

# Fowey River Academy

Windmill, Fowey, Cornwall, PL23 1HE

## Inspection dates

4–5 July 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils of different abilities, particularly the most able, are not being challenged to think more deeply and make the progress of which they are capable.
- New governance structures to support and hold leaders to account are not yet demonstrating impact.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not yet making comparable progress with their peers nationally, although the differences are diminishing.
- Absence for different groups of pupils is too high, despite the committed efforts of staff to tackle this.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not yet good. Although pupils' behaviour is compliant in lessons, they do not demonstrate a thirst for learning.
- Assessment is not being used to best effect to ensure that pupils make the progress that they are capable of. This is because some staff are not fully confident in the accuracy of their judgements.
- Pupils are not consistently using the guidance they receive from teachers to identify their mistakes and improve their work.
- The curriculum is not yet meeting the needs of all pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new principal is providing committed, calm and determined leadership. He has rightly raised expectations of staff and pupils. Leaders know the school well; they are clear about what needs to improve.
- Teaching is improving, although the impact is yet to be seen in pupils' outcomes by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with support which is enabling them to make comparable progress with their peers nationally.
- Behaviour is improving because staff have higher expectations of conduct. However, the system for managing behaviour is not always used consistently by staff.

Middle leaders are enthusiastic and optimistic about their role in school improvement. They are beginning to drive improvements to teaching.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
  - governance is fully effective in supporting leaders and holding them to account
  - the curriculum is suited to the needs of different pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that:
  - staff consistently use assessment data effectively to monitor and improve pupils' progress
  - teachers plan activities that routinely challenge pupils to think more deeply
  - advice and guidance provided by teachers consistently helps pupils to improve their work.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that staff:
  - continue to take action to improve the attendance of different groups of pupils, particularly those who are persistently absent
  - apply the behaviour system consistently and issue more positive rewards.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leadership is not yet good because, despite the 'green shoots' that are emerging, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes requires improvement.
- The school has been through a period of turbulence over the last couple of years. This is because of changes to senior leadership, the need to balance a deficit budget and high staff turnover. These factors have hampered efforts to raise pupils' achievement.
- Not all parents and staff are supportive of the changes that have been made to improve different aspects of the school's work. This is because of the number of significant changes introduced to improve teaching, behaviour and achievement.
- Many of the actions that leaders have rightly taken to improve aspects of the school's work are recent. Consequently, the impact of some of these actions is not yet apparent.
- The curriculum is not currently meeting the needs of all pupils. This is because some pupils are following courses that do not suit their abilities or interests. Leaders are aware of this issue and have taken some steps to tackle it. For example, it is no longer necessary for all pupils to take a language at key stage 4. However, there is more work to do here; leaders are rightly examining whether it is appropriate for some pupils to study three sciences.
- The principal, who has been in post for little over a year, is fully invested in the school. He is determined to improve the quality of education that pupils receive and ensure that they achieve their potential. The principal leads with purpose and ambition. He expects other leaders to do likewise.
- Leaders at different levels take an honest, open view of the school's weaknesses. They know what needs to improve and have not 'buried their heads in the sand'. This openness is helping to bring about more-rapid improvement in the school.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is helping to provide pupils with greater support in their learning. For example, funding has helped pay for a pupil premium champion who closely monitors the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In addition, pupils have benefited from revision guides, mentoring sessions and after-school study opportunities.
- Additional funding for pupils who need to catch up in English and mathematics in Year 7 is used effectively. Staff identify pupils' weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics, and provide additional sessions to boost pupils' progress in these areas.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make comparable progress with their peers because of the way that additional funding is used. Staff know pupils well. The relationship between staff and pupils begins when staff visit primary schools before pupils start. These visits aid transition and give pupils a smooth start to school. Staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' academic and welfare needs. They use this understanding to monitor and boost pupils' progress.
- There is capacity for improvement at different levels of school leadership. Middle leaders are being empowered to take on more responsibility for raising achievement in

their different subjects. They are enjoying this challenge and keen to develop their roles. However, senior leaders acknowledge that there is a need to develop further the strength and consistency of middle leadership.

- The Adventure Academy Learning Trust, to which the school belongs, is providing effective support to improve leadership and teaching. Trust leaders have helped secure important and necessary changes to senior leadership and staffing at the school. These changes have been fundamental in driving up improvement. More recently, trust staff have helped to broker support with other external organisations and provide staff development opportunities to improve teaching.

### **Governance of the school**

- Arrangements for governance, both at the level of the trust and locally, have recently changed. This is because leaders of the trust wish to introduce a system that strengthens accountability and communication. However, this system is untested and it is unclear, at present, to what extent the principal of the school will be supported and held accountable.
- Governors who sit on the Accountability, Review and Challenge group question and challenge leaders in depth on certain issues, such as attendance. However, meeting minutes indicate that the level of challenge with regard to other key issues, such as achievement and progress, is not always sufficient.
- Governors who have recently taken up their roles bring with them useful relevant experience and skills. They are committed to improving the school. However, there have been difficulties in recruiting suitable governors from the parent body and the local community.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are complete, detailed and up to date. The designated safeguarding lead is experienced and comes from a social care background. Staff are trained appropriately in child protection and the government's 'Prevent' duty, which is designed to protect pupils from radicalisation. Staff receive training updates as and when necessary. Governors are kept informed about safeguarding issues so that they are able to offer appropriate support and challenge in this regard.
- Staff referrals for child protection concerns are kept securely and are well organised. They contain the full range of necessary information detailing the chronology of events, and communication with parents and external agencies. This information, along with effective communication between different members of the safeguarding team, enables staff to take appropriate action to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders' efforts to create a supportive culture in which pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe are slowly succeeding. Staff are working hard to forge constructive relationships with parents and to teach pupils how to manage risk, which is making a positive difference. Nevertheless, there is more work to do here to ensure

that all pupils feel safe in school.

- Action is being taken to ensure that the school site is fully secure. Leaders have successfully secured funding that will pay for appropriate perimeter fencing around the school site. Plans to erect the fence are at an advanced stage.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Pupils of different abilities, but particularly the most able pupils, are not yet being routinely challenged to deepen their thinking in some subjects. In subjects such as mathematics and science too few demands are made on pupils to fully engage with concepts, problems and ideas. Consequently, pupils do not feel 'stretched', particularly in key stage 4.
- Pupils do not yet exhibit an enthusiasm for learning. Their behaviour in lessons is improving because they are more frequently following instructions, cooperating with each other and arriving promptly to lessons. However, they are not demonstrating engagement with learning beyond this passive, compliant behaviour.
- Staff are not consistently using assessment information to monitor the progress of pupils and intervene swiftly when pupils fall behind. This is because they are not always confident in the judgements they make and the targets they set. It is also because the school-wide approach to using assessment information to inform progress is in its infancy. The Year 11 'war room' is an example of how this approach is successfully being used to drive up achievement, but it does not exist for other year groups.
- Pupils are not using the advice they receive from teachers in some of their subjects to identify their mistakes and improve their work. Consequently, this hampers their progress. However, where this is effective, in subjects such as English, it is because teachers provide clear, practical guidance and check to see that pupils have acted on it.
- Staff now have higher expectations of pupils, even if pupils could be challenged to think more deeply. They are expected to participate fully in lessons, to work hard and present their work well. This is having a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- Teachers have a high degree of subject knowledge. They use this knowledge effectively to prepare relevant, focused tasks that ensure that pupils are being better prepared for examinations.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully during class discussion. They target specific pupils in order to check the understanding of individuals. Pupils respond well to these questions and, as a result, feel more involved in the learning.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

### **Requires improvement**

#### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils in different year groups have a mixed experience of school and some feel more

loyal than others. This is partly because they are adjusting to some of the changes that have been introduced. Changes include the high number of new teaching staff, higher expectations of pupils generally and a firmer behaviour policy.

- Pupils who spoke with inspectors reported that they feel safe in school and that bullying is not a big problem. However, pupils added that staff do not always deal with bullying incidents promptly. The majority of parents who responded to the online survey Parent View and the school's own most recent survey agreed that bullying is effectively dealt with.
- Pupils are provided with a variety of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, project-based adventure learning weeks enable pupils to develop their communication skills, creativity and critical thinking. The programme of lunchtime and after-school activities meets pupils' different extra-curricular interests.
- The 'Compass Centre', open to all pupils, has dedicated, trained staff, who assist pupils with behavioural, emotional and social issues. The centre also provides pupils with useful independent careers advice and guidance.
- The school is welcoming and attractive to visitors. As inspectors came into the airy central foyer at the beginning of the inspection, they were greeted by soothing music and a large projection of a skier descending the slopes. This encourages visitors to feel that they are entering a dynamic, exciting place. Other areas of the school showcase pupils' work, reinforcing the impression that the school is keen to champion pupils' achievements and learning.
- Pupils respect the school site. Inspectors did not find any graffiti or litter anywhere inside the building or outside.
- Pupils attending alternative provision are well supported. Specialist staff cater well for pupils' different needs and they undertake appropriate activities. Effective pastoral support increases their readiness for learning and enables them to make better academic progress.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The attendance of different groups of pupils is too low. Despite the determined efforts of staff to tackle absence it remains stubbornly high, particularly for persistent absentees. Leaders are right to repeatedly highlight the importance of good attendance to parents, the local community and other interested parties. As yet, however, there is little evidence of impact.
- Pupils and parents report that lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. However, the behaviour system is helping to improve pupils' conduct because they have a better understanding of boundaries. Inspection evidence supports this view as very little disruption was noted by inspectors during observation of lessons. Nevertheless, pupils say that the behaviour system is not always applied fairly and consistently by staff, and that there are too few rewards for good behaviour.
- Pupils are well presented. They wear their uniform well and look smart throughout the day. This is also mirrored by the presentation of most pupils' work. Titles are

underlined, space is put to good use and pupils write neatly.

- Exclusions from school are falling. This is because behaviour is improving and staff are using more appropriate and effective internal solutions to counter the need for external exclusion.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In 2016, the achievement of pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 was below average in a number of subjects, including English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils, low prior attainers and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities particularly underachieved.
- The school's current progress information for pupils in different year groups indicates that pupils are now making more rapid progress, although it is not yet good enough. The work of pupils with different abilities, particularly the most able, shows that they are not being challenged sufficiently. This means that progress is not as rapid as it could be.
- Some groups of disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress as a result of a clear focus on their progress and well-deployed additional funding. However, the school's own information indicates that progress is variable among different ability and year groups. Overall, disadvantaged pupils are not yet making comparable progress with their peers, although the difference is diminishing.
- Pupils' work shows that they are not provided with sufficient opportunities to practise extended writing for different purposes and audiences. Although pupils are making better progress in English than other subjects, the emphasis is on developing reading rather than writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making progress comparable with their peers who have similar starting points. This is because staff know the pupils well, monitor their progress closely and work successfully to meet their academic and pastoral needs.
- Pupils are taking greater pride in their work. This is because staff have raised their expectations of pupils, which is leading to greater consistency of neat presentation.
- Pupils are being increasingly better prepared for the next steps of their education and life after school. Staff have productive links with colleges in Truro and St Austell. In addition, pupils attend taster days at university, attend careers fairs and receive impartial advice from a careers adviser. Pupils develop personal attributes, such as commitment, perseverance and resilience, by taking on service roles in school, such as prefect. Roles such as these help pupils to become good citizens.

## School details

Unique reference number	140836
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10033112

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	602
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mary McKeeman
Principal	Martin Dale
Telephone number	01726 833484
Website	<a href="http://www.foweyriveracademy.org.uk">www.foweyriveracademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@fracademy.org.uk">enquiries@fracademy.org.uk</a>
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 meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 11 in 2015. Floor standards for this school were not applicable in 2016.
- The school became part of the Adventure Learning Academies Trust (ALAT) in January 2015. The principal formally took up post in January 2016. The entire senior leadership team has been appointed since the school became part of the multi-academy trust.
- The multi-academy trust commissioned an external review of governance in February 2017 to support the implementation of new arrangements. The review was conducted



by a national leader in education for governance. A further review is scheduled for later this term.

- Fowey River Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of girls in the school is broadly in line with average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who receive support is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is just below the national average.
- Two pupils attend alternative provision at Restormel Alternative Provision Academy.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, often jointly with school staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, trust representatives, the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead. In addition, they met the coordinators for pupil premium and catch-up funding and middle leaders.
- Inspectors had discussions with pupils from a range of year groups and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, governing body minutes and progress information. In addition, they scrutinised records of the monitoring of teaching, along with attendance and behaviour information. They also considered safeguarding records. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from different year groups.

## Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Colledge	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector

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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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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