

Richard Lander School

Higher Besore Rd, Truro, Cornwall, TR3 6LT

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The school is well led by the headteacher and senior teachers. The governing body provides the school's leaders with appropriate challenge and support to ensure that there is a drive for improvement.
- There has been a strong focus to maintain the good quality of teaching. This ensures that students typically achieve well, particularly in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history.
- The middle leadership of the school has been systematically strengthened; they share the high ambitions of the senior leaders.
- The school's range of subjects taught is broad and balanced and offers an opportunity to gain a wide range of qualifications.
- Most students achieve well in English.
- Students gain the highest GCSE grades (A* and A) across a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, humanities, science and arts subjects.
- 'The Ark' resource provision is very effective in helping disabled students and those who have complex and severe learning difficulties to make progress.
- Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is exceptionally good and they make very good progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged students receive tailored support so they make good progress as a result.
- The conduct and behaviour of students is good and they are keen to do well. The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. As a result, the school is highly inclusive and there is a very strong community spirit.
- The school offers a huge range of extra-curricular activities, including expressive arts, sports and physical education.
- Students make visits to a range of places, including France, Spain, the USA and Africa. The annual activities week offers students the chance to experience a wide range of events.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching does not always ensure that students have tasks that match their abilities. This means some make less progress than they should.
- Teaching does not always ensure that students' work is systematically checked to see if they improve their work.
- Students are not always confident to tackle class-based activities on their own.
- Some disadvantaged students make less progress than they should.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 37 lessons. In addition, inspectors made other short visits to lessons and looked at the school's unit providing for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Visits were also made to tutor-time sessions. Senior staff accompanied inspectors on some visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, teachers and representative groups of students. Informal conversations were held with students around the school between lesson times. One inspector had a discussion with the headteacher of the local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). An inspector had a conversation with a representative of the local authority. One inspector listened to individual students reading aloud and talked to students about their reading.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work to judge the rate of progress and the quality of the assessment and marking processes. They also looked at progress information, documents about the school's development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of staff training were also scrutinized.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 210 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View. Information from a small number of letters and other communications received from parents and carers were considered. All members of staff were invited to contribute their views in a questionnaire and 51 responses were received and taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Chiquita Henson	Additional Inspector
Justine Hocking	Additional Inspector
Judith Long	Additional Inspector
Kevin Wright	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Richard Lander School is larger than the average-sized secondary school for students between the ages of 11 and 16. Most students move to the school from 10 local primary schools. There is very close working between Richard Lander School and these local primary schools. This includes sports, literacy and numeracy activities, modern foreign languages and expressive arts.
- The school has a local authority resource known as 'The ARK' for disabled students and those who have complex and severe learning difficulties. This resource provision has 15 places and is currently full.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above the national average.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. Very few students do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is about a sixth of the students on roll, which is below the national average. This is additional funding to support students eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- In Years 7 and 8, about a seventh of students benefit from additional help in mathematics and English, funded by the government's catch-up premium.
- The school has extensive facilities for sports and these are used by the local community after school hours.
- The school currently has International Schools status, Artsmark Gold status, Sportsmark status, Dyslexia Friendly status and the Education Business Excellence award. It also has Specialist Technology status.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students are educated off site for part of the week at Truro College or Duchy College, Rosewarne. Currently a few students are educated full time at Glynn House in Truro which is a Pupil Referral Unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that all students learn exceptionally well by:
 - ensuring that activities set for students are matched to their needs and prior learning so that they are actively engaged in tasks which are not too easy or too difficult
 - helping students develop their own learning skills and increase their capacity for independence and resilience so that they have the highest love of learning and thirst for knowledge
 - systematically checking that students act on the advice they are given and subsequently assessing their development of understanding.
- Extend the successful help undertaken with older students who are disadvantaged to rapidly close the gaps in progress with other students nationally and achieve as well as they are able.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school well. He is dedicated to the school's stated aim of 'helping students become the best they can be'. Other senior staff and members of the governing body provide very good support to the headteacher. Together they have shown determination in working to raise standards throughout the school. The school's capacity to improve in the future is good.
- The whole school community is united and ambitious for the students of the school; this was clearly witnessed by inspectors in a meeting of all staff. The school's leadership is endorsed by the staff. The responses to staff questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive, and inspectors noted that morale is very high.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. There has been a focus on driving up standards so that the outcomes for most groups of students have improved over time. Leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to make further improvements, and teachers are offered support where it is needed. The further training of teachers is matched to their particular needs and to strengthening their skills.
- Throughout the school, it is clear that students are expected to behave safely and well and to take responsibility for their actions; this approach successfully promotes very good behaviour.
- The school undertakes detailed analyses of its performance in all areas and makes careful plans for further improvements in the light of these findings. Inspectors fully endorsed the school's self-evaluation.
- The school recognises that its use of additional government funding for disadvantaged students was not always used effectively in helping them to catch up quickly with their peers. There has been a significant change in approach. The school's current actions are bringing about rapid improvement in the progress being made by nearly all disadvantaged students.
- The leadership and management of the school's resource provision for disabled students and those who have complex and severe learning difficulties are extremely effective.
- There is a focus on the community aspects of the school and importance is given to ensuring that there is equality of opportunity and any sources of potential discrimination are removed. Relationships within the school and between the school and the wider community are very good.
- The school's leadership has worked systematically to strengthen middle leadership over recent years. This has taken some time to achieve, but now improvements throughout the school are evident and students are making more rapid progress as a result of changes made.
- The range of subjects offered to students is broad and balanced. It facilitates a particularly wide range of options for students to gain qualifications. In Key Stage 4, students may follow routes, which include fundamental subjects such as English, mathematics and science alongside qualifications to suit their abilities and aspirations for future employment.
- Excellent attention is given to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have good awareness about the importance of democracy and life in modern British society. They have opportunities to visit other places in this country, and there are regular exchange visits to the USA, France and Spain. During the inspection, a large number of students participated in the local celebration to mark Saint Piran's Day, which included contributions by musicians and male voice choirs to the events in Truro Cathedral. Inspectors were impressed with the level of participation and the outgoing confidence clearly displayed by participants, alongside the obvious pride in local history and culture.
- The school has formed strong links with a community in Uganda and each year a small number of students are able to make a visit which involves community project work in the Ugandan schools. There are also links to a community in Nigeria.
- Creative arts of all types are offered as extra-curricular activities. They includes a range of school productions and concerts and involvement in a variety of local events and festivals of art, drama, music, dance and photography. The school holds Artsmark Gold status. Physical education (PE) and sport are another strong feature of the school's extra-curricular programme and students demonstrate success at many levels. The school holds the Sportsmark status. There is an active Environment Club and the school Gardening Club contributes to numerous local events. The school holds the Eco-School award, and students take active steps to protect the environment.
- The school has in place a clear policy to promote good literacy skills and the success is evident. Close attention is given to the use of good English and to technical and subject-related language.
- The school's arrangements for the safeguarding of students meet all statutory requirements. Systems are robust and given the highest priority, and include the regular and appropriate training of staff.
- The school works well with other agencies, including the local authority, and has responded positively to the good support given to it.

- The school works closely with other providers to ensure that the students who attend courses at other centres have good attendance and behaviour and that they make good progress.
- Students of all ages are encouraged to plan and act for their futures. The school has been recognised for its work with the Investors in Careers award. Older students have clear and impartial advice and access to information to allow them to make decisions about their future training and education. This process is highly effective and almost without exception, students make successful transitions to the next stage of their life.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body works very closely with senior staff. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and its impact on learning as they have regular meetings with the school's leaders. Individual governors are linked to departments in the school and they make regular visits to see their work. The governing body also has access to experts outside the school's own staff to ensure that they can fully scrutinize information about the school's performance and evaluate the school's progress; they are well aware about its relative strengths and weaknesses. The governing body challenges school leaders and has been instrumental in helping the school maintain its effectiveness.
- The governing body plays an active part in checks on staff performance for the most senior leaders. Their oversight of how well teachers' performance is managed helps ensure that their salary progression is related to students' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Governors check the school's finances and make sure that funds, particularly for pupil premium students, are used to raise standards. The governing body works hard to engage the families of students so that their views help to inform its decisions. The governing body fully meets its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Students have consistently positive attitudes to all aspects of learning, which has a constructive impact on their learning across all subjects. Younger representative students told an inspector that they particularly enjoy learning in art, technology and PE. However, not all students are confident to work independently or at length. Some students do not always fully stick with a task until it is completed.
- Students wear their uniform smartly and report promptly to lessons with the correct equipment. They cooperate well with staff and each other, and lessons flow smoothly without undue interruptions. Low-level disruption is very uncommon, and if it occurs, is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Students are proud of their school, their own work and their achievements. The buildings and facilities are respected by all users; for example, there was a total absence of litter on the school site.
- Persistent absence of some students at the school is slightly above the national average. The school has addressed this by making changes to the way it follows up absences and this is showing a positive impact.
- When moving around the school during break and lunchtime, students conduct themselves very well with only minimal staff intervention being necessary. The students enjoy the opportunity to spend some leisure time together; positive and responsible use is made of the school's facilities.
- The school has a well-developed rewards and celebration system to promote good conduct. Good behaviour has been a consistent feature of the school over many years, confirmed by the school's records, which appropriately log and monitor any incidents.
- The partial and appropriate integration of students from the special educational needs base with other students encourages an ethos of tolerance and respect; the approach is highly beneficial to all members of the community.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students, their parents and carers and school staff all firmly agree that the school provides a highly safe environment.
- Students are extremely knowledgeable about different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They are given very clear and highly practical advice about how they may keep themselves safe. As a result, they understand the risks and are active in taking steps to minimise them. They know how to seek help if they need it and told inspectors that they are totally confident that if a

matter is reported to the school, it will be dealt with effectively and quickly. Staff and parents and carers endorsed this view.

- The school's student support team gives very effective support and guidance for all students, responding to the various needs of different users. Students know that they can access support and guidance to help them to be safe and successful, and have high confidence in the support they have.
- Students who attend other centres have all aspects of their safety and well-being monitored to ensure that they receive the same high standards of care.

The quality of teaching is good

- The school has given focused attention to improving the consistency of the quality of teaching. Evidence that teaching is typically good was seen across a wide range of subjects and in different year groups from students' work, from discussions with them and the school's progress information. This is reflected in the rapid progress being made by most students. There was close agreement about the quality of learning taking place, observed jointly by senior school staff and inspectors.
- The leadership of teaching has been resolute in bringing about improvements where needed. There is a culture of good professional dialogue between teachers and senior staff. Consolidation and improvements have been seen in many areas, further adding to the good practice evident in other areas. The development of 'coaching triangles', with teachers at different stages working in groups of three to help each other, has had a positive impact.
- In most subjects, there is clear evidence of detailed lesson planning and the matching of tasks to students' abilities. In many lessons, checks on students' progress contribute to their good learning. Marking and guidance to students are good in many subjects where students have clear advice about how they should improve their work to gain higher grades. This is not yet fully the case for all students and there is some inconsistency across subjects. In some subjects, students do not know how to make their work better, or they do not respond to the advice of their teachers and this can slow down learning.
- Some of the best learning takes place when teachers check that students' understanding is secure, such as through well-directed questions. If necessary, tasks are reshaped so that students are confident before they move on.
- Students are set individual and challenging targets, which are designed to raise their expectations. The more able students are challenged consistently to achieve highly.
- A rewards structure for students is linked to success in academic work and to recognise other successes. Students earn points, which can be converted to tangible rewards. Inspectors were very impressed to learn that in many cases, students decide to convert their rewards into cash donations to support their chosen charities.
- Very effective attention has been given to ensuring the success of disabled students and those with special educational needs. There is detailed assessment of the needs of these students and a wide range of strategies to help them. The ARK is very well equipped to deal with their special requirements. There is effective deployment of teachers and teaching assistants who work in a variety of ways with the students.
- The work of the ARK is further strengthened by sessions run by other experts, for example, during the inspection a tailored fitness session was greatly enjoyed by the students.
- The school makes determined efforts to help students develop their skills in mathematics, literacy and communication. For example, in a science lesson, students were skilled in pronouncing an unfamiliar term to become more confident about the use of the technical vocabulary. The school's library is a well-used resource to encourage development of reading skills.
- Teachers regularly set homework which complements the tasks completed in lessons and has a positive impact on students' achievement.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards which are consistently equal to or better than the national average in both English and mathematics.
- Students generally make good progress through the school. Occasionally, students' progress in English is not as rapid as that in mathematics. The progress made in English has not always been consistent for different groups, as some with average starting points in Key Stage 2 do not make as much progress as they should. Progress in mathematics has been consistently good for all students from their starting points.
- Inspectors observed that improvements in teaching are now bringing about more rapid progress by

students throughout the school.

- Throughout the school the most able students make particularly rapid progress. In English and mathematics, the proportion who gain GCSE A* and A grades is above the national average. In the 2014 national tests, the proportion of candidates who gained the highest GCSE grades was significantly better than average in mathematics, geography, history, French, Spanish, drama, psychology and sciences.
- The school's range of subjects taught offers the most able students many opportunities to excel in their academic studies, for example the most able linguists study two modern languages from Year 8, and triple science GCSE is available in Key Stage 4. The examination results in humanities, modern foreign languages and technologies are consistently strong.
- For those with the appropriate aptitude and aspirations, the school makes provision for the study of a range of vocational qualifications with good success rates.
- Disadvantaged students have help to catch up, but in the past, the school has not always been as successful as it could be in reducing the gaps in achievement between these students and their peers in English and mathematics. In 2014, there was a gap in English of nearly one and a half GCSE grades for disadvantaged students compared to the school's other students. In the same year, there was a slightly smaller gap of just over one grade in mathematics. Compared to other students nationally, the gap for GCSE English in 2014 and 2013 was about one grade, and for mathematics, the gap was just over one grade in 2013, narrowing to just under a grade in 2014.
- The school's approach to helping disadvantaged students has been modified so that now these students are given more direct assistance. For some current Year 11 students, this has included early entry for GCSE English and GCSE mathematics. The GCSE grades gained by these groups show that the disadvantaged students, and those students with lower starting points from Key Stage 2, have made more rapid progress and the gaps are now closing rapidly. Inspectors judged that in lessons, students through the school eligible for additional funding were making progress similar to that of other students in the school.
- Where students have taken GCSE examinations early in Year 11, they will be offered an opportunity to resit the examinations, though the school is clear that this does not limit the potential for any students.
- The younger students eligible for catch-up funding are given focused help, for example with phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help with reading skills. In mathematics, extra work helps these students to catch up on weak skills.
- The school has very close links with local primary schools to aid the smooth move into the school. The students benefit from very thorough liaison between the schools. Preparation work includes early learning in modern foreign languages, expressive arts and sports activities.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs within the main school are given good support so that they achieve well across subjects.
- Students in the ARK special resource provision make exceptional progress from their various starting points.
- The students in alternative provision make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. Almost without exception they are able to progress into further training and employment. Students are very well prepared for the next stages of their education and training; almost all proceed to further education college while some move directly to apprenticeships.

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	112055
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	449590

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Loosemore
Headteacher	Stephen Mulcahy
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 May 2010
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