

Port Isaac Academy

Address: Mayfield Road, Port Isaac, Cornwall, PL29 3RT

Unique reference number (URN): 149681

Inspection report: 21 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	● ● ●
Needs attention	● ● ● ●
Urgent improvement	

✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have a robust and rigorous approach to attendance. Regular monitoring ensures that trends and patterns are well understood and appropriate support is in place for pupils and families. Where there are ongoing concerns, the school takes swift action. For a small number of pupils whose attendance is below the national average, the school has taken the appropriate action to improve this quickly doing all that they reasonably can. Some reasons behind lower attendance are beyond the school's control. This impacts negatively on published attendance data.

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' behaviour, particularly around promoting more positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have risen to these high expectations and show readiness to learn from the very start of the school day. They know the routines well and what is expected of them. This begins in the early years where children engage well with their learning when listening on the carpet. Staff act as positive role models and implement the school's behaviour policy consistently well. Bullying is not an issue, and any concerns are dealt with quickly.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise children in the early years getting off to a secure start to their education. The school's revised curriculum sets out clearly what children should learn across the seven areas of learning. This curriculum is underpinned by the development of communication and language alongside a love of reading.

Warm and positive relationships between staff and children ensures that the children feel safe and well cared for, including those that are new to the school. Staff know children well. They check carefully how well children are learning and support them to keep up with the ambition of the curriculum. Learning is celebrated with parents and carers so that they are involved in their child's educational journey.

Staff provide well-designed activities to deepen understanding across the seven areas of learning. Staff generally provide meaningful interactions that extend vocabulary, as well as ensuring that children sing songs and recount rhymes to support their communication and language. Children are supported to be independent, and they confidently access their learning showing high levels of engagement.

Children get off to a positive start in learning to read. This is prioritised from the start of Reception Year. Any pupils who make slower progress are identified and supported quickly. This helps them to be generally prepared for Year 1.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has a well-considered programme to support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This is underpinned by the personal, social, health and education curriculum as well as wider opportunities for pupils to become responsible and active citizens. The school

has considered its coastal location and given pupils the skills they need to be prepared for life outside of school, such as securing a deeper understanding of water safety to keep themselves safe in their village. This is supported further with swimming lessons, 'beach school' and visitors such as the 'Royal National Lifeboat Institution'.

Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They understand the importance of healthy relationships. Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the relationships, sex and health education curriculum, such as how their bodies will change as they get older.

Pupils know their voice matters, such as through pupil leadership roles as house captains or ambassadors. They have a say in the clubs that are on offer to develop their talents and interests. Pupils vote and agree on these to deepen their understanding of democracy. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The school tracks pupils' participation to ensure that barriers to attendance are identified and supported. This enables all pupils to benefit from the school's offer, including those who are disadvantaged.

Pupils value the experiences they have that go beyond the classroom. They enjoy trips, such as to London, to develop their understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils are taught about different faiths and cultures. However, some pupils do not have the depth of knowledge that leaders intend.

Pupils value the support in place for their wellbeing. They know that any adult will help them if they have concerns, including through sharing any worries in the 'worry monster'.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

There is too much variability in how well some pupils learn the curriculum. They struggle to remember what they have learned and how this links to their previous learning. Leaders are taking steps to address this, such as through refining the teaching approach of number fluency to improve pupils' performance in the multiplication tables check. However, it is early days. Some pupils struggle to recall an appropriate depth of knowledge across the curriculum and so they are less well prepared for their next stage of learning.

Phonics is a strength, as reflected in published outcomes over time. Leaders have prioritised improving writing, particularly with accuracy and fluency in early years and in key stage 1. This support is helping more pupils to write well. However, pupils who struggle with writing, including those in key stage 2, do not receive support quickly enough. As a result, weaknesses in handwriting, spelling and punctuation persist, and the quality of some pupils written work across subjects is not of high quality.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to historic weaknesses in the teaching of the curriculum. While staff are taking steps to identify and support these, some pupils do not

learn the curriculum well. The school has developed a new curriculum with support from the trust to better meet the needs of mixed-aged classes. This makes it clearer for staff about what to teach and when ensuring that new learning builds on what pupils have learned before. However, some subjects are in their infancy and the way the curriculum is taught and learned continues to be variable.

The school has worked on the lesson design to improve pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils revisit previous learning at the start of lessons to remember this better in the long term. Some checks staff make on how well pupils learn across the curriculum lack precision. As a result, pupils repeat misconceptions or are not deepening their understanding of new learning well enough. This includes some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities where gaps in knowledge are not routinely supported with adaptations that reduce barriers to learning.

The school prioritises pupils learning to read quickly. Staff have developed their expertise to ensure that pupils learn to read well. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know using their knowledge of sounds well to decode and blend unknown words successfully.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The school has systems in place to identify barriers to learning that pupils may face. This starts in the early years, such as with language assessments to identify and support any gaps in speech and language. However, the support for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is variable. This is because some learning plans lack a sharp, timely focus on closing gaps in knowledge. Leaders do not have an accurate oversight of how well some pupils with SEND achieve. They do not check the impact of planned support well enough, particularly for pupils with cognition and learning needs. Staff have had training to support pupils with SEND, particularly for pupils with more complex needs. Even so, staff do not adapt learning to meet some pupils' needs well enough and so their progress through the curriculum stalls.

Leaders check more carefully the provision in place for pupils with an education, health and care plan as well as those with social, emotional and mental health needs. They work effectively with external agencies to ensure that these pupils get the support they need to access the curriculum and engage in their learning.

The school uses additional funding effectively to support pupils who are disadvantaged. For example, additional resources have been purchased to support reading so that these pupils learn to read well.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Since the school joined the trust, leaders have guided the school through a period of change. The trust has provided effective support for the school to navigate staffing and leadership changes, as well as changes in class structure. However, due to the significant number of areas that need improving, it has been challenging for leaders to address all of these effectively. Leaders recognise that the continued variability in how well pupils are learning limits the school's improvement journey.

Leaders have taken steps to address historic, profound weaknesses in the school across a range of areas. The school has benefitted from trust subject experts to support its development, such as in the implementation of a new curriculum. Leaders' work has had an impact in supporting key aspects of the school, such as in the improvement of pupils' attitudes to learning as well as in ensuring that children get off to a positive start in the early years.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's direction, valuing the support for their workload and wellbeing. They appreciate the training they receive to teach the curriculum, such as in the teaching of phonics.

Those responsible for governance have an accurate understanding of the school. They use this knowledge to ensure the school benefits from the right support and resources at the right time. They carry out their statutory duties effectively and hold leaders to account for driving improvement.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. They trust leaders to manage any concerns. They praise the improvements of the school and hold staff in high regard for the impact of their work so far.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school where everyone is included. Leaders have made bringing the school together a priority. This has helped pupils to have a deep sense of belonging at Port Isaac where they value being part of the school community. This view is echoed by parents and carers. Pupils develop warm, positive relationships with staff that helps them to feel safe and well looked after. Pupils are confident that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns.

Children in the early years get off to a positive start. However, further up the school, pupils do not learn the curriculum as well. Leaders have acted quickly since the school joined the trust to support a period of staff turbulence and to take steps to address historic weaknesses. New leaders, including the head of school and executive headteacher, have identified the improvements needed and taken steps to address these. Their focus on improving pupils' behaviour has resulted in a calm and orderly school where pupils behave well and want to learn. However, some changes that have been introduced are recent and so there has not been enough time to see the impact on pupils' learning. As a result, many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, lack the knowledge and skills they need.

Pupils are kind towards each other and bullying is not a concern for them. They enjoy social times where the older pupils play well with younger pupils. For example, older pupils show real care towards the youngest children in early years when they choose to play football. Pupils value the trips to enhance the curriculum, such as whole school theatre visits and residential.

Next steps

- Leaders, including the trust, need to continue to provide robust support and challenge of the school checking the impact of this work so that this leads to rapid and sustained improvements.
 - Leaders should develop staff expertise in supporting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and check with rigour that curriculum adaptations and targeted support closely match what pupils need to learn the curriculum securely.
 - Leaders should raise expectations further of what pupils can achieve and ensure staff check carefully how well pupils are learning the curriculum so that pupils build their knowledge securely across subjects.
 - Leaders need to ensure that pupils with significant gaps in handwriting, spelling and punctuation are given the support they need to become accurate and fluent writers across the curriculum.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Cornwall Education Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Dan Morrow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sally Foard.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, head of school, trust leaders including the CEO and school staff. The lead inspector met the chair of the trust board.

Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, and spoke to some parents. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school joined Cornwall Education Learning trust in May 2023.

The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. At the time of the inspection, there were 53 pupils on roll that were taught in two mixed-age classes.

The current executive headteacher and head of school took up their posts in September 2025.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Esther Best, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Sophie Hillson, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

53

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

72

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

26.53%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.00%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.75%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	62%	S
2023/24 (final)	33%	61%	Below
2022/23		60%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	75%	S
2023/24 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	72%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	74%	S
2023/24 (final)	44%	73%	Below
2022/23		73%	

'S' in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

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Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23		79%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	3.4%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	14.6%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.6%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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