

Combe Pafford School

Steps Lane, Watcombe, Torquay, TQ2 8NL

Inspection dates

20–21 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well given their starting points. They gain several national qualifications and are prepared very well for future employment or training.
- The sixth form provision is outstanding. The programme includes a very good balance of work-related courses and the study of wider employment skills.
- The school has developed links with the local community, schools, employers, and schools in other countries which provide an outstanding range of learning experiences for pupils. They are very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Extra help given to pupils who are struggling with reading and numeracy has a very positive effect on raising standards.
- Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils' learning is supported well by highly skilled teaching assistants.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. This has had a strong impact on improving attendance which is above the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are keen to learn. As one parent commented, 'I've never seen my child so happy.'
- Governors and senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are effective in managing the professional development of staff to ensure teaching and learning are good and they take prompt action to tackle any weaker areas.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' handwriting is not taught consistently in all classes.
- The teaching and recording of communication skills for pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder are underdeveloped.
- Senior leaders do not always use information about the school's performance to check in detail how well their plans for improvement are working.
- The governing body does not use the information it receives to challenge the school's performance in a few areas rigorously enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning across the school, including in 21 lessons, of which two were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, they heard pupils read and observed them receiving targeted help to improve their reading and numeracy skills.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, governors and pupils. They also gained pupils’ views by meeting them informally and discussing their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including information on pupils’ progress, teachers’ planning, safeguarding policies and procedures, and the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The views of 32 parents and carers expressed through the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed.
- The views of 59 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Andrew Redpath, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Edwards

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Combe Pafford School provides education for pupils who mainly have moderate learning difficulties or an autistic spectrum disorder. A few have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, sensory impairments or are physically disabled.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The school occasionally uses one off-site provider, On Track in nearby Totnes, for a small number of students.
- The school has specialist status for business and enterprise. It provides outreach support to several local schools and approximately 150 students from local schools attend Combe Pafford part time to complete work-related courses.
- The school roll has increased by more than a third since the last inspection and a new sixth form has been established. Eight new teachers joined the school in September 2014.
- Combe Pafford School converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2013 and is governed by the Combe Pafford School Trust. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - monitoring the recently introduced strategies to improve pupils' handwriting to make sure they are used effectively across the school
 - improving the teaching and recording of communication skills for pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders use information about the school's performance to check in more detail how well plans for improvement are working
 - governors make better use of the information they receive to shape the school's future plans more effectively and to challenge its performance in some areas more rigorously.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong leadership and are continually seeking to improve the school. Examples of recent successes include managing the increase in the school roll, the addition of the sixth form and the extension of work-related courses.
 - Senior leaders make sure teaching and learning are consistently good through systematic and thorough monitoring, which includes: formal lesson observations, unannounced visits to classes and checks on work in pupils' books. Teachers are given appropriate professional development and support, and those new to the school receive a thorough induction.
 - Middle leaders are highly effective because they are given training and time to exercise their responsibilities. Several are completing national qualifications. They are involved fully in improving the quality of education the school provides. Middle leaders have good plans for developing their subjects, for example the teaching of English and mathematics, and in helping to train teaching assistants.
 - Leaders collect a good amount of information about pupils' achievement and other aspects of the school's performance. This information is not always used to check closely how well areas targeted in the school's development plan are being improved.
 - The school provides a very rich and stimulating range of activities for pupils. A very large proportion of pupils experience a residential trip each year. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school's links with schools abroad and can discuss cultural differences following trips to China and Costa Rica. For example, one pupil observed that 'school classes in China are much bigger'.
 - The school is a harmonious community where pupils are accepting of each other's differences. Pupils show an understanding of democracy and of their rights and responsibilities in wider society. They are aware of different faiths and ethnic groups and understand the need for tolerance.
 - The school's specialist status for business and enterprise has been used effectively to establish learning experiences which form a clear pathway to future employment or training. Pupils learn at an early stage about the personal skills necessary to succeed at work. The school provides work-related courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form which include animal care, construction, motor vehicle studies, health and social care, hairdressing and horticulture. Students attend from local schools and take these courses alongside Combe Pafford students, which is a good example of the school's partnership with the local community.
 - Pupils and students benefit from thorough careers guidance which includes visits to exhibitions and taster sessions before choosing work-related courses. They are clear about their future pathways.
 - Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support pupils' personal development and to improve their reading and numeracy.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors are closely involved in the school and have a good understanding of its overall performance. They have overseen the school's conversion to academy status and the setting up of the sixth form.
 - Governors are kept well informed about the work of the school through senior and middle leaders' reports and by making regular visits to the school. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and of pupils' achievement and progress. They challenge the work of the school and hold senior leaders to account, for example they know the impact of the pupil premium funding and the educational value of trips abroad. They do not always use this information to check in detail progress in implementing the school improvement plans.
 - The governing body has established sound financial procedures and keeps a close check on the school's budget. Governors have introduced effective performance management arrangements which link teachers' salary progression closely to performance.
 - Governors carry out their safeguarding duties diligently and ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils like school and are eager to do their best. They are polite and pleased to talk about their work and life in school with visitors.
- In the large majority of lessons, pupils concentrate well and work hard. They settle to work quickly and respond willingly to teachers' instructions. Pupils take responsibility for their learning, for example when they put away their work at the end of a lesson with little prompting, or use equipment safely in practical subjects.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, very occasionally, more vocal pupils call out in lessons and in a few other lessons, where the teaching does not challenge them fully, pupils lose concentration.
- Older pupils develop their self-confidence through independent travel training and the work experience programmes. They also take responsibility when they run mini-enterprises and raise money for charities, for example Water Aid and the Shoe Box appeal. School leaders have set up a school council recently to involve pupils further in the life of the school.
- Staff are creative in designing the programmes of pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder to reduce their anxious behaviour and to help them adjust to change.
- A recognised programme to aid pupils' personal development has been introduced which has been successful in helping a small number of pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Almost all parents and carers who completed the online survey reported that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. Pupils agree that behaviour is good and that bullying is rare. They feel that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with well by staff. Inspection findings confirm these positive views.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. It is underpinned by a thorough personal, social and health education programme.
- Pupils know how to keep safe when using the internet and that they can email a designated member of staff if they have a concern.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying and report that the school 'anti-bullying week' was very informative and helped to raise awareness of how to respect each other.
- The pastoral team work closely with other professionals in education, health and social services and with families to make sure the school meets the individual needs of all pupils. A family support worker visits homes and parent groups are organised in the school. This work has had a marked impact on improving pupils' attendance.
- Off-site provision is used for a very small number of pupils and is chosen carefully to ensure pupils are safe. Pupils report they enjoy taking part in the confidence-building activities.
- All staff are vetted thoroughly prior to their appointment to make sure they are suitable to work with pupils. Staff and governors carry out regular checks and risk assessments to make sure the school is safe for staff and students.
- Parents and carers feel rightly that their children are happy and safe in school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers typically set high standards and plan lessons which capture pupils' interest. Teachers and teaching assistants use praise well and encourage pupils to try their best. As a result, there is a well-established climate for learning in classes across the school.
- Teachers use their usually good subject knowledge effectively to extend pupils' learning and ensure pupils learn at a brisk pace. For example, in an English lesson students eagerly discussed a text using different types of descriptive language. The teacher skilfully drew out pupils' ideas, pushing them to give detailed answers.
- Teachers generally use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. They also encourage pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Occasionally, the more vocal pupils answer most of the questions and learning for others slows as they lose concentration or do not take part fully in the lesson.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of how to teach phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and this is having a strong impact on improving reading. A new approach to teaching

handwriting has been introduced in Key Stage 2, but handwriting is not yet modelled or taught consistently in all classes across the school.

- Highly skilled teaching assistants are equally effective when they support groups in class or provide targeted help for individual pupils in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to make sure pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder have the right amount of challenge. Work is organised to provide pupils with a good balance between working in a group or individually.
- Teachers check pupils' progress regularly against National Curriculum levels or against the acquisition of work-related skills. Pupils' work is neat and marked regularly with suggestions for improvement. Most pupils are aware of their targets and older ones know what qualifications they are likely to gain by the time they leave school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Given their starting points pupils make good progress; however, attainment is low overall due to pupils' learning difficulties. At the end of Year 11, pupils gain a mixture of GCSE passes and work-related qualifications. Students in the sixth form progress to suitable destinations in employment or further training.
- Achievement is particularly strong in English. Some pupils who have taken the GCSE one year early perform well against expected grades. This arrangement gives pupils examination practice and boosts their self-confidence. Pupils are pleased to talk about their success in these examinations.
- The systematic teaching of phonics is having a strong impact on improving pupils' reading. Pupils are reading with increasing confidence as they develop the skills to identify new words. Pupils are less confident writers and make slower progress in developing their handwriting.
- Achievement in mathematics and in some areas of science has been weaker in the past. Plans have been put in place to tackle this and pupils are now making better progress.
- Pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder make good progress because teachers plan lessons which take close account of pupils' individual needs. Targets for improvement are sometimes quite broad and lack the detail to capture small gains in pupils' communication skills.
- The pupil premium funding has been targeted well to provide pastoral support and 'catch-up' sessions in reading and numeracy. The school monitors the impact closely and this shows that impressive gains have been made in pupils' numeracy and reading, and that these pupils are closing the gap in attainment with their peers.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- The sixth form is outstanding because it successfully builds on the work-related learning that takes place lower down the school. The programme is balanced and includes work-related courses, English, mathematics, and the development of personal skills. The outstanding teaching and learning is strengthened by students' very good opportunities to apply new skills through for example, work experience placements in the community or on foreign trips.
- Outstanding leadership and management have enabled the provision to become established in a relatively short period of time. The sixth form has been developed thoughtfully to ensure there is an 'older', more age-appropriate environment; for example, times for the school day are different from the rest of the school and students use the 'Yellow Frog' café for their breaks and lunch, alongside members of the public.
- Students speak with pride about their achievements. They are very well prepared for entering employment and some have gained employment following successful work experience placements. Students who leave the sixth form move on to suitable destinations which include supported employment, apprenticeships or further training.
- Standards of safety are high and a trained member of staff completes risk assessments for the range of activities. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure use of the café by members of the public is managed safely.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139540
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	449981

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Griffiths
Headteacher	Mike Lock
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01803 327902
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