

Looe Community Academy

Sunrising, East Looe, Looe, PL13 1NQ

Inspection dates 8–9 July 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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders and governors provide strong and effective leadership for the academy. As a result, students achieve increasingly well.
- Teaching is effectively led. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely. Teachers and other staff are given the right balance of support and challenge to improve their performance and that of their students.
- Students typically behave well around the academy site and in lessons. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well at the academy.
- Students feel safe at the academy. They are also well aware of most of the activities outside of the academy that carry risk, so are suitably safety-conscious.
- Consistently good teaching across a range of subjects is underpinned by strong subject knowledge and teachers' ability to use a range of effective strategies.
- Marking is regular and purposeful. It enables students to improve their work in a range of subjects.
- Students gain examination results which are at least in line or exceed national averages. This represents good progress for all groups of students. The most-able students achieve especially well.
- Students' personal development is extremely well promoted. They are successfully encouraged to aim high and to raise their expectations. Combined with their good achievement, this enables students to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students supported by additional funding and other students is not closing as rapidly as it might by the time that they leave in Year 11.
- Teachers' use of questioning is not always used effectively. On occasions, teachers do not adapt planned learning quickly enough to provide the right level of challenge for all students.
- As a group, middle leaders do not consistently promote and sustain the highest levels of student attainment and rapid rates of progress in all areas of the academy's work.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, the inspector observed students' learning in 24 part-lessons, several of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. Meetings were held with: the headteacher and other senior leaders; subject leaders and year group leaders, known collectively as middle leaders; members of the local governing body, including the Chair of the Governing body; several non-teaching staff and two groups of students. In addition, a telephone conversation took place with the academy improvement partner, who provides external support and advice to the academy.
- The inspectors looked at planning and self-evaluation documentation, assessment information and examples of pupils' work, and a range of policy documents.
- The views of 26 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into consideration. In addition, the views of the 65 staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Benjamin Houghton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Looe Community Academy is much smaller than most secondary schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is close to the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of students in Years 10 and 11 follow vocational courses at Cornwall College, Saltash and SR Training for part of their education.
- The school became an academy in February 2012. When the predecessor school, Looe Community School, was previously inspected by Ofsted in 2010, it was judged to be good overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement so that both are outstanding by:
 - closing the attainment gap more rapidly between disadvantaged students supported by additional funding and other students by the time that they leave in Year 11
 - teachers making more effective use of questioning to deepen students' understanding and to gauge when adjustments to planned learning are necessary
 - enabling all middle leaders to promote and sustain consistently high levels of student attainment and rapid rates of progress in all areas of the academy's work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and governors have ensured that the academy provides a good and improving standard of education for its students. Although a small academy, leaders do not lack ambition for their students. The academy's focus on raising students' aspirations through the 'Be the Best You Can Be' initiative is proving to be especially successful in improving both academic achievement and standards of behaviour.
- The academy is distinctively outward-looking and has built productive partnerships with a range of other schools in Cornwall to extend opportunities for students and improve the quality of provision.
- Teaching is well led. Plans for improvement are clear and achievable. They are securely based upon accurate self-evaluation of strengths and areas for development. Systems are securely in place to ensure that students' progress is regularly tracked and used by teachers when planning interventions, where required.
- Leaders monitor teachers' performance carefully. The results of this process are well coordinated into targets for improvement. Staff and leaders confirm that they are held firmly to account for how well targets are met; this is clearly linked to salary progression. Teachers also believe that their training needs are well met. Staff morale, as reflected in the inspection questionnaire, is high in the majority of cases.
- Middle leaders, including both subject and year group leaders, make a good contribution to raising standards. However, senior leaders rightly recognise that, as a group, the middle leaders do not promote and sustain the highest levels of student achievement consistently in all areas needed for the academy to be outstanding.
- The curriculum is a clear strength of the academy. It is broad and well balanced, and enables the relatively small cohorts to have a suitable choice of options for Key Stage 4. Extra-curricular provision is rich and varied, notably in the arts. Strong links ensure that there is a high level of engagement with the local community, including in arts festivals. Leaders monitor participation in academy events to ensure all groups are suitably represented, including for disadvantaged students supported through additional funding.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong. This supports the effective development of the values inherent in being part of modern British society. For example, students were asked to 'participate' in the recent general election to enhance their understanding of the importance of democracy and citizenship. This is also supported through involvement in elections to the academy council. Work in tutorials and assemblies celebrate the distinctiveness of Cornish identity.
- Leaders ensure that students are provided with clear advice and guidance regarding Key Stage 4 choices, post-16 study options and future careers. Students interviewed by inspectors confirmed that they felt very well supported in this regard.
- Leaders, supported by other designated staff, ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged students is used prudently. The academy focuses on the different needs of individuals that comprise this group, not assuming that 'one size fits all'. Interventions are carefully managed and evaluated, with adjustments being made where needed. Growing proficiency in using these funds is resulting in an increasing proportion of disadvantaged students closing the attainment gap with other students, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Arrangements to ensure that students are kept safe are fully in place and meet statutory requirements. New staff are carefully vetted before taking up appointment. Training for all staff is regular and up to date. Policies to ensure safeguarding measures are robust and comprehensive, as are any risk assessments, including for off-site activities. As a result, students are kept safe in the academy.
- Leaders and other specialist support staff engage well with parents. Regular contact is maintained through newsletters, the academy website and the use of text messaging. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is growing.
- Leaders monitor those students attending alternative provision courses closely. They ensure that they are well behaved, attend regularly and achieve well.
- Leaders and governors are well aware of the importance of promoting equal opportunities. Consequently, students from all groups progress at a similar rate and achieve well. Leaders also ensure that if any discrimination is evident, it is tackled vigorously. Students' understanding of the importance of tolerance in a diverse society such as the United Kingdom helps to foster good relationships around the academy.
- The academy does not receive any formal support from the local authority. However, it liaises closely and effectively with local authority officers, when needed. The academy improvement partner provides the academy with a useful external perspective on its performance.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body ensures that the academy is rigorously held to account for its performance. The governors are a knowledgeable group actively involved in the day-to-day life of the academy, as well as overseeing its strategic development. Governors undertake regular training to make sure that they are up to speed with recent developments. The governing body supports local primary schools in developing effective governance.
- Governors are aware of how well different groups of students achieve, including when compared to national trends. Consequently, they know that the attainment of disadvantaged students by the time they leave the academy needs to improve. They understand the relative strengths within teaching and any areas in need of improvement. This knowledge is used effectively to ensure that teachers' pay progression is well aligned with how well students achieve. Governors ensure that teachers are expected to meet their performance targets if they are to be rewarded financially. They also make sure that any underperformance is tackled.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students' attitudes to learning are mainly positive; most state that they enjoy coming to the academy. They also confirm that the orderly but relaxed environment witnessed by inspectors is typical.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. When they are not fully challenged in their learning, a few students occasionally become distracted.
- Students' conduct when moving around the academy site is sensible and mostly responsible. Students are polite to visitors and they have cordial and productive relationships with staff and with each other.
- Students are familiar and broadly in agreement with the academy's rewards and sanctions system. They recognise that the academy is seeking to operate a fair and transparent approach. Inspection evidence shows that the number of formal internal sanctions being used is declining; the same is true of the use of fixed-term exclusions.
- The academy can demonstrate notable success in helping those students with known behavioural difficulties to adapt well to academy life and find success there. Well-trained specialist staff, in addition to teachers and leaders, liaise well with parents and other outside agencies. They coordinate support especially well for students whose circumstances render them vulnerable.
- Most parents and staff share the inspection team's positive view of behaviour, as reflected in their comments on the inspection questionnaire.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students are of the opinion that all parts of the academy site are safe and that the academy promotes a safety-conscious culture.
- Bullying is uncommon. Students spoken to by inspectors expressed confidence in the staff's ability and readiness to tackle any incidents which might occur effectively and in a timely manner.
- Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including that relating to social media and text messaging. They are also aware of the different forms of bullying involving the use of derogatory terms linked to discrimination, including racial and homophobic language. Students gave a strong indication that any such bullying is not tolerated by the student community.
- Attendance over time is broadly average, with some fluctuations. Leaders and other staff ensure that absences are carefully tracked and followed up quickly.
- Those students who attend alternative provision attend regularly and behave well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and improving across the academy; this is enabling all groups of students to achieve well over time.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their expertise to stimulate students' interest in, and enjoyment of, learning. The academy's strong track record of good achievement in mathematics is underpinned by effective teaching in that subject, including careful identification of students' misconceptions.
- English is consistently well taught. By the end of Year 11, most students are proficient writers and can use

their well-developed skills for a range of purposes, including to be successful in examinations.

- Reading is well promoted across the academy. Weaker readers are well supported, including by capable teaching assistants. This helps them to catch up quickly and access the full range of subjects. In most cases, literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted across the curriculum, as well as in discrete English and mathematics lessons.
- The quality and effectiveness of marking has improved over time. As a result, teachers' guidance helps students to improve their work, including its technical accuracy. Marking is exceptionally strong in languages. Those students spoken to by inspectors affirmed that work is regularly marked and returned to them promptly by teachers. They value the advice provided through marking and other forms of feedback.
- Teachers plan work which, in most cases, enables students to learn well in a range of subjects. On a few occasions, the right level of challenge is not provided for all students. This is, in part, because teachers do not always use questioning well enough to gauge how much students have understood. Consequently, the necessary adaptations to lessons needed to accelerate and deepen students' learning are sometimes not made quickly enough.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students achieve well at the academy. On most measures, students achieve results which are at least in line with national averages. In 2014, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was a little above the national average, as it had been in the previous year. Given that students typically join the academy from below average starting points, this represents good progress.
- Attainment is impressive in a wide range of subjects, including art, French, geography and religious studies. Achievement in science has improved notably in the last two years. In those subjects where attainment was not strong in 2013, such as in physical education, there were marked improvements in 2014.
- Rates of progress across the different year groups, including in Key Stage 3, are typically good and improving. Consequently, students in the current Year 11 are firmly on track to attain results which are at least as good as the previous two years, including in English and in mathematics. Boys are now beginning to achieve much better relative to girls than was the case historically.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve as well as others in the academy. They benefit from effective support which is well attuned to their specific needs.
- From their different starting points, disadvantaged students supported by additional funding progress at a broadly similar rate to other students nationally and to others in the academy.
- In 2014, the attainment gap between Year 11 disadvantaged students and other students nationally was the equivalent of about a grade-and-a-half in both English and mathematics. The gaps were very similar in both subjects when comparing disadvantaged students' attainment with that of other students in the academy. Inspection evidence indicates that these gaps are gradually beginning to narrow as students move through the academy, but they are not yet closing rapidly enough by the time that students leave in Year 11.
- The most-able students achieve well and many attain the highest A* or A grades at GCSE level. In 2014, this group made significantly better progress than similar students nationally.
- The academy has entered students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics in the recent past. This has not had any adverse effect on their achievement. The academy continues to use this approach to a limited degree if it feels it benefits individual students.
- The small number of students who follow vocational courses with alternative providers achieve well over time. They make good gains in confidence and in basic skills. This means that they, like other students, are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	137839
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	448630

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	522
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Moyra Evans
Headteacher	Heather Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01503 262625
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