

Inspection of St Dennis Primary Academy

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

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Dennis is built on strong relationships. Pupils have a great sense of pride in the school. They gain this, for example, through representing the school in sports competitions. Staff meet pupils' individual needs well, including those of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, St Dennis is a happy and welcoming environment for all.

Pupils behave well in classrooms and in the playground. They are polite and courteous. For example, they hold doors open for visitors. Pupils show great enthusiasm for learning, including in the early years. They talk confidently about what they have learned. Pupils say that if bullying occurs, adults sort it out quickly.

Leaders have prioritised trips and experiences beyond the classroom. For example, older pupils talk excitedly about their residential trip to London. Trips such as this increase their knowledge of life beyond Cornwall. Pupils gain leadership skills through taking on roles such as those on the school council and eco council. They attend a range of clubs, including yoga, newspaper writing and football. These clubs extend pupils' interests and talents. Leaders closely monitor the uptake of clubs. They ensure that a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND take part.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. Staff share their vision. Leaders do what is best for pupils. Together with governors and the trust, leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of what they are doing to improve it, bringing in help from outside where needed. Staff praise leaders for how they value their well-being. Staff's morale is high.

Leaders have planned and established the curriculum carefully. It clearly identifies what pupils need to know and when. The content is highly ambitious. In the early years, staff concentrate on improving children's communication and language. They choose activities that match children's needs well. Older pupils study challenging texts to increase their vocabulary. Leaders have prioritised adapting the curriculum for pupils with SEND very effectively. As a result, pupils learn the same broad and balanced curriculum as their peers.

Leaders have made reading central to the school's work. They have implemented a systematic approach that ensures that pupils learn to read fluently. This work continued during the national lockdowns that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, leaders were able to reduce the amount of learning that pupils missed. Pupils who fall behind catch up quickly. This is because leaders have trained staff to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders encourage pupils to love reading at home and at school. Pupils enjoy reading from the school's well-stocked library. They say it is one of the best things

about their school. Pupils read widely. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors. Children in the nursery listen to stories attentively. Staff ask questions to deepen children's knowledge further.

Across the curriculum, staff frequently check what pupils have learned. For example, in mathematics, they revisit learning to see how much pupils remember. Pupils recall number facts with increasing fluency. Leaders in the early years ensure that all staff know where gaps in children's learning are. However, senior leaders know that pupils' knowledge in some areas of the curriculum is not good enough. For example, in religious education (RE), some pupils struggle to recall what they have learned. This is because teachers do not build precisely enough on what pupils already know.

Leaders have crafted a highly effective personal development curriculum. They celebrate pupils' achievements in assemblies. Staff encourage pupils to discuss their mental health. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about a wide variety of cultures to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. The school's personal, social and health education programme is carefully planned. It ensures that pupils learn how to be healthy and know about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

Governors, in conjunction with the trust, hold leaders to account for the quality of education. They ask leaders challenging questions about any areas of weakness. They check the impact of changes made to the curriculum.

Parents and carers speak positively about the school. They appreciate staff being available to talk to about concerns. They are happy that leaders have improved how they communicate with them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture. They know the pupils and families well. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training. As a result, staff identify pupils at risk of harm, and make detailed records of any concerns. Leaders report on and follow up concerns with the local authority when necessary. They work with different agencies to ensure that families get the support they need.

Leaders have clear systems for recruitment. They keep accurate records of checks on the suitability of staff and visitors. Governors and the trust regularly check aspects of the school's safeguarding work.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not build precisely enough on what pupils already know. As a result, some pupils' knowledge in these subjects is not as strong. Leaders need to ensure that teachers build on what pupils know in all subjects so that pupils know and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141198
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10256671
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anita Firth
Headteacher	Cathy Brokenshire
Website	www.stdennis.academy
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 June 2017

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in 2019.
- The school runs a nursery for children aged two to four years old.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school provision.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of staff, groups of pupils, trust executive leaders, a trustee and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and RE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum

with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils about their learning.

- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding measures. The lead inspector also scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gavin Summerfield

His Majesty's Inspector

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