

Inspection of Mullion School

Meaver Road, Mullion, Helston, Cornwall TR12 7EB

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Michelle Dunleavy. This school is part of Truro and Penwith Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jennifer Blunden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anita Firth. There is also a trust secondary school improvement lead, Jan Woodhouse, who is responsible for this school and four others.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Mullion School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be members of Mullion's learning community. They are positive about the opportunities available to develop their interests and talents. Curriculum planning is ambitious, broad and balanced. Expectations are typically high, so pupils try their hardest and take pride in their work. Pupils achieve very well, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged.

Mullion School has been through a recent period of change. New leaders recognise that standards in learning and behaviour slipped and have taken rapid and effective action. As a result, the school is already improving. Pupils interact and conduct themselves positively. Lessons are generally calm and orderly. However, some low-level disruption still occurs. Most staff deal with this effectively, although some inconsistency remains.

Pupils feel happy and safe at school. They learn what bullying is and know how to report concerns. A few pupils use derogatory language towards others. However, since the change in leadership, the school is aware that this happens and determined to eradicate it. A revised programme of education has been introduced and responses to incidents are now more robust. Pupils recognise that, on the rare occasions it happens, it is now dealt with properly.

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

Mullion is a strong and improving school. Trust and school leaders have worked together determinedly to turn around a previous decline in standards. They have a clear vision for excellent and inclusive provision. They have raised expectations, stabilised the ship and improved the school systematically. Staff, like pupils, are proud to be a part of this close community. Many are now recognising the benefits of being part of an effective trust. As a result, the curriculum has improved and pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance are returning to their pre-pandemic strength.

The school has redesigned and strengthened the curriculum. Subject leadership has been prioritised. This has helped raise expectations and ensure learning is sequenced sensibly. Teachers utilise this planning to promote pupils' learning across subjects in meaningful ways. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, remember relevant knowledge and achieve well.

Nevertheless, there is more to do. New approaches to implementing the curriculum and managing behaviour are widely understood and often practised securely. However, sometimes inconsistencies in their application remain. For example, recent improvements to the way pupils are supported to remember key knowledge are used better in some subjects than in others. Trust strategies to improve attendance have led to a halving in the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent. However,

although attendance overall is improving, the school has rightly recognised this could still be better.

Reading is appropriately prioritised. The school has established purposeful and enjoyable ways for pupils to experience books, stories and other texts. The school has carefully planned approaches that ensure pupils' cultural capital and understanding of diversity are improved. Pupils' reading ability is assessed carefully. From this the school adapts provision to meet pupils' specific needs, as well as provide targeted intervention for pupils who need it. As a result, pupils' reading improves. Many learn to love books and use the greater opportunities provided by the repurposed library.

Pupils' wider development is promoted well. Leaders ensure that all learning and extra-curricular activities are accessible to all pupils. For example, pupils appreciate the range of clubs and trips and the chance to improve their talents through the performing arts. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is stimulated effectively through regular school celebrations and events.

Recent changes to the careers programme have improved the quality of advice and guidance that pupils receive, which had slipped during the pandemic. However, the school rightly recognises there is more to do in monitoring the impact of this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Improvements to the curriculum are new and embedding. There is some variation in how these improvements are implemented, which means pupils learn better in some subjects than others. The trust should continue to strengthen the implementation of the curriculum so that pupils achieve well across all subjects.
- New expectations for how behaviour should be managed are not yet consistently applied. This means that occasionally expectations are higher in some parts of the school than in others. The trust should continue to strengthen the implementation of these policies so that low-level disruption is minimised.
- The school's careers programme is not as strong as it should be. In particular, pupils have only recently received careers advice early enough and there are too few links to local employers. Leaders should continue to improve the quality of careers advice so that pupils are well informed about their next steps.

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	143993
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10288218
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	568
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anita Firth
Headteacher	Michelle Dunleavy
Website	http://www.mullionschool.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Mullion School converted to become an academy school in June 2017. When its predecessor school, which had the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged outstanding.
- When the school converted to an academy it was part of another multi-academy trust called Southerly Point Cooperative Multi Academy Trust. In January 2023, the school changed hands and became part of Truro and Penwith Academy Trust.
- Since the predecessor school's last inspection, there have been four changes to the headteacher.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 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, both deputy headteachers, three assistant headteachers and both special educational needs coordinators. They also spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer, director of education and the secondary school improvement lead from the Trust, the chair of the board of trustees and three representatives from the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and the performing arts. 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.
- 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 Parent View questionnaire and free-text responses. They also reviewed responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluations, the school improvement plan, reports provided by external consultants, minutes of the board and from the governing body and information about the school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Anna Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Sargeant	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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