellent because the school places such importance on these areas. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. One pupil told inspectors how rightly proud of the three stars on his jumper he was because he felt he had worked hard. Pupils enjoy the huge range of clubs and activities which enable them to develop their social skills very well.

Pupils feel they have been able to influence change through the school council and take an active part in the school community. They have asked for and acquired fencing around an area of the playground, and for water to be supplied in the tuck shop. Pupils are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and know they can leave lessons to get a drink if they need one. They consider the school dinners to be very good and feel that the food is very healthy. Their awareness and involvement in the decision making process were shown in their discussions about the tuck shop and the desire, despite the staff's best efforts, to retain the option to buy chocolate and less healthy items! Pupils contribute well to the community and are involved in raising money such as through coffee mornings for Macmillan Cancer Relief.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is excellent. This is a direct result of the determined effort of all staff to provide pupils with very high level support. When pupils arrive at the school there are very good systems to check on what they can do, know and understand. Information gained from this forms the basis for what and how pupils will be taught. This understanding that pupils learn in different ways is fundamental to the school's approach. It is typified by the strategies used for the teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Rather than stick rigidly to a particular method, staff use what approaches suit each individual child.

Regular assessments are made to check on pupils' progress and these are recorded very well on the school's internal computer record system and therefore easily accessible

to all staff. Teachers use this well to set targets that build on pupils' previous achievements.

Teachers make lessons interesting and practical. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed trying to beat their previous times for solving questions in a programme using an interactive whiteboard. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to teaching their subjects well. In a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher's passion for her subject inspired the group to eagerly put forward their own ideas for a poem to be written in the style of a centuries-old Chinese poem they had read as a group.

Teaching assistants work very effectively with pupils, hold high expectations and clearly know their pupils well and what is expected of them. Computers and other forms of technology are used well to make learning interesting. For example, a Year 8 science lesson involving practical tests outside was summarised very well through pupils looking at digital photographs of what they had achieved during the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Pupils have good opportunities to study a range of subjects and the school has done a considerable amount of work to improve what is offered to pupils. Opportunities for pupils to experience college and work situations are very good and there is a very good range of examinations that pupils can undertake. There are appropriate plans in place to develop a more creative and flexible curriculum and a considerable amount of work has been done on establishing a therapeutic programme which many of the pupils are benefiting from.

There is a vast range of activities during and after school which support pupils' learning further. Pupils listed many linked to sports such as climbing club, running and cross country, and there are also opportunities to play in a Samba band which several were enthusiastic about. There are good links with the community and the school is establishing close working relationships with a nearby secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided to pupils are outstanding. The school's whole focus is about each individual child. Staff know pupils very well and have very good relationships with them. Regular meetings between staff and the very good communication systems ensure staff are kept well informed about each individual. There are very good links with outside agencies such as social services and Connexions which support pupils very well. The use of specialist staff to provide therapies in areas such as dance, art and music is excellent. Procedures for child protection and risk assessment are very good and ensure that pupils learn in a safe environment.

Pupils are supported extremely well to ensure that they make the best progress they can. This is reflected in the very good individual education plans. The targets set are challenging but realistic and there is very good evidence which shows that pupils

progress very well against the targets set. The progress that all pupils make is checked on regularly both in how well they are learning and developing personally.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has had a significant impact on the quality of education the school provides. His vision and commitment for excellence have driven the school forward. He has been well supported by a strong senior team, who together have given all the staff belief in their work and the confidence to meet the challenges they face. As a team they share successes and good practice to develop their skills even further.

The headteacher's very high aspiration for all pupils to succeed is at the heart of the school's outstanding effectiveness. He has placed a strong focus on improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For example, he has forged a link with national ASD specialists at Birmingham University, and this has helped extend the skills of staff in working with this group of pupils.

Rigorous professional development reviews have been instrumental in driving up standards and detailed analyses of achievements have led to very appropriate priorities for improvement highlighted within the school's improvement plan. Subject leaders share a passion for excellence and the reviews of their curriculum areas show precise analytical powers coupled with very well-focused subject action plans.

Governors are very committed to the school and very active in supporting improvements. They know the school well and ensure that its policies and procedures are monitored and approved. They are solidly behind the school's philosophies; as the chair of governors commented "in this school, every child does matter".

Excellent financial records show that money is being channelled very well to enhance the quality of the school's provision and, given its many strengths, the school provides excellent value for money.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

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

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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Thank you for making Ms Mascall and myself so welcome in your school. We both enjoyed meeting you and hearing about the many things you do. We were especially pleased to meet with those of you on the school council and can see how you are all involved in making decisions about your school. We have written a report about what we think about your school and have sent a copy to the school. They will be then sending a copy to your parents and carers. This report says that we think your school is outstanding and that all your staff work very hard to do their best for you. The most important comments we have made are:

You all make very good progress and your examination results are very good.

Your behaviour and attitudes in school are excellent.

Teachers and their assistants teach you extremely well.

All staff provide you with exceptional levels of care.

Your headteacher is an outstanding leader and together with the other senior staff has helped make your school better in the last three years.

To make your school even better will be hard but we think there are two things that will help.

Provide those of you who stay overnight with more chance to be on your own.

Continue with the changes being made to the lessons and activities you do to make them even more helpful and interesting.

Once again, thank you for being so helpful and looking after us.