

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Curnow School

Drump Road, Redruth TR15 1LU

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 November 2024

Outcome

Curnow School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Rob Armstrong. This school is part of the Special Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Guy Chappell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alison Cook.

What is it like to attend this school?

Curnow is a very special place. The school's vision is to provide an exceptional, nurturing environment for all its pupils. It does this extremely well. Parents cannot speak highly enough of the school. Pupils really enjoy attending, so much so that some said they would spend more time at school if they could.

Pupils are happy and secure at school because the staff look after them so well. All pupils, including those with the most complex difficulties, have very positive relationships with staff. Staff make sure that all children receive the high-quality care and respect that they deserve. Pupils demonstrate their genuine care for one another. Many pupils spoken with say they have friends and trusted adults who they know will help and support them.

The school wants every pupil to do as well as they can. The curriculum has been carefully tailored to meet the needs of pupils. Staff know the children really well. Staff skilfully provide a wide range of teaching approaches and support. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their life.

Leaders care deeply about the children in their care. Leaders work hard to meet the health, education and care needs of pupils while also ensuring pupils enjoy their time at school.

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

The school successfully prepares pupils for later life. The school has identified the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Staff have created different pathways for pupils, depending on their needs. This ensures that all pupils get the precise support they need for their long-term achievement. A good example of this is the different packages for pupils in the post-16 provision. Four pathways have been designed that pupils can follow, tailored carefully to their needs and interests. Lessons and activities are then carefully designed to ensure that pupils gain the skills and knowledge they will need for later life. Carefully thought-out activities help pupils to discover their own enthusiasms and interests. Impartial careers guidance helps pupils to think about the future. These help pupils to develop lifelong interests that give them meaning and enjoyment.

At its heart, the curriculum focuses on the key learning that all pupils need to gain. This includes learning to communicate, getting on well with others and physical development. This area of work is highly effective. The school supports all pupils to develop their communication and, when appropriate, the skills they need to read and write. This could be seen during the inspection in a class who were all enjoying listening to a story.

Pupils' personal development runs like a golden thread throughout all aspects of school life. The curriculum correctly prioritises this for all pupils. Staff expertly enable pupils to develop their understanding of how to look after themselves and how to get on with other people. The strength of this work can be seen in the way the school help pupils to understand 'consent'. Staff use every opportunity to help pupils understand that they can give permission for something to happen or ask agreement to do something.

A great deal of thought has gone into the development of the curriculum. The school involves parents, considers research and best practice in similar schools. This results in highly effective sessions tailored to the needs of the pupils. For example, in post-16 sessions pupils are well supported to develop their understanding of gender equality.

The school have comprehensive systems in place to assess pupils' progress. This system has not been updated since the curriculum was improved. There are plans in place to rectify this, but these are in the early stages of development.

Staff are well supported by colleagues and leaders in the school. This leads them to describe the school as having a family atmosphere. Parents also value the thoughtful care their children receive. Parents appreciate the communication they have with the school. This means that any worries can be quickly resolved. Many parents told inspectors that the school has a hugely positive impact on their child's life.

Leaders, including those in the trust, are committed to meeting the needs of pupils in the best way possible. Together, leaders successfully improve the support that pupils receive, for example, in the enhanced specialist support on offer in the school. The trust has thorough oversight of the school. This provides the trust with a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that systems to assess what pupils know and can do align with the updated curriculum. As a result, some staff spend too much time completing unnecessary assessments. This reduces the time pupils get to practise key skills. The trust needs to ensure that assessment is effective and pupils get sufficient time to embed new learning.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Curnow School, to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in January 2013.

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	143166
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10344743
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alison Cook
CEO of the trust	Guy Chappell
Headteacher	Rob Armstrong
Website	www.curnowschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has pupils with a wide range of SEND, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, and severe learning difficulties. A number of pupils have autism spectrum disorder.
- The school has nursery provision but, at the time of the inspection, no children in the early years were on roll.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, they observed staff working with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders. Inspectors also met with trustees and the CEO.

Inspection team

Phil Minns, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Costello

Ofsted Inspector

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