

Inspection of Falmouth School

Trescobeas Road, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 4LH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has experienced significant staffing issues since the previous full inspection. The many changes at senior level have been unsettling for staff, parents and pupils. The school has struggled to recruit specialist teaching staff. This has impacted negatively on the quality of education some pupils receive.

The new headteacher articulates the highest expectations of staff and pupils. While it is too early to see substantial impact, she has galvanised leaders to start to bring about the many improvements needed.

Most pupils say they feel safe in school. A large proportion of parents believe some pupils do not behave well enough; inspectors agree. While some pupils enjoy school and conduct themselves well, too many do not demonstrate positive attitudes. If bullying happens, most pupils say they have an adult that would help them. However, some pupils are less confident in how effectively staff deal with these issues.

Pupils appreciate the facilities they have access to such as the cycle track, fitness suite and dance studios. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the sports outreach programme speak proudly of their achievements. During the inspection, pupils spoke excitedly about their forthcoming production of 'Romeo and Juliet'.

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

The new headteacher is resolute in her determination to bring about improvement. She is fully aware of parental concerns regarding poor communication. Parents have welcomed a recent meeting and more regular communication from the headteacher. Leaders have set about implementing strategies for much-needed improvement. There has been some initial impact in improving behaviour. However, most initiatives are in their infancy and are yet to make a discernible difference. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of key aspects of the school's work, including assessing the quality of the curriculum, is yet to take place. Therefore, leaders are unable to determine the full effectiveness of actions and adapt their approach accordingly.

Curriculum 'learning journeys' have been introduced in each subject. Some subject leaders have considered carefully the important knowledge pupils must learn and by when. Pupils build a deep understanding of the subject over time. However, in some subjects, the important knowledge has not been clearly identified. Learning is not broken down into smaller, sequential steps. Pupils do not build their knowledge well. Published results for 2022 reflected the long-term weakness in the quality of education those pupils had received. The improvements in the curriculum mean that pupils currently in the school are learning better than those who have left, but there remains much more to do. This mixed picture of quality is similar in the sixth form. Some students progress well through the intended curriculum. However, in some subjects, learning is not demanding enough for the rigours of post-16 study.

Some teachers do not use assessment effectively to check what pupils know and can do. Therefore, learning does not build on pupils' prior knowledge and individual needs are not met well. They develop gaps in their knowledge and find learning new content challenging. Many pupils do not engage and stop trying. Behaviour often deteriorates. Pupils become off-task and disinterested. Some teachers fail to challenge this; they do not expect enough of pupils.

Pupils who need support with their reading are identified during the transition from primary school. Personalised support is put in place to develop their fluency. However, leaders are unclear about the impact of this work. Leaders have raised the profile of reading across the school through a range of strategies such as in English lessons, tutor time and use of the library. Many pupils welcome this approach and read more for pleasure.

The needs of pupils with SEND are known well by leaders. Learning passports usually provide helpful information for teachers to support pupils' learning needs. However, some teachers do not use this information well. Consequently, some pupils struggle to build their knowledge. Many parents of pupils with SEND raise concerns about the support provided.

Pupils have access to a range of extra-curricular activities to develop their talents and interests. They talk knowledgeably about recent assemblies on important aspects such as protected characteristics. They say most pupils welcome those from different backgrounds. The reintroduction of work experience in Years 10 and 12 is supporting pupils' understanding of the world of work. However, the careers and personal, social and health curriculum is still in development. Students in the sixth form are less clear on their future options other than university, managing finance and preparation for life after school.

Trust leaders acknowledge the need for rapid improvement in the school. They show a determination to bring about the much-needed changes. The recently formed local monitoring committee understands its responsibilities well. Expectations have been raised. Some staff find these raised expectations and the associated workload a challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders fulfil their statutory safeguarding responsibilities well. Policies and recruitment checks are carried out diligently. Staff receive appropriate training and understand what to do if they have a concern. Regular updates help staff to be alert to any ongoing concerns about pupils.

Pupils talk knowledgeably about how to stay safe when using modern technology. A recently introduced tool for pupils to report concerns is beginning to be used. Pupils welcome this, although some are still sceptical as to whether staff will act and support them promptly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the important knowledge pupils must know is not identified clearly. Learning is not broken down into small, sequential steps. This hinders pupils' ability to build knowledge effectively. Leaders must ensure that what pupils need to know is explicitly identified and a carefully considered sequence of learning established.
- Assessment is not used effectively to understand what pupils know and can do. Future learning does not take into account what pupils need to know next. Pupils develop gaps in their knowledge which hinders their ability to learn more. Leaders must ensure that assessment is used to understand how well pupils remember the curriculum and to ensure future learning is meaningful.
- Some learning does not meet pupils' individual needs, including those with SEND, and some teaching does not engage or interest pupils. When this happens, pupils fail to learn well and some give up. Teachers must tailor learning to meet pupils' needs and engage them fully.
- Leaders have not yet fully monitored and evaluated many of the new initiatives they have implemented, including the quality of the curriculum. This means that they do not know the impact of their actions. They are unable to adapt what they are doing to improve aspects of the school further. Leaders at all levels must monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility with rigour. They should then adapt their approach in light of their findings to ensure rapid improvement.

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	137223
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10256716
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	947
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	69
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nigel Hyde
Headteacher	Lenka Chanter
Website	www.falmouthschool.net
Date of previous inspection	16 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined The Roseland Multi-Academy Trust in September 2020.
- Since the previous full inspection, the school has had an interim headteacher and two substantive headteachers. The current headteacher took up post in January 2023.
- Local monitoring committees have recently been set up by the trust to provide delegated governance functions at the school.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- This was the third routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued 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 leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer of the trust, as well as trustees and members of the local monitoring committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, languages, history, English and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Simon Rowe, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Coulson	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Shanks	Ofsted Inspector

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