

# Altarnun Community Primary School

Five Lanes, Altarnun, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 7RZ

## Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, instability and changes in staffing have slowed the rate of improvement in the academy. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes is not good enough.
- Local governance is underdeveloped. The academy relies too heavily on the direct support and intervention of the trust, including in the implementation of the pupil premium strategy.
- Subject leadership roles, including English and mathematics, are not well established. As a result, these leaders do not contribute effectively to school improvement.
- Pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are not good. Too many pupils make only slow progress.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information well to match work closely to the different needs of the pupils, including the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The teaching of phonics and spelling is weak. This hinders pupils' ability to read and write as they progress through the school.
- Weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics limit pupils' reasoning skills and their understanding of number.

### The school has the following strengths

- The acting head of school has quickly gained the respect and confidence of pupils, parents and staff. Together with other leaders in the trust, he is taking the right actions to improve teaching, learning and behaviour.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and reliable. As a result, the multi-academy trust has intervened effectively and is rapidly improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Leaders' recent actions to promote the school's values and improve behaviour are effective. Around the school and in lessons, pupils are typically courteous, kind and respectful.
- New leadership in the early years foundation stage is already having a positive impact to secure necessary improvements.

## Full report

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

- Raise standards across the school in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment information to match work closely to the full range of pupils' needs, including the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those of the most able
  - improve the teaching of phonics and spelling across the school
  - build pupils' reasoning and number skills effectively in mathematics.
- To improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that local governance holds school leaders to account, including for its pupil premium strategy
  - enabling subject leaders to have the skills, knowledge and understanding to drive school improvement, particularly in English and mathematics.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be taken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Over time, pupils and parents agree that significant staffing and leadership changes have had an unsettling effect on the school. This has slowed the rate of improvement since the academy conversion in June 2013.
- Leaders' plans to fill key posts and positions in the school's leadership structure have been weak or poorly executed. As a result, the school still relies heavily on actions and support from the trust to fulfil some of its statutory duties, for example the work of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).
- Subject leadership in English and mathematics is underdeveloped and has limited impact on school improvement. Professional development for middle leaders previously has not been considered well enough. However, effective performance management is now in place, with the appropriate training and development needs of leaders fully met.
- Leaders' strategies and actions for raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not checked or evaluated well enough. As a consequence, there are still too many pupils not making good progress across the school.
- The trust's intervention and support has been critically important, especially in challenging the quality of teaching to improve. However, lines of accountability between academy staff and trust advisers are not fully agreed. This causes some confusion and hinders the speed of improvement.
- Leaders' evaluations of the effectiveness of the school's work are accurate and honest. They enable leaders to identify the right priorities for improvement and to take appropriate action. This has led to some staffing turbulence over time but is now securing the necessary improvement, for example in the early years foundation stage.
- The newly appointed acting head of school is securing rapid improvement. He has quickly grasped what needs to be done to improve the academy. For example, his attention to the school's values and high expectations of pupils is already having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors observed strong cross-curricular links between lessons, including counting in physical education (PE) lessons.
- The impact of the additional funding for pupil premium and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not strong enough. Very recently the head of school has been tracking targeted pupils effectively, including their academic, social and emotional needs. However, pupils still have too much ground to catch up.
- The PE and sports premium is well spent so that pupils participate in a range of sports, clubs and physical activities. In addition to core PE lessons, pupils benefit from extra-curricular clubs, including rugby and athletics. Leaders recognise the importance of PE to pupils' development, learning and well-being.
- Leaders are taking effective action to promote pupils' social, spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils share celebrations such as singing Christmas carols and

harvest festival with the local community. However, although pupils understand the importance of the academy's values and principles, leaders are not supporting pupils well enough to help them make the link between the school's values and British values.

- School leaders currently rely heavily on the trust to ensure that the necessary improvements are being made.
- In 2017 the Year 1 phonics screening check was voided due to maladministration of the tests. Leaders acted promptly to report this. They have also responded swiftly to advice and recommendations to ensure that this will not be repeated and that the matter is fully resolved.

## **Governance of the school**

- Since September 2016 the trust has been trying to secure strong local accountability and governance through its 'drive team'. This is not yet established successfully. The school is still reliant on the trust to manage key school-based improvement, which reduces the capacity for improvement at the academy level.
- The school does not have a named 'equivalent' of the chair of the governing body, or identified lead for disadvantaged pupils or special educational needs. As a result, strategies for directing resources and improving outcomes for pupils are not good. The head of school is effectively tracking pupils with the support of the regional executive principal but there is no longer-term view or strategy in place for sustaining improvements.
- Trust representatives recognise the need to bolster local skills, knowledge and expertise through the drive team. Since September 2016 there have been three new members. Training is now in hand to ensure that governors are being supported in their roles and responsibilities.
- The recent deployment of a national leader in governance is already increasing accountability in holding school leaders to account. As a result, school plans reflect the right areas for improvement. However, plans do not always have enough detail or precision to inform high-quality self-evaluation for the long term.
- Governors have identified staff training needs, including for middle leaders which is imperative for sustaining recent improvements. Training needs and professional development are matched appropriately to meet current priorities.
- Governors and leaders have been proactive in working with trust representatives to improve key weaknesses in the school. For example, previous decisions they have taken have led to strongly improving teaching in the early years and key stage 1. Also, investment in staff training to support vulnerable pupils is now starting to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff are not complacent. They are well challenged and supported by the trust in undertaking safeguarding reviews and checks and promoting a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

- The school ensures that all checks and vetting procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils. These include pre-employment checks for staff. In addition, governors, volunteers and others from external agencies are all checked rigorously. School records and systems are well maintained and thorough.
- Training for safeguarding and child protection is detailed and appropriate. Timely updates and effective induction arrangements mean that staff are highly aware of safeguarding processes and how to respond to pupils. This promotes a strong culture where pupils feel safe, reassured and have confidence in staff.
- Leaders react quickly when staff log incidents or concerns. They use the full range of external agencies to work with pupils and parents to keep pupils safe and improve their well-being. For example, a member of staff has just completed training to be able to offer high-quality social and emotional support in school.
- Pupils feel safe and know what to do to stay safe in a variety of situations, including working online and undertaking fire evacuation drills. Pupils also feel that previously poor behaviour is now improving, which is enabling them to feel safe and enjoy coming to school.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Recent actions taken by trust and school leaders are improving the quality of teaching, learning and provision. However, this has taken too long and has contributed to some slow progress and disruptive behaviour of pupils over time.
- Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan well enough to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Work is often too easy or difficult. As a result, pupils are not making good progress across the curriculum because essential 'building blocks' of key skills, knowledge and understanding are not securely in place.
- The teaching of phonics and spelling is weak, including in targeted group sessions. Staff subject knowledge is generally poor, which hinders pupils' progress. For example, pupils' misconceptions are not identified or corrected quickly enough. However, the newly appointed key stage 1 and early years leader has the expertise and knowledge and is already taking action to improve staff practice.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. However, pupils are not being taught well enough how to reason and apply their mathematical knowledge to a range of situations. Furthermore, teachers do not enable pupils to gain fluency in their number skills. This inhibits pupils' understanding and use of calculation across the mathematics curriculum.
- Teachers and leaders have accurate assessment information and know the pupils well. The head of school is now checking the progress of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Professional meetings with teachers ensure that pupils are being accurately identified for additional targeted support. However, the quality of this support is not good because it lacks particular focus on what the pupils need to learn next and timescales are not suitably ambitious.

- Teachers plan activities to link learning well across the curriculum. This motivates pupils and enables them to join up their thinking in various subjects. For example, in Years 5 and 6 pupils are writing diary entries based on their Second World War topic.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in promoting positive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils generally show interest in learning, including their homework, and are confident to ask questions in lessons.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' learning behaviour and attitudes in lessons deteriorate when teaching is not meeting their needs or holding their interest well enough. However, new teachers and staff are becoming more skilled in recognising this and are taking appropriate steps to engage pupils.
- Attendance is marginally below the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. The head of school is now checking pupils' absence on a weekly basis, which is already having a positive impact, because it allows early flagging for parents. As a result, pupils and families are being given additional support to improve attendance before absences escalate.
- The few pupils who have persistently high absence are being supported and challenged to improve. This involves school staff as well as external agencies, as required, who help ensure that pupils attend school and receive their entitlement.
- The work of a recently trained specialist social, emotional and behavioural practitioner to support pupils is effective. Pupils and parents confirm that this post is having a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour of targeted pupils. For example, pupils are helped to overcome phobias and in managing their emotions when they find certain social situations threatening or challenging.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The head of school immediately recognised that the behaviour of some pupils is not good enough as it disrupts the learning and enjoyment of others. Recently he has raised expectations through a revised behaviour policy and 'sanctions ladder' which is understood by all. As a result, pupils say that behaviour is improving well. However, behaviour remains a high priority due to the legacy of poor, persistent behaviour over time.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They play well together and eat lunch amicably. Pupils share the school grounds and resources sensibly at play times.
- Pupils are keen to make a contribution to the school. For example, representatives on the school council are proud to represent their peers and take the role very seriously.

These are coveted positions and pupils use the council to voice their concerns and help to make decisions, such as fundraising.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- The small numbers of pupils in 2017 national tests means that comparisons with the national average are difficult. There was a decline in reading. However, pupils' progress in both mathematics and writing improved in key stage 2 from the previous year.
- Pupils' phonics and spelling skills are weak across the school. Not enough pupils are able to spell and build words in line with age-appropriate expectations. This slows their skills and lowers their confidence as writers.
- Pupils' reading skills are developing too slowly. This means that some pupils are unable to catch up if they fall behind and others, including the most able, are not developing a depth of vocabulary to use and apply in reading and writing.
- Leaders have identified key gaps in pupils' attainment and have rightly targeted these for immediate improvement. In the first instance, disadvantaged pupils and boys do least well in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders' recent strategies are showing positive impact and are diminishing differences, but further attention is required to consolidate this position.
- The most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough good progress in reading, writing and mathematics to reach the standards they are capable of. This also restricts the quality of their work across the curriculum.
- Pupils' mathematical understanding and reasoning skills are limited. Similarly, their fluency in being able to use and apply numbers is not well developed. For example, some pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to calculate the sum of a pair of decimal numbers but cannot explain what the value of every digit is, or what 'decimal number' means. Focused work to develop pupils' reasoning is now taking place in lessons, which is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' understanding of number.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2017, including the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined. This is reflected in pupils' current workbooks, where, across the school, more pupils are now working towards national expectations.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are below the national average, including those meeting the higher standard (greater depth). However, leaders and the key stage 1 teachers have a clear understanding of the gaps in pupils' knowledge and are already focusing on what is needed for pupils to catch up quickly.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- The proportion of children attaining the expected 'good level of attainment' in 2017 fell and is likely to be below the national average. Previously, children have not built

quickly enough on their prior learning and development, especially in reading, writing and number.

- Too few of the most able children achieve the higher attainment they are capable of across the early years curriculum.
- The newly appointed early years teacher/leader has quickly grasped what needs to be done to improve teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teachers are challenging and supporting the children more effectively to accelerate the children's progress.
- Teachers and adults know the children's starting points well. They are now taking these into account when planning suitable activities for the children. However, phonics teaching and aspects of the environment, including the outside, are not yet fully adapted to reflect particular needs of different children. This reduces the overall impact of the learning.
- Transition and induction arrangements are strong. School staff use a wide range of information to support the children. This includes early baseline assessments and other information from pre-school settings, as well as information provided by parents from home visits.
- Parents are positive about the start the children are receiving in school. They confirm that early years' staff are approachable, responsive and supportive.
- Safeguarding in the early years foundation stage is effective.



## School details

Unique reference number	140839
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10033110

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	Adventure Learning Academy Trust
Chief operating officer	Mary McKeeman
Head of school	Simon Danby
Telephone number	01566 86274
Website	<a href="http://www.altarnunprimary.org.uk">www.altarnunprimary.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@altarnun.cornwall.sch.uk">head@altarnun.cornwall.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school has not been compared to the government's floor standards in 2016 or 2017 due to the very small cohort size.
- This is the first inspection of the school since it joined the Adventure Learning Academy Trust in June 2013.
- The school has had an acting head of school since the start of the Autumn term 2017.
- The school is smaller than the average-size primary and has three classes comprising a joint early years/key stage 1 class and two other classes in key stage 2.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- In 2017, the Year 1 phonics screening check results were officially 0% due to the trust reporting maladministration at the academy.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes and was accompanied by the head of school for the majority of inspection activities.
- Meetings were held with the range of leaders to evaluate their work. These included: the head of school; the regional executive principal; two members of the drive team and two trustees.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents including drive team visits; assessment information; the school's self-evaluation; trust monitoring reports; anonymised performance management records and the school development plan.
- Documentation, including the school's single central record and child protection training, was scrutinised with school leaders and staff.
- The inspector reviewed evidence and took full account of the response of leaders to the maladministration of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017.
- The inspector carried out one lesson observation in PE.
- The inspector undertook an extensive scrutiny of pupils' books to evaluate the quality of work and check the accuracy of assessment information, including for disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- The inspector spoke to children through various activities during the inspection and heard pupils read in Years 2, 5 and 6.
- The inspector observed playtime and lunch on both days of the inspection.
- The 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector considered comments provided alternatively, such as meeting directly and through the 18 free-texts received.

## Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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