

# Penair School A Science College

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112060
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	337831
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Pye

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1195
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr N Vincent
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr B J Vann
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	St Clement Truro TR1 1TN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01872 274737
<b>Fax number</b>	01872 242465
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@penair.cornwall.sch.uk

---

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons, and held meetings with the Chair of Governors, staff, senior managers and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, for example data relating to students' progress, and documentation regarding safeguarding, health and safety and curriculum planning.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effective the school's actions have been in addressing the issues arising from the 2008 results, including any variations in the progress of different student groups
- how well teachers use assessment information to inform their lesson planning
- how consistently leaders use assessment data to self-evaluate and to plan and monitor any changes introduced
- evidence to confirm the apparent strengths in care, guidance and support and the Every Child Matters outcomes for students.

## Information about the school

This specialist science school is larger than average and takes students from Truro and the surrounding rural area. Most students are from White British backgrounds and very few of them have English as an additional language. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below average, although there are some significant pockets of disadvantage within the school's catchment area. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although there are an above average number of students with a statement of special educational needs. An integrated health centre has recently opened on the school site. The school has recently formed a trust with two other local establishments. It is a Training and a Leading Edge school.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Strong leadership by the headteacher, particularly regarding the emphasis on improvement, has helped the school maintain high quality provision and outcomes. Staff embrace change and work alongside students in reviewing the impact of any actions. For example, students who are members of the sports council have sought views on the changes to the curriculum and fed these back to the appropriate staff. A combination of good teaching and students developing very well as independent, self-challenging learners results in excellent achievement levels. Students, given their starting points, progress well and, as a result of the good teaching and learning, they attain high standards. The unvalidated examination results for 2009 show a recovery from the dip in students' overall progress in the previous year. Prompt review by senior managers led to changes in teaching styles and the tracking of students' progress, which have undoubtedly led to improvement, particularly in mathematics.

Effective safeguarding systems contribute to outstanding quality care, support and guidance for students. They say they feel extremely safe and secure and this contributes to their extremely positive attitudes to work, and their preparedness to focus and involve themselves in their learning. Relationships in lessons are very positive and the students want to learn. They show initiative and work together very well, reacting enthusiastically to the varied activities presented to them during lessons. Behaviour is outstanding. However, students' progress, on occasions, could be even faster. There are a few inconsistencies in some aspects of teaching. For example, not all teachers use assessment data sufficiently well to plan work that challenges students of all abilities. Similarly, some inconsistencies in the quality of marking exist and students consequently do not always have a clear idea of the next steps they need to take to improve their work. In a small minority of cases, teachers do not always plan to promote opportunities for students to reflect on their learning.

Students are well motivated by the outstanding curriculum, aspects of which contribute extremely well to their excellent personal and social development. Besides the very wide range of visits and visitors, the students also benefit from the school's attention to detail. For example, the Year 7 curriculum is designed to replicate the students' primary experience and hence encourages students to settle more quickly. Similarly, the new health centre provides students with excellent opportunities for counselling and advice and guidance on a range of health matters.

There is no room for complacency, and leaders and managers have a firm focus on monitoring and self-evaluation which leads to very appropriate development planning.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The high academic standards over recent years, coupled with the positive impact of changes introduced regarding, for example, the curriculum, reflect an outstanding capacity to maintain improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the consistency of teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information about student groups to plan work that challenges all abilities
  - ensuring that all marking gives clear guidance to students on how to improve their work
  - providing consistent opportunities for students to reflect on their learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well. Their overall achievement is outstanding because they are independent learners, highly motivated, and respond well to the good teaching. In one English lesson, for example, Year 10 students settled quickly because the lesson was well planned and organised. Students in a Year 8 design and technology lesson gained very secure knowledge of health and safety matters because the teacher ensured they had a good focus on this. In a Year 11 drama lesson, students progressed very well because they had excellent concentration levels, and the teacher had high expectations of them, urging improvement throughout the lesson.

Students generally enter the school with standards just above average. In 2008, there was a dip in the rate of students' progress by the end of Year 11, although standards in English remained high. This blip has been very well addressed, particularly in mathematics. Over recent years, the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, has been significantly above average except for the dip in 2008, and evidence shows a recovery in 2009. The impact of the science specialism is seen in the high standards attained by students.

Other outcomes for students are outstanding. In particular, they have a very secure knowledge of how to remain healthy. The award-winning chef not only contributes to their understanding of such things as sourcing of foodstuffs but has overseen a rise in the numbers of students accessing the healthy meals. The students' contribution to the community is exceptional. They engage in meaningful decision making through the school council and numerous focus groups and act as 'learning detectives' as well as attending governors' meetings. They fully recognise and respect the needs of others, for example when mentoring younger students. Within this caring environment, students grow in confidence. Heartfelt applause took place for two girls who, in assembly, played and sang their own composition. The high levels of basic skills, including information and communication technology, along with the varied opportunities to experience the world of work, ensures that they are extremely well prepared for future life.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. It is often better. A wide range of assessment information is available and is used very well by some, but not all, teachers to plan work for different abilities. Teaching assistants are well briefed and adopt a proactive approach. The school's recent focus on the use of assessment for learning results in very appropriate questioning by teachers. However, on occasions, insufficient time is provided for students to reflect on their answers. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge well to build on students' answers. In a Year 7 French lesson, the consistent use of vocabulary challenged well the students' understanding. Marking is supportive but does not always give a clear message about the next steps in students' learning.

The curriculum is highly coherent, meets the differing needs of the students extremely well and contributes significantly to their enjoyment and excellent achievement levels. Students have benefited from and respond very well to the school's emphasis on personal learning and thinking skills. The innovative approach by the school to redesigning the curriculum to meet the needs of the new diploma courses is praised by students. They like the additional time that now allows for more variety in activities.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Students find learning is made more real for them when similar themes are delivered in different subjects. For example, the science specialism led to a shared piece of work with geography and information and communication technology, based on the subject of disease and illnesses in other parts of the world. Similarly, citizenship underpins much work across the curriculum with students encouraged to identify active citizenship targets. There is a wide range of science courses available and GCSE astronomy has been introduced with 90% of students attaining an A\* to C grade. Partnerships make an outstanding contribution to students' learning. For example, the link with the Peninsula Medical School results in medical undergraduates visiting the school to debate issues such as stem cell advances. This is another example of the impact of the science specialism.

Outstanding care, guidance and support for students results from the school's emphasis on meeting their individual needs as much as possible. All aspects of students' progress are very carefully monitored and result in appropriate interventions being put in place. Consequently, students with additional language needs are well supported and achieve in line with their peers. Partnerships with external agencies are very effective in providing appropriate support. The pastoral support team adds significantly to the support that students receive and they monitor aspects such as attendance extremely well.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior management team plays a significant part in the maintenance of high standards and the successful and continual drive for improvement. Challenging targets are set and made clear to all staff. This clarity, together with systematic monitoring and self-evaluation which involves a wide range of leaders, leads to effective and high quality development planning. This can be seen in the work of the 'learning team' who, alongside the training school, contribute well to teachers' professional development. The school is extremely well supported by the governing body, which acts rigorously as a critical friend. The school meets the diverse needs of students very well; there is no evidence of discrimination. Assessment and the tracking of students' progress is, overall, good. The school acknowledges that the potential of the new method of recording assessment and progress has yet to be maximised; for example, in its use for tracking the progress of

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

some student groups, such as those entitled to free school meals. Community cohesion is strong, with links to New Zealand, for example, which together with a London school benefits very well the students' understanding of the lives of others. Some of the accommodation is limiting, and the school acknowledges the need to look further at the use of the rather overcrowded dining room facilities. Students benefit greatly from some excellent partnership work, for example, carried out as part of the Leading Edge collaboration. The school is extremely well supported by the governing body, which acts rigorously as a critical friend and ensures that safeguarding procedures are effective.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

There was a very good response to the questionnaires. The very large majority of parents are happy with the school. Many praised the transition arrangements, and felt that their child was well prepared for the future, and that teaching was good. A small number expressed concerns about behaviour, although the inspection team judged this as outstanding. A small number of parents felt communication could be improved but the great majority felt satisfied with this. The team did agree with those parents who queried the lunchtime arrangements, and the school is looking into ways of addressing this aspect of its provision.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Penair School, A science College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 396 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	147	37	227	57	18	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	142	36	231	58	13	3	4	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	103	26	252	64	31	8	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	117	30	239	60	22	6	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	124	31	246	62	11	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	111	28	239	60	31	8	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	104	27	232	59	30	8	6	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	136	34	225	57	8	2	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	119	30	227	57	24	6	7	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	111	28	221	56	41	10	8	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	19	249	63	30	8	8	2
The school is led and managed effectively	154	39	209	53	9	2	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	165	42	206	52	10	3	4	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Penair School A Science College, TR1 1TN

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. In keeping with the school's approach to ensuring you have a voice in what takes place at Penair, you had much to say when we spoke to you. We listened carefully, and thanks particularly to the groups of students we spoke to. Like you, we feel that yours is an outstanding school.

Here are some of the things we found during our visit.

You attain high standards in your work and progress well. You told us that teaching is good, and that activities, particularly during the long lesson sessions, are interesting.

We were particularly impressed by how you develop as young people. You respond very well to the opportunities you get to take decisions and develop as independent learners. Your behaviour is excellent, and you adopt an extremely positive approach to your studies. The school encourages you in an outstanding way to get involved in school life, and you make the most of the opportunities. Well done!

We agree that you have an excellent range of activities in which to participate. The links your school has with other schools, some in different countries, with the health centre, and the local medical school, amongst many others, all significantly contribute to your learning. You also told us, and we agree, that the care and support you get are outstanding.

Even the best schools can get better, and we have asked the school to iron out some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In particular, we have suggested that all teachers use assessment data to plan work that challenges you, that marking clearly shows you how you can improve, and that you are given more opportunity to think and reflect on your learning.

Thank you once again, and, on behalf of the team, I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**