

Pool Academy

Address: Church Road, Pool, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 3PZ

Unique reference number (URN): 136614

Inspection report: 3 March 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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' achievement is improving securely over time. Outcomes in national examinations have risen recently and most pupils' current work shows that this positive trend is being sustained. Most pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders have acted decisively to improve pupils' learning and pupils now move through the curriculum with increasing confidence and success. Disadvantaged pupils achieve broadly in line with similar pupils nationally, and the gap between them and their peers in school is narrowing.

Across the school, pupils secure the essential knowledge and skills they need, particularly in reading, communication and mathematics. Where gaps in reading emerge, staff act promptly and effectively. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen pupils' acquisition of more-complex knowledge by ensuring that teachers check understanding consistently across all subjects. Overall, the achievement of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, and those known to children's social care, is rising steadily.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and well-informed understanding of the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Their monitoring identifies inconsistencies quickly, enabling timely support and effective professional development for staff. The curriculum is carefully constructed with key knowledge broken down into a clear sequence. This clarity helps teachers understand what to teach and when. Pupils generally learn the curriculum well. Consistent teaching routines, including the use of curriculum booklets, support pupils to learn with confidence.

Teachers know their pupils well and many adapt their teaching appropriately, which helps most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to learn successfully. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they explain their subjects clearly. In a few areas of the curriculum, teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding. As a result, they do not adapt their teaching effectively to address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders ensure that pupils who need additional help are identified quickly, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Pupils at the early stage of reading receive appropriate support to develop their reading fluency and comprehension skills. Pupils benefit from a well-planned approach to developing their enjoyment of reading. Through the curriculum, pupils are supported to extend their conceptual understanding through opportunities to write extended responses.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school provides a thoughtfully constructed programme for pupils' personal development, which is woven through the curriculum and a range of wider opportunities. This programme supports pupils' social, spiritual, moral and cultural development. The relationships, sex and health education programme is delivered effectively. It provides pupils

with the knowledge they need to navigate relationships, stay safe when online and understand the world around them.

Pupils learn about citizenship and the importance of the rule of law, democracy and freedom of speech in modern Britain. They learn about the importance of respect and tolerance and take part in voting for representatives to the school council. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, can access the personal development programme. For example, leaders track participation in clubs and extra-curricular activities closely.

A wide range of enrichment activities enables pupils to explore their interests and talents in sport, music, the arts and drama. For example, pupils enthusiastically staged and performed in a recent fashion show. The school's careers programme is well established. Pupils gain a secure understanding of future pathways in education, employment and apprenticeships.

Pastoral support for pupils is effective. Staff provide tailored support and spaces for pupils' emotional and well-being needs. For instance, the 'Lowen room' provides a calm space where staff can tailor support for vulnerable pupils.

Needs attention ●

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention ●

A minority of pupils do not meet leaders' expectations for behaviour and these pupils can be disruptive, particularly when they are out of lessons. Although most lessons are calm and orderly, too many pupils behave poorly in corridors and around the school. Leaders' work to improve behaviour is underway and has led to some early improvements, but inconsistencies in how staff apply the behaviour policy limit its overall impact. These inconsistencies contribute to pupils' perceptions of unfairness, which in turn affects their attitudes to school and their willingness to engage.

Leaders have recognised that pupils under-report concerns about bullying and have recently introduced new approaches to address their concerns. These approaches are at an early stage and their impact is not yet clear. While the number of suspensions and sanctions has begun to fall, it remains too high. Too many pupils continue to receive repeated sanctions. Some pupils do not understand fully the purpose of the behaviour policy, which reduces its effectiveness in supporting their personal development and shaping positive attitudes.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of attendance patterns. They analyse information closely and intervene to remove barriers, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Attendance is improving, including for pupils who are persistently or severely absent.

Inclusion

Needs attention ●

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils' needs accurately. Leaders ensure that appropriate support is put in

place promptly for those with the highest needs, using specialist advice where appropriate. Leaders use a clear, graduated approach that is generally effective. They regularly review the impact of support and refine it where needed. Staff are trained well to use both generalised and specific strategies to support pupils with SEND in the classroom.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies to support pupils known to children's social care and ensure that they receive the right support at the right time. Clear communication between staff ensures that pupils' needs are reviewed frequently and support is adjusted accordingly. Leaders allocate pupil premium funding appropriately and evaluate its impact. As a result, many disadvantaged pupils show improvement in their engagement, achievements and attendance.

Despite this positive work, a significant minority of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are not supported well enough to improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Some of these pupils spend too much time out of lessons due to their behaviour, missing crucial learning. The support to help these pupils to catch up with missed learning is not currently having the desired impact. Overall, the school uses alternative provision in the best interests of pupils.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders have identified the right priorities for improving pupils' behaviour. The actions leaders have taken have secured improvements over time. Governors and trustees understand their strategic responsibilities. However, there is more that needs to be done. Leaders would benefit from increased scrutiny of the impact that behaviour policies are having on pupils' day-to-day experiences. Inconsistencies in how staff apply the behaviour policy persist. Leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of how these inconsistencies affect some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils.

Beyond behaviour, leaders have a secure grasp of the school's wider strengths and areas for development. They act with purpose to strengthen the curriculum and teaching across both key stages. Staff overwhelmingly feel valued and well supported. Leaders are mindful of the workload and well-being of staff. The professional development programme is increasingly effective, helping staff to understand the school's teaching approach and expectations. Leaders support staff effectively to understand the needs of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, these pupils' achievements are improving.

Leaders are reflective and responsive to the emerging needs of pupils. However, leaders have not been successful in communicating the positive developments at the school to some parents, who continue to hold negative views about the school despite some recent improvements.

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

The school has undergone a period of change in recent years. As a result, many pupils have a positive experience in the school. They feel safe. Pupils generally enjoy learning. They

benefit from a curriculum that is increasingly ambitious, carefully planned and delivered through engaging lessons. Those who attend regularly achieve well because they gain the knowledge they need to move to the next stage of their education. Many pupils feel valued as individuals. Staff know the pupils well and there is a range of provision on offer to help pupils overcome barriers to learning and personal development.

Although most pupils behave sensibly in lessons, a significant minority do not meet the school's behaviour expectations in corridors and around the school. Some pupils are unsure of the rationale for certain rules, and staff do not apply them consistently. This inconsistency leads to pupils' perceptions of unfairness, which in turn causes some pupils to disengage from learning. Some disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities spend too much time out of lessons and therefore miss the well-planned curriculum. This limits their learning. As a result, these pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and do not achieve as well as they should. Many pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff and other pupils. However, some pupils report that bullying is an ongoing concern that is not resolved as effectively as it should be.

Pupils benefit from a rich personal development programme that helps them broaden their interests and build their character. They can take part in a range of enrichment opportunities such as annual trips to Valencia and Berlin. Pupils also learn about local and national career pathways, helping them to make informed decisions about their future education, training or employment. Learning about different cultures and faiths helps pupils develop greater inclusivity and respect for others.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and as intended, so that pupils develop a secure and shared understanding of what constitutes appropriate behaviour.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils who face barriers to learning are supported to improve their behaviour successfully over time and, when learning is missed, are able to catch up quickly with their peers.
 - Leaders should ensure that the recently introduced anti-bullying strategy is implemented consistently and effectively so that pupils' concerns about bullying are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently check pupils' understanding to identify misconceptions and adapt their teaching as necessary.
 - Leaders should ensure that when new policies and practices are reviewed, actions to adapt or improve current practice are swift and have measurable impact and are subject to suitable challenge from governors and trustees.
 - Leaders should actively seek the views of parents and ensure that changes to the school are clearly communicated so that all parents have confidence in the work of the school.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Athena 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, Ben Parnell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Elaine Marshall.

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

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

The inspection started on 3 March 2026. Inspectors returned on 30 March 2026 to gather additional evidence in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections>).

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the chief executive officer of the academy trust, the director of education and school improvement lead for the academy trust and other school leaders. An inspector held a telephone discussion with an officer from the local authority. An inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors and the chair of the board of trustees.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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.

The school makes use of 9 alternative provisions, including 6 that are unregistered. An inspector visited a selection of these provisions.

Headteacher: Nick Ward

Lead inspector:

Annabel Davies, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Aykin, His Majesty's Inspector

Lee Sargeant, Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Lee, Ofsted Inspector

Nadine Lapskas, Ofsted Inspector

Paul Williams, 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 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

681

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,050

Close to 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

29.52%

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: 28.9%

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

3.38%

Close to 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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.68%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above 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

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	37.9%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.1%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.3%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	41.8	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36.7	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	37.9	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.59	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.81	-0.03	Below

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	16.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	21.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	20.0%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	34.7	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	29.7	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.4	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.89	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.12	-0.57	Below

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	21.4%	53.1%	-31.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	20.0%	52.4%	-32.4 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	34.7	50.4	-15.7
2023/24 (final)	29.7	50.0	-20.3
2022/23 (final)	32.4	50.3	-17.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.89	0.16	-1.06
2022/23 (final)	-1.12	0.17	-1.29

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	89%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	88%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	94%	Average

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%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	12.0%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.8%	9.0%	Above

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)	23.9%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	37.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	41.9%	26.5%	Above

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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