

St Dennis Primary Academy

Carne Hill, St Dennis, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 8AY

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has raised expectations, which has resulted in more consistently good teaching, pupils' better attitudes to learning and stronger progress.
- Children in the early years enjoy activities that are varied and interesting. This makes them keen to develop their reading, writing, phonics and mathematics skills, both inside and outdoors.
- Pupils' attainment is improving and differences between groups of pupils are diminishing. School leaders are aware that some disadvantaged pupils need to make better progress and are taking good action to secure this improvement.
- Pupils are taught phonics well, which underpins the development of both reading and writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have tailored support which helps them to make good progress from their starting points.
- Many pupils are challenged well to think more deeply in their work. However, some teaching does not provide sufficient opportunities for the most able pupils to be fully challenged, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils focus well on their work and collaborate with each other effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour across all parts of the school is good. Conduct during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes is consistently positive.
- Leaders make sure that the school is focused on keeping pupils safe and responds well to pupils' individual needs. Pupils say that they feel safe and know what to do if they are worried about anything.
- Attendance is better than in previous years, but is still below the national average and remains an important area for improvement.
- Middle leaders are working well to develop their subjects and bring greater consistency in approach. However, limited monitoring of the progress of different groups of pupils is hampering the development of teaching for some pupils, particularly the most able.
- Governors understand the school well. Thorough procedures ensure that they challenge school leaders appropriately about all areas of the school's work. However, governors' evaluation of the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school is not clear enough.
- At times, communication with parents is not as effective as it could be.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management further by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders use information about the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in order to identify precise areas for improvement
 - governors make clearer evaluations of the school's effectiveness as part of their monitoring role.
- Continue to improve how consistently teachers in all year groups meet the needs of the most able pupils and enhance their progress.
- Improve communication with parents, including reporting on pupils' achievement and continuing to promote good attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has been effective in driving improvement and has been well supported by other leaders and governors. Their focus, high expectations and commitment have resulted in better progress and raised standards.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has addressed weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment effectively. As a result of focused action, extensive professional development and ongoing monitoring, she has helped teachers and teaching assistants to improve the quality of their work.
- Leaders routinely observe learning across the school as well as using expertise within the trust and the local area to support them in establishing a secure view about the quality of teaching. Teachers' professional targets are linked to how they improve pupils' progress and attainment and this determines decisions about career and pay progression.
- Leaders check pupils' progress regularly to ensure that any underachievement is identified promptly and pupils' needs are met. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained and resourced in a range of learning interventions to support pupils' different learning needs.
- The leadership and organisation of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Pupils' needs are identified promptly and resources, interventions and staff deployment ensure that pupils can succeed in both their learning and their personal development.
- Joining the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust has allowed leaders and teachers to access additional support. This has been effective in helping to develop the quality of teaching and leadership further. The trust has provided wider expertise and opportunities for collaboration.
- The additional primary physical education and sport premium is being used effectively to promote pupils' physical fitness and has resulted in greater participation in sports as well as increasing staff expertise.
- Learning opportunities are helping pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Teachers have been responsive to pupils' questions about recent national events and are helping pupils to learn about and reflect on British values and life in modern Britain and the world.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that intrigues and engages them. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their work on the Second World War and learned a lot from a visiting speaker who saw active service. Art is a particular strength of the school, as can be seen in the pupils' work around the school, and the focus on developing specific artistic skills. Literacy is threaded through the curriculum and pupils have good opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects, which gives them a sense of purpose in their reading and writing. Mathematics skills are also developed through other subjects. For example, pupils have applied their knowledge of coordinates and statistics in topic work.

- School self-evaluation is broadly accurate and improvement plans identify appropriate areas for attention. However, the exact starting points for improvement work and the expected impact by key points in time are often not sharply defined. For example, the mathematics improvement plan focuses more on the implementation of systems and processes rather than impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, leaders and governors do not have an incisive understanding of exactly where and why things are improving or not improving.
- Middle leaders are developing their roles and good systems have been established to allow the leadership team to check that agreed strategies to secure improvement are being applied by all staff. However, the monitoring they carry out is not yet sufficiently focused on identifying precise areas for improvement in the quality of teaching or in identifying the progress of particular groups of pupils. Leaders do not currently include a regular analysis of the attainment and progress of the most able pupils as part of their ongoing tracking processes.
- Leaders have established a number of ways to communicate with parents, including using the school's website and text messaging. However, a proportion of parents are currently not happy about how the school communicates with them. They say that they are not kept sufficiently informed about school events and that communication with the school can be difficult.
- Open mornings and open afternoons take place regularly, but some parents have noted that, although they enjoy visiting the children's classes, they do not receive information about their children's progress in a way that is helpful to them. They commented that the timings of parent consultations at the beginning and end of the school year do not help them to support their children.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing body are sufficiently informed and involved to be able to hold school leaders to account for the quality of education in the school. They have high aspirations for the pupils and challenge the headteacher to explain the performance of pupils and to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governors ensure that teachers and leaders are held to account for the progress that pupils make through a robust appraisal process.
- Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium and physical education and sport premium to ensure that these are deployed appropriately to improve pupils' achievement.
- Governors have established a programme of monitoring activities to ensure that they have a comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use their skills to good effect to keep the work of the school under close review. However, at present, their evaluation of the progress that leaders are making in addressing the school's priorities for improvement is not clear enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School staff undertake regular and appropriate risk assessments for all aspects of the

school's work and governors have made important improvements to site security.

- Additional support, for those pupils who need it, is personalised and kept under constant review to ensure that it is meeting the individual's needs. A parent support officer has been appointed to build relationships with parents and make links between them and other agencies if required.
- Staff are well trained and vigilant. They are aware of their responsibility for recognising any potential for extremism, exploitation or abuse. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they felt that their children are kept safe in school.
- School leaders have a commitment to safer recruitment and carry out the necessary checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work at the school. Some aspects of the records were incomplete or dispersed at the start of the inspection and this has been addressed rapidly. Governor checks had not identified the issue in the record-keeping.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- A positive climate for learning exists across the school. Classrooms are calm, orderly and purposeful. Pupils talk confidently about their learning, work well together and share their ideas. They enjoy learning from each other and learning key life skills about cooperation.
- Teachers ensure that pupils make good progress in writing. Pupils have opportunities to write frequently within and across a range of subjects. The good teaching has resulted in pupils who are confident to write independently and able to maintain their effort and attention for a sustained period.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They make sure that pupils with lower starting points get the support needed to complete tasks successfully. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants who help them to engage in learning alongside their peers. The school provides a good range of additional educational interventions to support pupils who are in danger of falling behind and these are monitored closely to ensure that they are effective for the pupils involved.
- Pupils enjoy participating in a range of sporting activities and the school has been successful in local competitions.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and pupils respond well. Although good attitudes to learning are apparent right across the school, they are particularly strong in upper key stage 2 and in the early years. As a result, pupils take particular pride in their work. This is less marked in key stage 1, where pupils do not always take sufficient care with their handwriting and presentation.
- Teachers follow a consistent approach to assessment. Most pupils are able to talk about how this helps them to improve their work. In some cases, teachers' guidance does not help pupils to improve their work because it is not directed at those aspects of the work that will make the most difference to the pupil's progress.
- Teachers and leaders have a good understanding of the age-appropriate standards for each year group, but are less secure in their understanding of how to challenge the most able and support pupils to work at greater depth. For example, new ways of

working have been introduced in mathematics to improve consistency and progression across the school. While these changes have been successful in ensuring that more pupils are working at the expected standard for their age, they have been less successful in supporting pupils to work at greater depth in all year groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are generally self-confident and enjoy discussing their learning with each other and with adults.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after. They know whom to go to and are confident that the adults in the school will deal with their concerns. They like the worry box, which enables them to raise any issues.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe on the internet and in the wider world.
- Pupils enjoy breaktimes, and lunchtime is a calm and orderly affair where they can and do choose healthy options. Pupils are willing to try new foods and understand about staying healthy.
- There is a structured approach to the teaching of the British values of tolerance and respect. Pupils learn to respect other pupils and understand that discrimination should not be tolerated.
- Some pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen, but they also note that it is quickly dealt with by teachers. A parent support officer monitors incidents and keeps a clear record, which is analysed for any patterns and trends.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for the transition between home and school and between the school and secondary education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. Most show an enjoyment of learning and take pride in their work. They are friendly and polite to staff and visitors.
- At the end of breaktime, pupils line up quickly in an orderly fashion and move sensibly into classes, which ensures a calm start to the next lesson.
- Attendance has improved. A parent support officer has implemented a number of strategies to improve attendance, including weekly letters for pupils falling below 95% attendance followed by meetings with parents if absence does not improve. Rewards for good attendance have also helped pupils to understand the importance of being in school. Nevertheless, attendance is still below the national average and continuing to improve attendance remains a priority for the school.
- The number of exclusions has reduced significantly over the last three years and there have been no exclusions in the last two years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils typically make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in reading and read with confidence and accuracy. They read frequently at school and use their skills across the curriculum.
- Effective teaching of phonics in the early years and Year 1 enables pupils to make a good start in both reading and writing.
- In the end of key stage 1 assessments in 2016, more than the average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching a high standard was above average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics.
- In the end of key stage 2 assessments in 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was above the national average. The proportion reaching the higher standard was below average in reading and writing and slightly better than average in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 in 2016 made good progress from their starting points at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of current disadvantaged learners is variable. Disadvantaged pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those with poor attendance are making more limited progress, while the most able disadvantaged are generally making good progress.
- Current learners in most year groups are making good progress in writing, although handwriting is not consistently strong in key stage 1. Spelling has been correctly identified by leaders as an area that is less strong and is a current focus across the school.
- Based upon the pupils' work in their books, the most able pupils in the majority of classes are currently making the progress they should over time. However, school leaders do not yet analyse the progress of this group as routinely and regularly as other groups and pupils' books indicate that their progress is not so rapid in some classes, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities typically make good progress towards their individual targets. Staff know the needs of these pupils well and ensure that they are provided with suitable support and educational interventions.
- In the current Year 6, a large majority of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard and some are working at the higher standard in writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years is strong. The knowledgeable, skilful and determined

leadership of the early years leader has resulted in improvements in teaching, learning and assessment and a subsequent improvement in the children's achievement.

- Planning and assessment are carefully linked to ensure that children's individual needs are met. As a result, disadvantaged children, including the most able disadvantaged, are making good progress.
- Children benefit from a stimulating and inviting environment, both indoors and outside. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Children make good progress from their starting points in the Reception class and leave well equipped for learning in Year 1.
- In 2016, the proportion of children leaving the early years with a good level of development was broadly in line with the national average. This represents good progress, given the starting points of the cohort.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress during their time in the Reception class.
- Teachers plan a range of interesting opportunities that enable children to learn well and initiate their own learning. Skilful adult questioning helps children to think for themselves. For example, when working with a group of children learning about money, the teacher asked the children to explore different ways of making 10p.
- Children make good progress in the early years because of the high-quality teaching that they receive and the opportunities they have to apply their phonic knowledge during other learning activities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ask questions which help children to speak in sentences and give children plenty of opportunities to practise reading and writing words.
- Adults manage children's behaviour very effectively. The warm and consistent approach of adults across both the nursery and reception classes encourages good behaviour. Expectations and routines are well established. Children are sensitive to adults' instructions and behave sensibly as they explore and learn. They maintain high levels of attention for sustained periods.
- The caring and supportive environment, which promotes children's safety, welfare and social skills effectively, ensures that children are happy and get on well with each other.
- The statutory welfare arrangements required for early years settings are in place.
- The early years leader has been proactive in establishing links within the trust and with other local schools to increase capacity for further improvement. For example, she has begun to explore how British values can be embedded in the early years curriculum with two other schools.
- Staff in the Reception class have a very secure understanding of how young children learn, but there are some further training needs in the Nursery class, where there is sometimes confusion about developing mathematical language and understanding.

School details

Unique reference number	141198
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10033102

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mrs Sarah Keast
Headteacher	Miss Joanna Harvey
Telephone number	01726 822546
Website	www.stdennis.academy
Email address	office@stdennis.academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school became a sponsored academy in 2014, joining the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust. When its predecessor school was last inspected, it was deemed to require special measures.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- St Dennis is a smaller than average school with a low proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and/or with English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils supported through pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors undertook 21 observations of learning, including some carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, before school, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked carefully at pupils' work from all year groups and across a range of subjects.
- Discussions were held with pupils from different year groups about how they feel about school, how teachers help them with their learning and how the school keeps them safe.
- The inspectors listened to individual pupils read and discussed their views on reading and reading preferences with them.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to the staff online questionnaire.
- Inspectors had discussions with a number of parents/carers as they brought their children to school as well as looking at the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) results. The individual comments left on Parent View by parents were also considered by the inspectors.
- Inspectors had discussions with the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and support staff as well as governors, the chief executive officer of the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust and a trust school improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including assessment information, school policies, the school's self-evaluation and school development plan as well as information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- During this inspection, a complaint was made about the school's administrative processes which was passed to the relevant authority.

Inspection team

Janet Ross, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Phil Banks

Ofsted Inspector

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