

Inspection of Pensans Community Primary School

Madron Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 8UH

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Niki Ambrose. The school is part of Truro & Penwith Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jennifer Blunden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anita Firth.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pensans has a highly inclusive ethos. It cares well for its pupils. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are passionate about their learning. They speak eagerly about their favourite lessons and how much they enjoy school.

Nevertheless, the quality of education is not good. The school has endured a turbulent period of staffing instability. This, combined with curriculum changes and the effects of the pandemic, means too many pupils have left without the knowledge and skills needed for secondary school. New leadership has started to address these issues. However, there is still some way to go.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly in recent times. This is because the school has established a new behaviour system that both staff and pupils understand and follow. Staff skilfully support those pupils who find these high expectations a challenge. This includes those in the additional resource base. Pupils say adults deal quickly with any bullying that occurs.

Like the academic curriculum, much of the work to support pupils' personal development needs further improvement. However, the school strives to give pupils new experiences to broaden their horizons, such as participating in a street music project.

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

The trust acknowledges the school's decline in recent years. Behaviour was rightly identified as the priority to tackle. The headteacher has been the catalyst for some of the green shoots emerging. She is highly regarded among staff and parents. While there have been significant changes in many aspects of the school's work, staff feel this has been managed well. They can see the early signs of success in the school. For example, in pupils' behaviour and attendance.

The school has radically changed its curriculum. It has done so in a relatively short space of time. In some subjects, pupils now learn better than in the past. For example, in history, pupils show a strong knowledge of the Maya civilisation. While the curriculum is broad and balanced, the school recognises it needs further improvements. Some subjects in the wider curriculum are not well sequenced or ambitious. This means pupils do not build their knowledge effectively.

Through agreed approaches to teaching, staff are clear about how to implement the curriculum. However, there is still more to do to improve their subject knowledge. Some staff do not set work that matches the curriculum intent or adapt it to take into account pupils' prior learning. This includes pupils with SEND. Therefore, although pupils are often 'busy' completing tasks, they are not deepening their knowledge well over time.

The school has ensured that reading has been the bedrock of its curriculum improvements. Staff have been rigorously trained. As a result, the teaching of reading has improved rapidly. Staff receive ongoing support to ensure this is maintained. Pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check have risen sharply and the school is now in line with national averages.

The reading curriculum at Key Stage 2 shows an early positive impact. Older pupils relish discussing the use of key vocabulary in texts. The emphasis on fluency means they are becoming better equipped to comprehend more complex texts.

In the early years, many children enter with knowledge and skills well below what is typical for their age. Staff show warmth and compassion. This helps children to settle quickly. However, too often staff do not plan tasks with enough precision to address children's gaps, such as pencil grip or physical development in the outdoor space. This causes these gaps to widen. Consequently, too many children are not well prepared for Year 1.

Following the pandemic, pupils' attendance fell sharply. The school and trust have been tenacious in addressing this. Through robust systems and careful analysis, pupils' attendance is now much higher. This means pupils no longer regularly miss out on important curriculum content.

Pupils know how to stay safe online. They learn about life beyond Cornwall through a residential trip to Bristol. However, there is a lack of precision about how pupils' broader development will be enhanced and when. This means pupils lack a secure knowledge of British values and of faiths and cultures different to their own. Although there is a school council, pupils' opportunities to take on leadership roles are underdeveloped.

The interim governing body has helped to support the school through a difficult period. It has helped to monitor the impact of the many changes. This means it knows clearly what still needs to be done to improve the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the early years, staff do not plan activities that precisely address gaps in children's knowledge and skills. As a result, some children's gaps widen and so they are not well prepared for Year 1. The trust needs to train staff to precisely identify gaps in children's knowledge and skills and plan purposeful tasks that help them to learn well across all areas of learning.

- In some foundation subjects, the curriculum is not well sequenced and need further refinement. Consequently, pupils do not build or connect their knowledge well enough. The trust needs to ensure that curriculum plans are well-sequenced and ambitious so that pupils' knowledge builds well over time.
- On some occasions, teachers do not give pupils work that matches the intent of the curriculum or takes into account what pupils, including those with SEND, already know. As a result, pupils do not deepen their knowledge well. The trust needs to support staff to have the subject knowledge to provide work well matched to both pupils' needs and the intent of the curriculum.
- The personal development curriculum is not fully established. It is not clear what pupils should learn or experience and when. Consequently, pupils do not have a secure understanding of different cultures or of British values. The trust should develop a carefully considered, high-quality programme beyond the academic to enhance pupils' broader development.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142238
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10322295
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anita Firth
CEO of the trust	Jennifer Blunden
Headteacher	Niki Ambrose
Website	www.pensansprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Truro & Penwith Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in 2023.
- The number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly in recent years.
- The nursery provision for two-year-olds is currently closed.
- The school runs its own breakfast club.
- The school has a local authority specially resourced provision for pupils with communication and interaction needs. This opened in February 2024. It has a capacity for 10 pupils from Reception to Year 6.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of staff, groups of pupils, the CEO of the trust, executive leaders from the trust, trustees and members of the interim governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also discussed the curriculum and looked at samples of work in science and history.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and to the pupil and staff survey.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Iain Freeland

Ofsted Inspector

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