

# Truro Learning Academy

Albany Road, Malabar, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3PQ

## Inspection dates

26 to 27 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although this is an improving school, the legacy of underachievement is still evident. Some improvements have not been sustained and others are yet to embed.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Leaders' systems for checking on and supporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are at an early stage of development. Too few pupils who receive SEND support make the progress they should.
- The legacy of gaps in pupils' writing skills has not been fully eradicated.
- Too few pupils have the necessary skills to decode and read fluently. Pupils who struggled with reading and phonics earlier in their school career do not catch up quickly enough.
- Too many pupils are absent too often from school, which is detrimental to the progress they make.
- The development of mathematical reasoning is not as strong as other aspects of mathematics.

### The school has the following strengths

- School leaders have made effective use of trust-wide support. Recent improvements have supported several pupils, especially the most able writers, in getting back on track.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Children make strong progress and enjoy positive relationships with adults and each other.
- Funding for disadvantaged pupils has been highly effective in providing pastoral care for the most vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils have a strong sense of belonging. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils behave well in and out of lessons.
- Parents are pleased with the school. They recognise improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders have implemented a broad curriculum. They have developed teachers' subject knowledge. This is beginning to raise standards in the early years, key stage 1 and upper key stage 2.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that middle leaders have a greater influence in improving teaching so that it is consistently good across the school, including for pupils who receive support for their SEND.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement so that they are consistently good or better by ensuring that:
  - teachers use accurate assessment information to plan and adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs, particularly in writing
  - the teaching of phonics is effective, including for the lower-attaining pupils, and that the books and resources pupils use to practise their early reading skills are matched closely to their phonics knowledge
  - teachers promote pupils' mathematical reasoning skills more effectively.
- Strengthen the work with families of those pupils who are persistently absent from school to improve their attendance and progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- This is an improving school. There is strong impact of leadership at all levels to bring about improvements in pupils' progress. The well-considered curriculum has motivated pupils and has led to pupils catching up in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in some year groups, where teaching has been disrupted, pupils are not making enough progress.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas requiring further improvement. Leaders' actions have gathered momentum after a stalling of progress because of staffing changes. Progress is being made to secure the necessary improvements. However, some aspects, such as the progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4, need further improvement.
- The executive principal has acted determinedly and taken decisive action to tackle weaknesses in teaching. Trust leaders have made well-judged changes to the structure of the leadership team and have provided appropriate support to those who are new to their posts. Leaders and teachers appreciate the development opportunities they have received from trust leaders.
- The new head of school has skilfully brought everyone together as a team. Staff are enthusiastic and reflect the energy of senior leaders' determination to improve.
- Leaders make effective use of information about pupils' progress in order to target support for teachers and pupils. Leaders are increasingly taking the right actions to tackle these issues.
- Support from other schools in the trust and from trust-wide directors is effective. There have been improvements to behaviour and the teaching of mathematics, reading and writing as a result. Leaders' monitoring and feedback to teachers have led to improvements.
- Most subject leaders are new to the school. They have quickly gained an accurate understanding of what support is needed and are implementing their plans for improvement successfully. Some subject leaders have provided training to develop teachers' subject knowledge, for example in mathematics. This is beginning to improve the consistency of teaching across the school.
- In a short time, the subject leader for English has been effective in establishing a new team. She has provided effective staff training to strengthen and embed systems so that the teaching of phonics is effective. Her work to increase teachers' expectations in writing is also beginning to pay off. She has recognised that the school's work to develop a love of reading requires an investment in high-quality books, particularly for the older pupils.
- The leader of SEND is well supported by experienced staff members within the trust. She has prioritised the identification of pupils' needs and has been successful in this aspect. The number of pupils with an education, health and care plan has doubled since September. The leader has worked closely with external specialists to identify and support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. However, the effectiveness of the support for pupils identified with SEND is more variable as systems for checking the

success of plans and the progress pupils make are less well developed.

- Leaders' actions to improve the implementation of the English and mathematics curriculums are effective. They have recently implemented a curriculum that provides effective opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Educational visits and a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities further enhance the curriculum. Leaders have introduced residential activities to support pupils' understanding of different places and cultures, for example visits to London.
- The school promotes pupils' understanding of British values effectively. Leaders make sure that all pupils are valued. Mutual respect and tolerance are strong features of the school.
- Leaders have used pupil premium (PP) funding appropriately to support the social and emotional needs of disadvantaged pupils so that they are better able to access their learning. The new PP leader has an excellent understanding of the impact of PP because she monitors its effectiveness closely and acts quickly on her findings.
- Leaders have used the sport premium to provide a wider range of sporting activities for pupils. Prior to this year, there were no after-school sports clubs. Now, three quarters of the school participate in at least one club.
- As a result of leaders' actions, parents recognise the improvements in the school's work. They appreciate the quality of care shown by staff.

### **Governance of the school**

- Trustees ensure that they carry out their statutory duties effectively in overseeing staff performance, safeguarding and recruitment. They do this through the 'Aspire Improvement Group' (AIG) and local hub councillors. Aspects of attendance, behaviour, and the quality of teaching and learning are all improving as a result of challenge and support from governance.
- Directors maintain an accurate view of leaders' progress in tackling school improvement priorities. They have been instrumental in deploying funds effectively in order to bring about stability and a strong teaching workforce after a period of turbulence.
- Hub councillors make regular visits to the school to check the progress of the school improvement plan. They ask challenging questions, however, on occasions when hub councillors do not follow up leaders' answers with sufficient rigour.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding and a comprehensive approach to providing all staff with clear guidance and training to ensure all children are kept safe, particularly vulnerable children with complex needs.
- The single central record of recruitment checks is thorough and well maintained. Senior staff and governors have been trained in all aspects of vetting new appointments. All

new appointments are carefully screened to ensure the safety of pupils.

- The leaders responsible for safeguarding keep their training up to date. They have the necessary skills to fulfil their roles and to train staff. Consequently, staff have a thorough understanding of all aspects of safeguarding to ensure pupils' safety at school and beyond. Training is routinely updated, and safeguarding is given a suitably high priority.
- Leaders act promptly when they receive a referral from a member of staff expressing a concern about a pupil. When necessary, they consult with external agencies effectively and follow up referrals promptly. The leaders maintain thorough and complete records of all concerns raised about individual pupils.
- Throughout the school day, high levels of adult supervision are maintained to ensure the safety of pupils.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- There have been significant changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching over time is not consistently good. Most class teachers are new to the school this year.
- Teaching is not routinely matched to pupils' needs. Too often, in some classes, teachers provide work for pupils which is too easy or too hard. This is particularly the case in classes where pupils have gaps in their learning because of previously weak teaching.
- The teaching of phonics helps pupils to decode words effectively. However, teachers do not make sure that the texts pupils read reinforce the sounds they know and remember. As a result, pupils struggle with their reading and do not make the progress they should.
- The teaching of writing continues to improve. Pupils cover a range of writing styles. However, the quality of teaching is variable. On occasions, teachers' expectations are too low. The work pupils are asked to do does not build on what they already know. For example, pupils who can punctuate sentences accurately do not do so consistently. In addition, the strategies employed to improve pupils' spellings do not make enough difference to the accuracy of pupils' writing.
- Teachers harness pupils' enthusiasm for subjects such as geography and history to help them to make better progress in their literacy and numeracy work. For example, pupils apply their mathematical skills to draw tables and line graphs in geography.
- Teachers develop pupils' ability to recall mathematical facts and to solve problems. However, pupils' ability to explain their mathematical understanding is not well developed in some year groups.
- Support staff are deployed effectively and make a good contribution to supporting pupils' learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils respect adults and listen carefully to instructions. Most pupils respond appropriately to teachers' feedback. This helps pupils to improve.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know pupils well and provide high levels of pastoral care to build and sustain pupils' confidence, their understanding of their emotions, and what it is to be an effective learner.
- A short-term nurturing provision has been highly effective. Pupils who have previously struggled to regulate their behaviour have developed skills to manage their feelings so that they can increasingly rejoin their classes. Pupils' social and emotional welfare is exceptionally well supported. As a result, pupils are now able to develop academically.
- Instances of bullying incidents are few and decreasing. The schools' wide-ranging programme to support pupils' personal, social and health education is effective in providing pupils with the strategies they need to know, understand and manage their feelings.
- Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of tolerance and respect. They celebrate differences and welcome the many new pupils to the school in a way that helps them feel included and supported.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct around the school and in lessons. Previously high exclusion rates have reduced dramatically as school systems for managing behaviour have become more established. In addition, staff training has equipped staff with the strategies to support pupils' individual personal, social and emotional needs.
- The school is an orderly community with a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils are polite and courteous towards visitors, staff and one another. Pupils show high levels of enjoyment in their learning and are eager to do well.
- Pupils' overall attendance is improving. However, there are still too many pupils who are regularly absent from school. Although leaders communicate their expectations for pupils' attendance, this has not had enough impact.

## Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Too few pupils leave Truro Learning Academy ready for the next stage of their education. The proportion of those who leave the school at the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics is below the national average. Although, in 2018, pupils made progress which was in line with the national average, they still lag behind in terms of what they should know, understand and be able to do. This was not enough to compensate for pupils' previous underachievement.
- In previous years, too few pupils have left Year 2 ready for Year 3. However, in 2018,

the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. Current work in books for Year 3 pupils shows that some pupils' progress has declined in reading, writing and mathematics. This is particularly evident for pupils with low prior attainment.

- Pupils in Year 4 are not catching up quickly enough to make up for previous underachievement. Pupils' writing books show that raised expectations by teachers this term is allowing the most able pupils to catch up. However, this has not yet had the same impact on previously low- and average-attaining pupils' progress.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved to be in line with the national average in 2018. Disadvantaged pupils achieved in line with others. However, those pupils who did not reach the expected standard have not caught up by the end of Year 2. Similarly, the few pupils who left the early years with an insecure understanding of letters and the sounds they make have not caught up this year.
- Over recent years, too few of the most able pupils reached the higher standards expected of them by the time they left the school. However, most recently, more of the most able pupils are now making the progress they should. In 2018, a similar proportion of pupils to the national average reached the higher standards in reading and mathematics.
- Attainment in writing is weaker than other areas of learning across the school. This is despite pupils using their writing skills regularly in subjects other than English. Often, poor spelling hampers the quality of pupils' writing. However, pupils' books in Years 2, 5 and 6 show good progress in writing. In these year groups, teachers are making good use of assessment to help pupils improve their writing.
- The careful decision-making that has gone into choosing books as 'class texts' to share with the pupils has had a positive impact on pupils' writing across the school. Pupils make highly effective use of vocabulary in their writing to engage the reader. However, older pupils report that they do not have enough 'interesting' books to read.
- In most classes, pupils' attainment in mathematics is improving quickly. Staff ensure that pupils cover a wide range of mathematical themes. Pupils practise their skills so that they are fluent and can apply their knowledge to solve problems. However, work in books and discussion with pupils show that their ability to reason is less well developed.
- An increased focus and specific support for the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school have been effective. In the early years and key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils achieve equally as well as, and sometimes better than, other pupils. In key stage 2, the additional support that disadvantaged pupils receive is beginning to overcome barriers to their learning. Support, such as the short-term provision of the nurturing Watergate class, has helped pupils to be better-placed emotionally and socially to integrate back into mainstream classes.
- Pupils who have an education, health and care plan make good progress against their individual needs. However, the progress of pupils who receive SEN support is not consistently strong.
- The progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is gathering momentum from the good start they receive in the Reception class. In these year groups, previously average- and

high-ability pupils are continuing to achieve well.

- Pupils achieve well in physical education and make good progress in their physical skills, stamina and fitness.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Leadership and teaching in the early years are among the strengths of the school. Children make good progress across the early years curriculum so that they are ready for Year 1. From low starting points, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Leaders have acted swiftly to eradicate the differences between boys' and girls' attainment, particularly in reading and writing. Staff plan activities to motivate and challenge boys to the same degree as girls.
- Teaching is strong. Investment in training all the early years staff has paid off. Staff are adept at observing and intervening so that children make strong progress. In particular, their effective modelling of language has supported children in making good progress in speech and language.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. More children are exceeding expectations in reading and writing this year because of the strong focus on developing their phonics knowledge. Children were observed using their 'phonics pinnies' to practise and test each other on the sounds they had been learning earlier that day.
- Staff in the early years engender a love of reading. Children engage enthusiastically in storytelling sessions and confidently retell the sequence of known stories.
- Leaders have established effective routines in children's learning. Consequently, little learning time is lost. Children sustain concentration well and are inquisitive. Staff work successfully to develop children's independence skills and self-confidence.
- Recent support from trust leaders has enabled the teacher to make good use of the outdoor learning environment. Children benefit from a well-resourced and cared for outdoor area for learning. The teacher's careful planning ensures that activities have a clear purpose.
- Children's behaviour is good. They are polite, cooperate well together and are considerate towards one another.
- Staff develop good relationships with parents and families. They engage parents in their children's learning very well through an online tool. Most parents were overwhelmingly positive in their views of the early years provision.
- Welfare and safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are well trained about the procedures and expectation that all children must be safe at school. Leaders carry out rigorous risk assessments to satisfy themselves that no harm can come to the children in their care. Consequently, the learning environment provides a safe place for children to learn and explore.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged children are supported well. Consequently, they achieve as well as other children. However, a few children with SEND do not receive support that is finely tuned to their academic needs. As a result, the progress that these children make is not as good as it should be.

## School details

Unique reference number	139960
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10088321

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	168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jacky Swain
Head of School	Daniel Hadley
Executive Principal	Lyn McNamara
Telephone number	01872 277 635
Website	<a href="http://www.truroacademy.org.uk">www.truroacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:secretary@truroacademy.org.uk">secretary@truroacademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	6 to 7 December 2016

## Information about this school

- Truro Learning Academy is a smaller-than-average sized primary school, although numbers on roll have been growing since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Aspire Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust of 28 primary schools. The trust's board of directors holds the school to account. It is facilitated by a hub council. The school is part of a hub of five schools in the Truro area.
- There is one executive principal for the schools in the local hub, including Truro Learning Academy and Probus Community Primary School. The head of school at Truro Learning Academy has the responsibility for the daily running of the school. He joined the school in September.
- A high proportion of the pupils join the school at entry points other than the usual transition points. The proportion of pupils who start and leave at other times than at the start of the school year is high compared to national figures.

- There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. There are now only two class teachers out of the six who were in the school prior to September 2019. In addition, all senior and middle leaders apart from the executive principal are new to their roles.
- There is a separate nursery operating from the school site, but this is not managed by the school or part of this inspection.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons in all classes across the school. Visits were mostly accompanied by the executive headteacher or head of school.
- Discussions took place with the executive headteacher, SENCo and other subject leaders. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the hub council and two directors of the Aspire Trust.
- The inspectors gained the views of pupils throughout inspection activities and during breaktimes.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in books to establish the current quality of work across the range of subjects.
- An inspector listened to a sample of pupils read in Years 1 and 2, visited a guided reading session in Year 6 and discussed reading with older pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and parents to seek their views of the school. The 22 responses from Parent View and corresponding free-texts were considered by inspectors. In addition, information from face-to-face discussions with inspectors was considered. The responses from the staff and pupils' surveys were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's improvement plan, governors' visits and minutes, the school's website, the single central record and other safeguarding notes and records.

## Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bragg

Ofsted Inspector

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