

# Inspection of a good school: Combe Pafford School

Steps Lane, Watcombe, Torquay, Devon TQ2 8NL

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Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

## Outcome

Combe Pafford School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Michael Lock, OBE. This school is a single academy trust of the same name, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, who is also the headteacher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jane Hallwood.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils excel at this ambitious, harmonious and happy school. Staff secure positive relationships very effectively. This helps pupils to feel valued, safe and ready to learn. Pupils experience purposeful lessons and many wider opportunities. For example, the school offers an array of residential visits, many of which are abroad, as well as work experience and visitors that link to pupils' learning and pathways into adulthood.

All pupils have a special educational need and/or disability (SEND). The school's curriculum is designed to allow pupils to be as well prepared for the world of work as possible. The school ensures that barriers to learning are understood. Pupils benefit from tailored provision linked to their needs and aspirations. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Many go on to secure meaningful and sustained employment.

The whole community has high expectations of pupils. Pupils behave very well in lessons and most of the time in and around the school. Staff utilise their honed expertise to get to know pupils extremely well. This helps to ensure they can support pupils effectively when they find things tricky or challenging. Staff and pupils get on well together. Pupils, like parents and carers, say that bullying is not a problem.

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

Combe Pafford School prioritises securing positive futures for its pupils. The school utilises this value to underpin the rationale for its curriculum. This ensures that pupils learn the knowledge and skills needed for future employment, despite their needs. Everyone is committed to this ethos. Staff work enthusiastically together to do all they can to achieve

this goal. As a result, pupils typically secure the qualifications, experience and independence to gain meaningful local employment when they leave the school.

Despite this track record of success, the school has determinedly looked to improve the curriculum. Curriculum planning is built on three 'cornerstones' linked to pupils' abilities and aspirations. The school has rightly looked to strengthen the coherence and impact of the academic cornerstone and with success. Many subjects are planned carefully and allow pupils to build knowledge effectively, including in the sixth form. Students go on to secure GCSEs, level 1 and level 2 qualifications as a result. For example, in English and science, pupils experience coherently sequenced lessons that build on what they already know and can do. Reading is central to the overall curriculum. Alongside dedicated reading lessons, books and reading run through all elements of school life. This is reflected in the well-stocked library which is in the centre of the school.

Nevertheless, the school recognises there is more to do. Some subjects are not as established as others. Where this is the case, the knowledge the school wants pupils to learn is not as clear as in the more successful subjects. For example, in subjects like history, pupils learn important knowledge. However, the implementation of the curriculum is not as successful as that seen in science and in pupils' vocational learning. Similarly, expectations in the lower school are not as consistent as in the upper school and sixth form. Where this is the case, pupils' learning is less secure.

The promotion of pupils' wider development is exceptionally strong. Pupils benefit from a carefully planned vocational curriculum. Staff ensure that pupils have a rich experience of their local and wider community. This includes linked work experience and opportunities to explore a range of pathways into further education or employment. In lessons, pupils discuss beliefs and values through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. This helps develop pupils' spirituality, cultural understanding and preparation for adult life in modern Britain.

Staff love working at the school. They share leaders' ambition. Staff say leaders, including governors, consider their well-being and support them to do better. Staff are highly skilled and motivated. Leaders provide considered training to improve curriculum planning and teaching. Governors provide targeted challenge to ensure that decisions are in the best interest of pupils. Consequently, the school is continuously improving.

Leaders engage with the wider community very effectively. There are useful processes to allow pupils, parents and carers to contribute to curriculum planning and pathways. Parents recognise their children are well supported. Many appreciate the difference made to their pupils' readiness for adulthood and self-confidence. One parent, reflected the views of many, said, 'The school is fantastic with excellent leadership, teachers and support workers who really care about the children.'

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

## **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The implementation of the curriculum varies. This means that pupils' learning is sometimes less secure. The school should look to strengthen the consistency of the implementation of the curriculum so that pupils learn equally well across all subjects.
- Provision in the lower school is not as ambitious and coherent as in the upper school and sixth form. This means pupils are not as well prepared for the curriculum and the pathways to employment as they could be. The school should raise expectations within this part of the school so that pupils secure the foundational knowledge to do even better as they progress further through the school.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in January 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 139540   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Torbay   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10322266   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Special  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 8 to 19  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 268  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 56   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Jane Hallwood  |
| <b>CEO of the trust</b>                           | Michael Lock, OBE  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Michael Lock, OBE  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.combepaffordschool.co.uk">www.combepaffordschool.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 18 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                     |

## Information about this school

- All pupils at Combe Pafford School have SEND and an education, health and care plan. Most pupils have a primary need of moderate learning difficulties, although the school does cater for other needs including pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- 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.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 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 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 leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to an independent consultant who acts as a school improvement advisor to the school. They also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, PSHE and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum planning and listened to some pupils read.
- 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.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted's Parent View, including questionnaire and free-text responses. They also considered responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to governance, leaders' evaluations, plans for school improvement and information about the school's curriculum.

## Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jen Edwards

Ofsted Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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