

# Curnow School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112086
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	289167
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Pauline Robins HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	111
6th form	15
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Wendy Hattan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Bob Coburn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2001
<b>School address</b>	Drump Road Redruth TR15 1LU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01209 215432
<b>Fax number</b>	01209 314205

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<b>Age group</b>	2–19
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Curnow School provides for children and young people with severe learning difficulties (SLD). All pupils enter the school with a statement of special educational needs. There is a gender imbalance in that 70% of the pupils are male and 30% female. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A higher than average proportion are in the care of the local authority (LA) or are on the At Risk Register. The school has significant accommodation issues. It is housed in a two storey building where currently the upper floor is unable to be accessed by many pupils. The post 16 unit is situated within a shared building (shared with the National Health Service information and communication services and the police station), parallel to the main site. The school has been through a period of turbulence with regard to leadership and management, including the governing body. The substantive headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Curnow provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. It is an extremely welcoming school where young people enjoy their learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and a number commented on improvements since the headteacher came into post. As one parent wrote, 'Everything at Curnow is for the children.....thanks to the headteacher who has the passion and enthusiasm to advance all the children to their full potential.'

A number of significant challenges which faced the headteacher have been tackled well since he took over the school in January 2006. Although some plans are still in the developmental stage, there is evidence to demonstrate a clear impact on outcomes for the pupils. Far-reaching organisational changes to the leadership and management at all levels, including governance, have provided the school with a clear direction for improvement. As a result there is good capacity to improve further.

The progress made by pupils against their targets is satisfactory and this is a reflection of the quality of teaching. Significant improvements have been made in a relatively short space of time and most staff are committed to raising standards. Systems are now in place to scrutinise data based on pupils' prior attainment but are yet to be consistently used to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils. Through a robust moderation process teachers are becoming more accurate in their assessments and consequently set more meaningful and measurable targets for each pupil.

The strength of the school is the degree to which staff care about the pupils' welfare. The relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and respectful. Where pupils have difficulty controlling their behaviour there are systems in place which are consistently and sensitively employed. Incidents are quickly diffused with the minimum of disruption to learning. The high adult to pupil ratio means that pupils' circumstances and disabilities are clearly understood. This is credit to the commitment of the staff. However, the level of support can, on some occasions, be to the detriment of pupils developing their independence.

Although the school has worked hard to improve the quality of provision at post 16 the inadequate accommodation is a barrier to further development. As such the good teaching cannot compensate for a curriculum that does not meet the needs of the students. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is barely satisfactory as the standard of teaching varies widely and in some classes the environment is not conducive to good early years education.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Strong leadership of the post 16 provision this academic year has brought about improvement in a number of areas. Teaching is now good, as is the quality of care that students receive. However, there remains a legacy of underachievement from previous years which the school has done its utmost to address. Students now attend courses at local colleges of further education for two days each week. This gives them access to relevant vocational opportunities which are not available to them on the school site. Poor accommodation restricts the school in developing a curriculum that fully meets the needs of its students, particularly with regard to developing the skills necessary for independent living.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school by making consistent
- use of assessment data to plan lessons and set tasks that meet the needs of all pupils, and by supporting pupils in developing greater independence.
- Provide all pupils in the Foundation Stage with access to a well planned and stimulating environment.
- Investigate ways to work with the LA to improve the accommodation at post 16 so that the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils in terms of independent living skills and appropriate vocational options.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities means that they are working at levels well below national expectations, but the progress they make is now satisfactory in most classes. This is the result of the improving quality of teaching. In some classes, teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of the pupils' differing abilities, and the level of challenge, particularly for the higher ability pupils, could be greater.

The school now uses a range of data to measure pupils' achievement, including the progress they make towards the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs), 'P' level data for core subjects including personal, social and health education (PSHE), and the outcomes of accredited courses.

The data prior to 2006 is unavailable or found to be unreliable which, when added to the small numbers in each year group, makes comparison of trends over time difficult to assess. The school is working closely with the LA to further develop its data in order to set whole school targets which are challenging and meaningful.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The exceptional relationships between pupils and all adults in the school make pupils feel safe. Both they and their parents report how happy they are to attend. These strong relationships mean that, where they are able to articulate their views, they feel confident to communicate to adults about their concerns. Pupils also work well with each other and where they are able interact to make decisions through participation on the school council. Instances of unsafe behaviour are a consequence of individual pupils' complex social and communication difficulties rather than deliberate antisocial attitudes. Effective behaviour management strategies are consistently and sensitively used and monitored throughout the school. All pupils have an individual safety plan that is discussed and updated at each annual review.

Although the pupils' ability to adopt healthy lifestyles is largely governed by those adults who have close contact with them, the pupils are as aware as possible of the importance of these

issues. Pupils make satisfactory progress towards preparing for their future economic well-being through the emerging emphasis placed upon developing choice and taking personal responsibility. Links with the local and wider community are strong. Pupils take part in a number of activities such as the Murdoch Day celebrations and their work has been displayed in Truro Cathedral and other venues around the county.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning were recognised by the headteacher as the first priorities to be tackled when he came into post. As a result teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall with some examples of good practice. However, there is also some weak teaching which has been identified by the school and effective strategies are in place to bring about the required improvement. Teaching is strongest in Key Stage 3 and at post 16. The support provided by the learning support assistants is good. They know the pupils well and enhance the work of the classroom teachers. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is variable, ranging from good to unsatisfactory. Leadership of this phase has been strengthened but has not yet been able to impact on entrenched underperformance.

Teachers are still coming to terms with using assessment information to inform their lesson planning. In Key Stage 3 there is an effective system in place to record progress on a daily basis, but this practice has yet to be disseminated throughout the school. Where the teaching is good pupils are stimulated by a variety of resources relevant to the focus of the lesson and the pace is such that they do not have time for their attention to wander. As a result they are fully engaged and make measurable progress. In contrast the weaker teaching is characterised by missed opportunities to exploit the pupils' learning and classrooms which are sterile.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

The curriculum in the main school is satisfactory. Subject leaders are in place and the plans for developing the curriculum in the coming year are encouraging. Currently most subjects are taught as discrete units and the school recognises that a more integrated curriculum is called for. The curricular planning for the school's three phases ensures long-term planning is coordinated and avoids repetition. There is an appropriate balance between developing the pupils' personal as well as academic needs. The pupils particularly enjoy music and art and this is evident from displays around the school. There are limited facilities to deliver specialist subjects such as PE and design and technology.

The curriculum is greatly enriched by links to mainstream schools and the programme of visits, residential trips and visitors to the school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Without doubt every member of staff in the school, no matter what their role, cares deeply for the welfare of the pupils. However, in some classrooms and at lunchtimes pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to develop their independence and there is an over-reliance on the adults present. Procedures for child protection are secure, as are the quality and extent of risk assessment for individual pupils.

Changes to the review system have been implemented, and personal development and individual pupil targets are now reviewed three times a year. However, academic guidance cannot be secure until the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress are consistent and accurate. The appointment of the transition mentor has been successful in raising pupil and parent/carer involvement in the review process, particularly through the use of visual records of achievement.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher and the assistant headteacher have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what still needs to be done to bring about improvement. They have already had a hugely positive impact on the school's performance and have the determination to bring about further change. The newly formed senior management team are enthusiastic and are developing an understanding of their roles and the mechanism by which they hold their teams to account. Currently the headteacher and the assistant headteacher take the main responsibility for both strategic and operational decisions. They recognise that if the team is to develop fully there must be greater delegation to the wider senior team to allow them to develop their expertise. There is an appropriate focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils achieve to their full potential. Strategic financial decisions have been made to bring the school out of a deficit budget situation while maintaining the quality of provision for pupils.

Governance is satisfactory. The new chair of governors took over in November 2006; she gives freely of her time and cares passionately about the school and its community. The governors have worked hard to review all policies and establish a committee structure that is appropriate to the needs of the school. They acknowledge that at the present time they rely too much on information received from the headteacher but policies and procedures are being developed to introduce governor monitoring visits.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	3

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Curnow School, Redruth, TR15 1LU

I would like to thank you all for looking after me so well when I came to visit your school, which is giving you a satisfactory education. I really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

There are lots of good things about Curnow:

- You all get on really well with each other and you like the adults who teach you and take care of you.
- When some of you are unhappy and find it difficult to control your behaviour the staff handle this very well.
- There are lots of opportunities to go on visits and trips. I hope the camping goes well and you don't get rained off again!
- Doctor Bob is doing a good job working with the staff to make the school even better.

There are also some things which could be better:

- The unit for the oldest students does not give them the chance to practise some of the skills they will need when they leave school.
- Some of the teaching needs to be better so that you all do well in your work and become more independent.

I wish you all every success in the future and hope you continue to enjoy your school.

Pauline Robins HMI