

Truro Learning Academy

Albany Road, Malabar, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3PQ

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been slow to respond to pupils' underachievement in key stage 1. Consequently, not enough pupils meet the standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have not checked closely enough the progress of pupils as they move into Years 3 and 4. As a result, the outcomes for pupils in these year groups are still lower than expected.
- Leaders' strategy for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has not been considered or checked thoroughly enough. As a result, these pupils are not achieving as well as their peers nationally.
- Leaders are over-generous in their judgements of the quality of teaching. Consequently, teaching is not improving rapidly enough, particularly in key stage 1.
- Teaching is not matched closely enough to the needs of pupils across the range of ability. This means that pupils do not build on their previous skills, knowledge or understanding to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders do not check the learning and progress of the most able pupils closely enough. As a result, they do not make consistently strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics to reach the high standards expected of them.

The school has the following strengths

- Key stage 2 results in 2016 showed standards in reading, writing and mathematics above the national average. Progress for this cohort compares well with those of others nationally, especially in reading.
- Parents, pupils and staff are positive about the improvements to pupils' well-being and behaviour at the school.
- The early years foundation stage is well led and managed. Consequently, children make good progress and are ready for Year 1.
- Leaders focus unrelentingly and deeply on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils are typically happy, caring and respectful.
- Safeguarding is effective and the culture for safeguarding pupils is strong.
- Leaders are effective in improving pupils' attendance at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - work is matched more closely to the needs of the pupils, especially in Years 1 to 4
 - the most able pupils are challenged to meet the standards of which they are capable.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - intervening more quickly when information shows a decline in pupils' performance
 - establishing a clear strategy that is known and followed by all staff to tackle the underperformance of disadvantaged pupils
 - raising teachers' academic expectations of pupils, particularly in Years 1 to 4, so that they are consistently high and match their high levels of commitment to pupils' personal development.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not focused strongly enough, over time, on raising standards for pupils at the end of key stage 1. Consequently, their attainment at the end of Year 2 has been lower than expected.
- Leaders, including those responsible for governance on the local academy hub council, have not developed an effective strategy to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, those pupils eligible for the additional funding are not consistently meeting the standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders have not used the information that they hold about pupils precisely enough over time to check their rates of progress. As a result, actions to help those who need to catch up or to be extended in their learning have been too slow.
- The impact of the work of middle leaders on pupils' achievement across the curriculum is inconsistent. For example, leaders need to know more about standards in science across the school. However, evidence in pupils' workbooks shows that the leadership of mathematics is now having a much stronger impact on pupils' progress across the school.
- Leaders are overly generous in the evaluations they make of the quality of teaching. They do not link their judgements of teaching closely enough to pupils' outcomes, especially in key stage 1. As a result, teaching and pupils' learning are not improving quickly enough.
- Leaders' initiatives to improve teaching, especially in key stage 1, are now starting to have a positive impact. However, these actions are too recent to have produced sustained improvement in pupils' progress.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well led. The special educational needs coordinator is new in post but has already been able to improve the quality of pupils' individual education plans. Information about pupils' achievement, however, is not yet comprehensive enough to enable leaders to hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make.
- The additional pupil premium funding supports disadvantaged pupils so that they can attend visits and participate in off-site activities. However, leaders have not improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils quickly enough.
- Leaders have improved the school in important respects, including the physical environment. They have developed a positive ethos through the promotion of clear aims and principles. There have also been significant and sustained improvements in pupils' behaviour, conduct and welfare.
- Parents, pupils and staff strongly endorse the work of leaders and in particular the head of school. Pupils and parents are very proud of the school and recognise the wider improvements made.
- Parents are delighted with the way the school engages and communicates with them, in particular by listening to their views. Leaders communicate well with parents and work together with them to set interesting home learning activities.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is wide and encompasses the full range of subjects. In particular, leaders have an effective strategy for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils' understanding of the world and their place in the community is well developed so that they understand how choices can influence their own lives and those around them.
- School leaders have introduced a range of wider provision and activities to support pupils, including those eligible for the additional pupil premium funding. Pupils have a 'reflection space', a 'virtues board' and other displays that show the enjoyment of pupils at school, including the school's annual camp. In addition, activities including breakfast club, 'play zone', forest schools and go-kart racing all contribute towards pupils feeling valued and enjoying a varied curriculum and school day.
- Leaders are effective in promoting fundamental British values. Pupils are able to explain how rules and events at school reflect those in society. The 'British heroes' display prompts pupils to consider the role and impact of significant British icons through the years and the difference that individuals can make to the communities and world around them.
- Sports funding contributes to high-quality physical education lessons and a range of sporting activities such as tag rugby, swimming and football. This appropriately supports pupils' fitness, enjoyment and participation through a variety of sports.
- Leaders, including councillors, promote a strong, caring ethos which reflects a high regard for individual respect and integrity. Promoting pupils' equality is central to the work of the school so that every child feels valued. Pupils with complex and/or medical needs are typically integrated in school life well, including events to promote pupils' wider understanding and tolerance.
- The management of leaders' and teachers' performance has brought about change in key positions and staffing since the academy conversion. While this has led to some improvement in the quality of teaching, it is not yet of consistently high quality across the school and the range of subjects.
- Leaders draw on support from the Aspire multi-academy trust and the other schools in the hub (Mount Hawke Academy and Probus Community Primary School). This enables the school to use the expertise of staff across the partnership, for example, in developing the English subject leadership at Truro Learning Academy.

Governance of the school

- The trust operates through a local hub with councillors who are accountable to the board of directors.
- Local councillors have not been quick enough to check the school's performance and intervene where necessary. In particular, they did not challenge the decline in pupils' achievement in key stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4.
- Despite previous staffing changes made by the trust, the impact of these on the quality of teaching is only recently starting to make a discernible positive impact.
- Trust representatives recognise that there are inconsistencies in the outcomes for pupils in Truro Learning Academy. However, their self-evaluation is overly generous in terms of the impact of the actions of school leaders on pupils' achievement across the school and in a wide range of subjects.

- The close support of other schools has contributed to more consistent practice, as shown in pupils' workbooks, lessons and school leaders' own records. This demonstrates the school's capacity for further improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and can talk convincingly about safeguarding concerns. This includes, for example, pupils in key stage 1 who know precisely the kind of personal information they should never share online.
- School leaders, including governors, promote a high awareness of safeguarding with pupils, staff and parents. The school adopts policies through the trust, which include an online system to ensure that all mandatory checks and risk assessments are maintained rigorously. As a result, policies are updated and revised appropriately for essential documentation.
- Staff show a good awareness of how to respond to child protection concerns. Staff are confident in knowing what to do in the event of pupils' disclosures, including how to respond directly to pupils to reassure them, as well as using the school's systems to refer these appropriately.
- School leaders ensure that checks and vetting of staff, including temporary teachers, is robust. The single central record is fully compliant and evidence was seen on inspection to show how photographic evidence with current child protection training is vetted for all temporary teachers.
- Checks on documentation of pupils subject to child protection plans show that these are also effective. In one case which is typical, the school's actions in working with other agencies have supported the pupil to attend school more regularly and show good partnership working with other professional agencies and organisations.
- The safeguarding director for the multi-academy trust takes an active role in checking and reviewing documentation. Consequently, this ensures that there is a strong focus and due diligence with safeguarding, including the chair of the local governing board, who has completed safer recruitment accreditation.
- Staff and parents strongly endorse the work of school leaders in safeguarding. Those who have been a part of the school community since the academy conversion consider this to have improved significantly. One parent was able to explain to the inspector how she had been subject to identification checks to gain access to the school. Staff are also adamant that the incidence of previous violent behaviour, which often led to exclusions, has reduced significantly and led to a calmer environment for all.
- Staff and pupils interact regularly across the school day and this promotes a genuine trust and rapport between adults and pupils. Pupils feel safe because of the actions introduced by school leaders, including the revised behaviour support systems, which now support pupils well. For example, pupils confirm that bullying is rare.
- School leaders' weekly welfare meetings ensure that school leaders meet regularly to share essential information to look after children and keep them safe. As a result, there is a continual dialogue about vulnerable pupils, including those at risk of exclusion or on child protection plans, which enables staff to agree appropriate plans and actions to meet pupils' social and emotional needs.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent across the school, although it is better in the upper school. Teaching does not build consistently and quickly on pupils' previous knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly those of the most able pupils. As a result, pupils do not attain the standards that should be expected of them at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing, phonics and mathematics.
- Pupils are often unable to build quickly enough on prior learning, such as in phonics, where work is sometimes too easy or at others times too hard. For example, lower-attaining pupils in a key stage 1 session were required to spell words using complex sounds when they were not yet able to write simple words or to make plausible marks for writing. Pupils confirm that work is not matched well enough to their needs.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in a range of subjects are not high enough. Evidence in a wide range of pupils' books shows that pupils are not using their numeracy and literacy skills securely enough in subjects beyond English and mathematics. Furthermore, the quality of pupils' presentation and handwriting is too variable.
- Teachers are starting to make better use of questioning to support pupils. In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants challenge pupils' reasoning to deepen their understanding, or sometimes initiate learning.
- The teaching in upper key stage 2 is typically stronger because activities are more closely matched to the needs of pupils. For example, targeted group work with a teaching assistant is based on the pupils' prior knowledge and builds on what the pupils need to learn next.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Teachers use different images and resources to consolidate pupils' understanding. For example, in Years 4 and 5 pupils were exploring ways to represent the value of 56 and at the same time the teaching assistant was ably supporting other pupils in their understanding of division. As a result, pupils are developing their skills in mathematical reasoning and understanding.
- Teaching is now starting to make better use of other subjects to support pupils' core literacy skills. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 developed a good awareness of life in the second world war through role play activities using an air-raid shelter in their classroom.
- The school's assessment policy provides clear guidance for teachers and is being applied consistently. Pupils recognise that feedback from their teachers helps them to learn. However, feedback is not always sufficiently focused on the most important aspects of pupils' learning to help them make the most progress.
- Classroom displays are well ordered and presented. They are used to support pupils with colourful and useful prompts, models and aids. For example, a grammar display in Year 1 showed how a sentence is constructed.
- Teachers deploy staff well to work with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants provide effective support for learning and have a regular dialogue with teachers about the pupils' progress. Pupils with the highest needs are also well supported in a positive and inclusive environment.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils, parents and staff emphatically agree that leaders have been effective in creating a school where the children want to come and learn. Leaders have had a significant impact on the welfare and enjoyment of the pupils on a daily basis.
- The open and friendly nature of the school's staff is exemplified by the head of school, who, in greeting pupils, promotes a calm and orderly start to the day. Pupils are also supported through additional activities, such as the breakfast club, which provides a nurturing environment where pupils interact and socialise with each other and adults.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons, and also in making the right decisions for learning. Teachers use the agreed behaviour system well so that pupils can manage their behaviour appropriately.
- Pupils are well supported by adults. The harmonious bond created between pupils by staff ensures that all play well together and share happily. Pupils wait patiently in queues and demonstrate respect and tolerance for one another.
- Pupils enjoy the roles of responsibility they are given. They take these seriously and recognise the importance of their work. For example, the school councillors are leading an initiative to raise funds for school play equipment.
- Pupils make choices and take decisions with consideration and respect for others in mind. For example, pupils speak keenly about 'virtue' assemblies and how these provide an opportunity to reflect on behaviour. Consequently, pupils are learning about how their behaviour has an impact on others around them.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and are adamant that this is now much less of a concern at Truro Learning Academy. Pupils have confidence that issues relating to behaviour will be sensitively managed and taken seriously by school staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have focused positively on improving pupils' behaviour so that pupils conduct themselves with dignity, respect and tolerance in lessons and around school. Staff are skilled in recognising when pupils need emotional and behavioural support and intervene early. Leaders have worked hard with staff and parents to build a school they are now proud of in the community.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn and they support each other well. There are, however, some incidents of low-level disruption that occur when the teaching is not sustaining the pupils' attention; occasional loss of concentration is also reflected in pupils' books.
- Pupils' attendance has improved strongly over time, although it is not quite yet at the national average. Leaders have worked effectively using a range of strategies with parents and other organisations to secure much-improved attendance, including for the most vulnerable pupils.

- Leaders have focused well on integrating pupils and now have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct around the school and in lessons. Staff are aware of pupils' individual personal, social and emotional needs, which has resulted in a dramatic reduction in pupil exclusions in the past year.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Key stage 1 results in national tests were low in both 2015 and 2016 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Information held by the school and work in pupils' books confirms that current standards are still low in Years 1 and 2. Pupils are not making the progress they should over time to reach the national standards.
- In 2015 and 2016, pupils' results in the national phonics screening check were below the national average. Pupils' awareness, understanding and application of phonics is not yet secure enough when pupils enter key stage 2.
- In Years 3 and 4, pupils are not catching up quickly enough to make up for their underachievement in key stage 1. The school's assessment information and pupils' work in books show that, despite some recent improvements, pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are still typically low. In particular, lower- and middle-ability pupils are not catching up quickly.
- There are still too many inconsistencies in the rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is typically low and is only recently starting to show some improvement.
- The most able pupils do not consistently reach the high standards expected of them in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is reflected in the outcomes seen in current pupils' workbooks, as well as in the results of the small number of most-able pupils who took the national curriculum tests in 2016.
- Current attainment across the school is below expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics but these are improving, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, national tests show that pupils in this small cohort achieved results in reading, writing and mathematics that were higher than the national average. The rates of progress for these pupils similarly compare well with those of others nationally, and were significantly better in reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. These pupils, including those with higher and more complex needs, are well tracked and assessment information is used appropriately for their individual needs.
- Pupils are being challenged to use English and mathematics skills across the curriculum in a variety of contexts, which, most recently, is starting to support them well. Similarly, the improvements in teaching in key stage 1 are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes, although these are still very recent.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Provision and resources are used effectively to meet the children's needs and as a result, children make good progress across the

early years curriculum and develop skills, knowledge and understanding ready for key stage 1.

- Leaders have skilfully designed and implemented an extensive physical environment so that it provides children with a breadth of learning opportunities. This includes space outdoors so that children play independently and flexibly with the wide variety of resources and apparatus available to them. As a result, children quickly gain social, emotional and physical skills in their learning and play.
- Adults provide effective challenge and support for children. They design and shape learning based on the accurate assessment information they hold about the children. Consequently, children are well supported to make good progress in all areas of the early years curriculum.
- The teaching is well planned to meet children's needs. Disadvantaged children and boys are rightly being focused on to ensure that they make the same consistently strong progress as all other children.
- Children are well supported to work things out for themselves and show resilience from the earliest opportunity. For example, the children self-register and then choose a learning activity. During the inspection, children were writing letters to Santa, including a boy who was being well supported to spell the word 'bike'. Other children were writing their own names, recognising sounds and then representing these accurately with letters. Furthermore, two girls were practising writing numbers to 10 on their own.
- Children develop key communication, language and social skills through the effective organisation and deployment of resources. For example, two children were gently handling and discussing the woodlice they had found.
- The curriculum is well developed to support children's core areas of learning, including physical development. For example, children were observed independently cutting ribbon for their Christmas decorations and activities.
- Teachers know the children very well. They use information from pre-school settings, as well as other teaching and learning notes, to plan effective learning sessions across the curriculum. Leaders are still developing their use of information, in particular in the identified areas of writing and number.
- Communication with pre-school providers is effective and teachers conduct pre-school visits with childminders and settings which support the children in getting off to a good start.
- The school's work to engage parents in their child's learning is effective. Parents have access to the school's online assessment system and some use this to upload information and images to inform the teachers' own assessments. Parents are particularly vocal in their praise of the early years, citing strong support for early reading, letters and sounds and number work.

School details

Unique reference number	139960
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10019931

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	The Aspire Academy trust
Chair	Jacqueline Swain
Headteacher	James Gentile
Telephone number	01872 277635
Website	www.truroacademy.org.uk
Email address	james.gentile@truroacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school with small cohorts in each year group.
- It has five classes: a Reception, Year 1, Year 2, a Year 3 and Year 4 class, and a Year 4 and Year 5 class.
- The school converted to academy status in December 2013 and is part of the Aspire multi-academy trust. This is a group of 19 schools.
- There is one executive headteacher for the schools in the local hub, including Truro Learning Academy, Probus Community Primary School and Mount Hawke Academy. The head of school at Truro Learning Academy has the responsibility for the daily running of the school.
- There is a separate nursery operating from the school site but this is not managed by the school or part of this inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish, including information about its funding agreement.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes, accompanied by either the executive headteacher or the head of school.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, the deputy chief executive officer of the trust, the key stage 1 teacher, the mathematics and science subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and a representative of the hub councillors.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents including hub council meeting minutes, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation, trust monitoring reports and the trust development plan.
- The inspector carried out learning walks and visits to every class and included an observation of physical education.
- The inspector undertook an extensive scrutiny of pupils' books with the senior leaders.
- The inspector spoke to a group of children and heard some pupils in Years 1, 2 and 5 read.
- The inspector observed pupils at playtime, lunch and breakfast club.
- The 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector considered comments provided by text message and spoke to parents informally at the start of day one of the inspection. The online responses of 12 staff were also taken into account. The inspector also met with a group of teaching assistants.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017