

# St Merryn School

St Merryn, Padstow, Cornwall. PL28 8NF

## Inspection dates

2–3 July 2013

| Overall effectiveness          | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b> <b>2</b>     |
| Achievement of pupils          | Good                 | 2                        |
| Quality of teaching            | Good                 | 2                        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | Outstanding          | 1                        |
| Leadership and management      | Outstanding          | 1                        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership with high expectations for all aspects of the school's performance. Staff are very committed and work very well together as a team.
- The quality of teaching is good, with some outstanding practice, and relationships between pupils and their teachers are excellent.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors demonstrate that the school has a strong capacity for future improvement.
- The transition of the older pupils onto their senior school is well managed and they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- As a team, and as individuals, governors are wholly committed to supporting the school and driving improvement.
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress, often from low starting points.
- Most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the academy from the local pre-school. They settle extremely quickly and benefit from learning in a very safe, creative and stimulating setting.
- In all lessons, pupils' attitudes to their learning are exemplary.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally polite and caring. They enjoy and value every day they spend at St Merryn.
- Parents are extremely pleased with the quality of care and teaching their children receive.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength that encourages high aspirations.
- The curriculum offers an extremely varied and challenging range of learning experiences, particularly in the performing arts and sports.
- Pupils' progress is closely monitored and where any underperformance is identified it is addressed quickly and effectively.

### It is not yet outstanding because:

- At present, standards of attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are not as good as those achieved in English.
- Links with the pre-school on site although good are not yet strong enough to be sure that school staff know what children already know, can do and understand

## Information about this inspection

- The majority of full-time staff, apart from the deputy headteacher, were observed teaching. A total of nine lessons and one assembly were seen. This included three joint lesson observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read individually and observed the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they represent).
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, and the mathematics coordinator. Telephone conversations were held with the academy's external advisor with particular responsibility for early years foundation stage and outdoor learning, and the deputy headteacher, who was not in school due to a residential trip, whose roles include that of literacy coordinator and special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence which included the academy's improvement plan, the academy's data for tracking the progress and attainment of individual pupils and specific groups, the academy's checks on how well it is doing, curriculum and lesson plans, governing body documentation, and the work pupils were doing in their books.
- Parents were spoken to at the beginning of the school day and the 55 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were considered. The academy's own parent survey in July 2012 was scrutinised. Responses from eight staff questionnaires were also taken into account.
- During the inspection pupils' behaviour was observed, both inside and outside the classroom, and the academy's safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- The inspection coincided with the school's Years 5 and 6 residential trip to the Scilly Isles. The older pupils, which constituted 30% of the school, were therefore not in school during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Mark Anderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Merryn is a much-smaller-than-average-sized coastal academy located between Padstow and Newquay.
- The vast majority of pupils at St Merryn come from White British backgrounds.
- Pupils are taught in four classes: Reception; Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; and Years 5 and 6.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average. There are currently no children in local authority care and no children with a parent in the armed services on the school roll.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through statements of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The majority of pupils join St Merryn from the on-site pre-school provision which is run by an independent management committee and has a separate inspection.
- The school gained academy status in November 2011. When it was inspected before it became an academy and also known as St Merryn School but with a different unique reference number, it was found to be outstanding.
- The school does not offer alternative school provision.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, building on the good practice already evident in some classes, improving the proportion of pupils who reach above average levels.
- Develop closer links with St Merryn pre-school to further enhance pupils' progress at the start of their school career.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- The majority of children have skills slightly below those expected for their age when they join the academy. They make good progress in their first year at the academy. The Early Years Foundation Stage teaching staff deliver a well-balanced curriculum with a wide range of stimulating activities, both in the classroom and outdoors. Improvements are also seen to take place in the children's personal development and social skills. Progress is sometimes inhibited because the sharing of information from the pre-school about what children can do, know and understand is not well established.
- Consistent progress continues through Year 1 and Year 2. Although attainment at Key Stage 1 in 2012 reflected a slight dip in standards in reading and writing, this was not a strong cohort. Results achieved in mathematics were in line with national averages.
- In the 2012 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2, the great majority of pupils achieved the expected Level 4 and some did better than this in English and mathematics. Standards overall were broadly in line with national expectations. The attainment of pupils in English was higher than the results in mathematics. However, the academy's current monitoring and progress data for the academic year 2012/13 indicate significantly more rapid progress in all subjects across all year groups in comparison with 2012.
- Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 was in line with national averages in English and mathematics in 2012.
- Pupils get regular opportunities to read during the school day and teachers and learning assistants ensure that their knowledge of phonics (links between letters and sounds) continues to be reinforced during lessons.
- There are no significant differences in the progress made by groups of pupils, including the very few pupils from different ethnic groups.
- In the Key Stage 2 national assessments in English and mathematics, the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium was similar to that of other pupils in the academy when comparing average point scores. The impact of well-planned actions is leading to improvement in the achievement of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and has successfully narrowed the gap between their attainment and that of all other pupils. This improvement is an example of the academy's successful promotion of equality of opportunity.
- The academy's systems for tracking each individual pupil's level of progress and achievement are extremely accurate. The tracking data are analysed to establish any areas that are in need of strengthening and any individual pupils or groups who require additional support.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- The overall quality of teaching and teachers' level of expectations are good and the majority of pupils are making consistently good progress over time.
- The work pupils are asked to complete in lessons is well matched to pupils' different abilities. Lessons are always interesting and sometimes inspiring. The level of appropriate challenge ensures that pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and the pupils are strongly encouraged to become independent learners.
- Staffing issues that have affected the quality of teaching over time have been effectively addressed and previous underperformance, for example in mathematics, has now been eradicated. The quality of teaching is now rapidly improving from good towards being outstanding and teachers are providing increased opportunities for pupils to use and develop their numeracy and literacy skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- In almost all lessons teachers promote learning well and lessons are lively, clearly enjoyed and conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers' questioning keeps pupils focused on the task in hand and involved. In lessons pupils are very keen both to ask and answer questions and do so with great

confidence and understanding.

- Teachers' relationships with pupils are excellent. Pupils say that staff are friendly, caring and approachable. Class teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that those pupils requiring extra help with their learning receive the support they need in order to make similar progress to all other pupils. The contribution of the teaching assistants is a real strength of the academy. There is also a strong emphasis on teamwork and support for colleagues in all phases of the academy.
- Marking and written and verbal feedback help pupils meet their learning targets. These are consistently good, particularly across Key Stage 2, and pupils receive clear guidance as to the quality of their work and how to improve it.
- The use of information and communication technology is integrated across all areas of the curriculum and this was highlighted during a Reception lesson in which pupils were using hand-held tablets to find hidden treasure! The school has invested in a device for every two pupils.
- All parents who responded to the questionnaire or spoke to the inspector consider that their children were taught well and make good progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of all the pupils is outstanding and they have a very clear understanding of the high expectations within the academy.
- Pupils clearly enjoy coming to St Merryn and are extremely proud of their academy. Relationships are excellent and there is a positive learning environment within the academy. As one pupil commented, 'We are one big family where everyone looks out for another.'
- The youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn what is expected in terms of good behaviour very early on. As pupils progress through the school these expectations ensure that behaviour around the academy is outstanding across all age groups.
- All parents have a very positive view of behaviour in the academy, as expressed by those responding to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, and to the academy's own survey. Every parent who spoke to the inspector or responded online considered that the academy is very caring and approachable and staff will deal appropriately with any issues that arise.
- Pupils at St Merryn are very polite and courteous to staff and visitors. They are encouraged to show respect and consideration for others. They mix together very well with each other across the age groups, both in lessons, on the playground and in the woodland. Friendships are really strong and the calm atmosphere allows all pupils to feel at ease.
- Almost all pupils are given a leadership role within the academy and enjoy taking on a wide variety of responsibilities, including music leaders and photographers. The range of clubs and activities has expanded in recent years and includes an exciting range of opportunities, notably in sports, drama and music.
- Attendance is significantly above the national average and is evidence of the pupils' and the parents' commitment and loyalty to St Merryn.
- Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and feel safe at all times during the school day. All adults are considered to be approachable and pupils say that any problems are sorted out very quickly. The pupils showed a good grasp of what constitutes bullying, including physical, emotional and cyber bullying.
- The academy's curriculum supports and enhances the development of a wide range of personal and social skills for pupils. The pupils leave St Merryn as confident and caring individuals.
- Effective behaviour policies are in place and are implemented consistently throughout the academy. The headteacher and staff provide very strong role models for the pupils and this ensures a high level of mutual respect and trust.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The pursuit of excellence is central to the work of the academy. The headteacher and her senior leadership team, together with the governors, are ambitious for the academy's further development and have a very accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.
- The headteacher has substantially increased the level of academic ambition in order to provide every pupil with the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. The leadership of teaching is rigorous and the effective performance management system has had a strong impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- Teachers and parents agree with the findings of this inspection that the headteacher and governors provide very strong leadership and management across all areas of the academy.
- The overall positive ethos within the school is well supported by the strong teamwork and morale of the teachers. Every member of staff is committed to 'make the academy the best it can be'.
- Data on pupils' attainment and progress are regularly collected. The information is analysed accurately and pupil progress meetings are scheduled every term in order to identify those pupils falling behind or not making at least expected progress. The academy's checks on how well it is doing in terms of pupils performance are accurate and the school improvement plan is both ambitious and achievable.
- There is a united determination to ensure equal opportunities and eliminate any form of discrimination.
- The academy has excellent links with the local community, and farther afield, and the growing strength of the academy's reputation is reflected in the steady increase in pupil numbers.
- The academy is committed to improving its facilities and resources and makes the most of all available space. Plans are in place for the transformation of the information technology suite into a multimedia room and the refurbishment of the exterior of the classrooms.
- Safeguarding arrangements comply with statutory requirements. The academy's leaders identify and respond to any concerns regarding child welfare.
- Teachers are regularly observed in the classroom and accurate judgements are made regarding the quality of their practice and the progress their pupils make. As a result the quality of teaching is being moved from good towards outstanding. The findings of this monitoring are linked to teachers' pay and internal promotion within the academy. Clear links exist between teachers' performance, appraisal and pay progression.
- Links with parents are very strong and a very large number of parents helps out with school trips and in the classroom. The parents' enthusiasm is particularly evident on Friday mornings when they participate in the Wake and Shake session to gain house points with their children!
- The strong profile of the performing arts in the academy is reflected annually by the consistently outstanding performances of musicals such as 'Oliver!' which involve all pupils from Year 1 upwards. Recently, the academy also gained first place in the Youth Speak competition.
- The range of subjects and topics taught is extensive. The creative curriculum includes an extremely wide range of activities and educational experiences for pupils, such as the recent Arts Night. The curriculum also provides many opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors understand St Merryn academy well and are committed to its ongoing improvement and development. They know its strengths and how its performance compares with that of similar academies and schools, as well as with national standards. They have a clear grasp of the academy's performance management system and a good understanding of the quality of classroom practice. Governors regularly visit the academy and are kept very well informed by the headteacher. The governing body has a well organised committee structure and individual governor skills are used well. Governors ensure that finances are regularly audited and well managed. They have a sound understanding of how the pupil premium funding is allocated. Governors attend training so that they can fulfil their roles more effectively. They make sure

that the academy meets all statutory requirements, including safeguarding and safer staff recruitment.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |  |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade   | Judgement            | Description  |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 137623   |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Cornwall |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 411872   |

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

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                        |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy converter              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11                           |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                          |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 102                            |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body             |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Canon Julia Wilkinson          |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Sarah Cudmore                  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | Not previously inspected       |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01841 520683                   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01841 520683                   |
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