

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Looe Community Academy

Sunrising, East Looe, Looe, Cornwall PL13 1NQ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Scott Yalden. This school is part of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dan Buckley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lee Hallam.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Looe Community Academy are experiencing a great deal of change. The school has raised its expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves, including their uniform, punctuality and behaviour. This has helped improve behaviour in lessons, but some pupils are struggling with these changes. This negatively affects their attitude to learning. The school ensures that pupils are safe, and that support is in place for pupils' well-being.

The school's curriculum is also developing. It is stronger in some subjects than in others. Pupils do not learn consistently well in all subjects. The school does not always check what pupils have learned, and where they have gaps in their knowledge. This means that many older pupils need to catch up on missed learning. This is reflected in the school's weak published outcomes.

While too many pupils are not well-prepared academically for their next steps, pupils do develop a range of other skills. For example, they learn how to work in a team and be creative. They are rewarded for their achievements. Pupils enjoy taking part in inter-house sports competitions and take pride in work displayed around the school. They enjoy taking on positions of responsibility.

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

The school's curriculum is improving, including the provision for pupils at the early stages of reading. The school is addressing areas of weakness. Recent work has taken place to ensure that pupils are retaining knowledge. The school has provided guidance for teachers. However, the impact of this work is not apparent in all subjects. For example, the school has identified important vocabulary in each subject. This is on display and used by teachers, but not all pupils know what these words mean, or use them in their own work.

The changes to the curriculum have run alongside changes to the school routines. Most pupils behave well in lessons, but some remain passive in their learning. They do not always complete the work they have been given. The checks on their learning are not always effective. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge persist. The school has made appropriate decisions to improve the quality of education for pupils. One of these improvements is that the majority of lessons are taught by subject specialists. However, it is too early to see the impact of these decisions. In addition, the school and trust's evaluation of the curriculum is not always accurate. Governors and trustees do not always challenge school leaders robustly enough.

The school has been successful in improving pupils' punctuality, ensuring the start of each day is calm and reducing low level disruption. However, many pupils miss lessons as a result of being sanctioned. This particularly affects pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. In addition, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school is taking appropriate action to improve attendance, but the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains stubbornly high. For both these reasons, this means too many pupils, especially pupils with SEND, are missing valuable learning. Nonetheless, the school does accurately identify pupils with SEND and effectively supports a significant number of them through additional well-being support and sensitive work with families.

Pupils remember what they have learned about healthy relationships and how to stay physically and mentally healthy. Older pupils value the support they are given with revision and advice about their next steps, including undertaking work experience. They feel well-prepared in this respect. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, but these are not always reflected in their behaviour and attitudes towards one another.

Some parents and staff are adjusting to the significant changes underway at the school. This is an ongoing challenge. It affects pupils' attitudes and the school's reputation in the community. Decisions have been made in the best interests of pupils but leaders, including those responsible for governance, know there is still much to do to improve these relationships.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is not always used effectively. This means that teachers introduce new learning before all pupils have completed work, or fully understood their current learning. In addition, too many pupils have gaps in their learning from historically weaker curriculum implementation, or not being in lessons. The trust, through accurate self-evaluation, must ensure that assessment is used effectively to identify gaps in learning, so that all pupils can build knowledge over time and outcomes in public examinations improve.
- The school's approach to managing behaviour is new. It has raised its expectations of pupils. While this has helped to ensure lessons are calmer, too many pupils miss important learning and many pupils have negative attitudes towards school. The trust must communicate more effectively with pupils and parents, so that relationships improve and pupils become more positively engaged in their learning.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough, particularly pupils with SEND. This means they are missing out on important learning and are not well-prepared for their next steps. The trust, with support from local governors, must sharpen its focus on improving the attendance of all pupils.

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 to be good 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 school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2015.

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	137839
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10344627
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	531
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lee Hallam
CEO of the trust	Dan Buckley
Headteacher	Scott Yalden
Website	www.looe.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school belongs to South East Cornwall Multi-academy Regional Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school currently uses one unregistered 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and a selection of subject leaders and staff during the inspection.
- In addition, the lead inspector met with the CEO and Director of Education from South East Cornwall Multi-academy Regional Trust, as well as a local governor and a member of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/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.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Collins

Ofsted Inspector

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