

Porthleven School

Address: Torleven Road, Porthleven, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 9BX

Unique reference number (URN): 143996

Inspection report: 20 January 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Porthleven is a happy place in which to work and learn. Pupils' attendance is high, demonstrating their enjoyment of school and learning. They arrive for the school day promptly, prepared, and ready to learn. A range of before-school activities helps pupils make a smooth start to the school day and settle to their learning quickly. Daily active sessions enable those who need to exercise before the calm of the classroom the opportunity to do so. The personalised approaches in place support pupils' high attendance and prepare them effectively for their learning.

Pupils' behaviour is very positive. Incidents of bullying are rare. When they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly. Pupils collectively live out 'The Porthleven Way'. This is based on, 'We are safe. We belong. We are responsible. We Learn. We Can'. This embedded school culture builds a powerful sense of community and belonging. As one pupil said, 'you just fit in like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle'. Enthusiastic attitudes typify learning alongside a strong sense of responsibility. Pupils build deep friendships and enjoy sharing their experiences with each other. 'The Porthleven Way' underpins all aspects of the school's caring, respectful, and supportive environment; making it a community pupils genuinely want to be part of.

Expected standard ●

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Teachers develop pupils' understanding by organising knowledge well. They present information verbally and by using images or diagrams. Regular checks on pupils' learning provide teachers with the information they need to decide what to teach next. Teachers sequence learning using the school's approach of repetition and rehearsal, known in school as 'Practice Makes Permanent'. This helps pupils make connections in their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils receive personalised adaptations. Speech and language development underpins the school's practice and is evident in lessons. External specialists guide staff to develop effective programmes and promote inclusive practices.

The curriculum is rich across all subjects. Leaders emphasise the essential, fundamental building blocks that pupils need to learn new knowledge securely. Thoughtful curriculum design develops pupils' knowledge of place, location, and identity. Content across the curriculum connects the local community to the world beyond. Appealing books stimulate pupils' interests and broaden their horizons.

Phonics training helps staff to make sure more pupils, year on year, close their gaps in knowledge. The teaching of handwriting has improved over time. Pupils' work shows clearer letter formation and the increasing use of joined handwriting, where appropriate. There is

more to do to ensure older pupils can compose pieces of writing at length, with speed and accuracy across all subjects.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders build trusting relationships with children and their parents and carers. Partnership work with the neighbouring nursery provision ensures swift support for children's learning and wellbeing when they join the school. Adults check children's knowledge at the start of the Reception Year. They structure activities and plan teaching to enable children to overcome academic, social, or physical barriers. For example, creating animals from playdough supports gaps identified to strengthen children's physical skills. This helps them subsequently to hold pencils, colouring pens and paint brushes correctly. By the end of the early years, children develop the knowledge they need for their next steps.

Carefully chosen books, such as 'Little Rabbit Foo Foo', promote children's language development alongside their knowledge from wider aspects of the curriculum, for example farm animals. Purposefully connected activities help children learn important moral lessons and about feelings from this and other stories. Other learning opportunities are enhanced by visitors, such as from a police community support officer. This stimulates children's vocabulary and play.

Children thrive in the early years because of the quality of the learning opportunities and high-quality interactions with adults. Precise phonics teaching ensures that all pupils acquire the knowledge needed to decode simple words. Children work successfully on their own, in groups or with adults, in preparation for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Porthleven is an inclusive school. Leaders' knowledge of pupils and their families means the oversight for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is comprehensive and effective. Staff typically use their training knowledge well to deliver strategies that usually reduce barriers to learning. Adult feedback generally helps pupils to overcome some of their personal and academic challenges. Occasionally, planned activities do not support the precise learning needs of those pupils who have an education, health and care plan.

Leaders plan additional activities and adjust general teaching approaches, so that most pupils acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to achieve academically and personally. Changes to classroom layout and the use of specialist resources all contribute to the delivery of pupils' personalised programmes. All staff work closely together with external professionals and parents and carers to ensure that the needs of pupils are identified swiftly.

Effective use of additional funding enables pupils to achieve, belong and thrive. For example, funding allows pupils to access sport, art or musical clubs. Additional academic support in 2025 ensured that most pupils achieved the standards they were capable of by the end of key stage 2.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils at Porthleven and have high expectations for all. Leaders are successfully driving improvements to key aspects of the school's work. Actions focus on the right priorities, in the correct order. A journey of improvement, starting with pupils' behaviour and setting the right climate for learning, is evident. Leaders rightly focus on 'getting reading right', so that by Year 6 pupils' standards are above the national average.

Leaders act sensibly, understanding that they need to prioritise actions. They do not overburden staff with excessive demands. Consequently, staff feel supported and share leaders' passion for continued improvements. All recognise that there is further work to carry out to continue to raise pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics. Improvement plans are accurate and well-informed. Parents and carers are equally positive about the improvements made at the school.

Leaders across school are knowledgeable. Each of them understands their role and the part they play in driving improvement and overcoming pupils' barriers to learning. Support from the trust is helpful and detailed. Trust leaders identify precise areas for improvement across a range of the school's work. Subject networks and professional development opportunities help to improve staff's subject knowledge. Trustees' detailed understanding of the school's journey is used to challenge and support leaders effectively. Clear reporting arrangements enable the trust board to fulfil their statutory duties and make informed decisions that contribute to the ongoing improvements at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders design activities that help to connect pupils to the wider world. Carefully sequenced content and opportunities expose pupils to ideas and themes beyond the school and the local area. Baking Cornish pasties and comparing them to Italian spaghetti bolognese is one way of developing pupils' awareness of cultural traditions and how they have shaped societies today. Learning about the impact of forest fires on insurance premiums raises pupils' awareness of environmental issues and their impact on economic matters.

Pupils understand the importance of respecting people's similarities and differences, saying, 'differences just don't matter'. They demonstrate a reasonable understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy and different cultures. Pupils' daily interactions with adults and each other show the school values in action.

Staff know pupils and their local context deeply. They adapt curriculum content to mitigate against the risks that isolation can have on mental health, including the overuse of and reliance on social media. Visits from local lifeguards and The Royal National Lifeboat Institution deepen pupils' understanding of beach and water safety and prepare them for the immediate risks around the harbour.

The breadth of connected experiences particularly supports disadvantaged pupils to be successful. Pupils contribute to school life by taking on democratic roles, such as serving as school councillors. The 'trust parliament' provides opportunities to work with other pupils from the 'Crofty family' around concepts such as equality and equity. The buddy system in school teaches older pupils how to have empathy for their younger peers. Participating in

the international Porthleven Food Festival enhances pupils' sense of identity, community and belonging.

Leaders check club attendance to help more pupils benefit from the school's offer of coding, gardening, surfing, or sailing. Educational trips and visits to London broaden horizons and have a positive impact on pupils' personal development.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, standards achieved by pupils in some subjects have been well below those of other pupils nationally. However, while these are starting to improve, particularly for some groups of pupils across school, too many pupils do not achieve well enough from their starting points. Historically, the knowledge and skills that enable pupils to write fluently and use numbers to calculate accurately have not been in place. Leaders have successfully addressed the improvements required in reading to ensure pupils are ready for their next stage in education.

Pupils' knowledge across a range of wider curriculum subjects is not secure. Most remember some recently taught content but often have gaps in their learning. Many pupils need prompts to recall prior learning in detail. In subjects such as geography, pupils are not able to draw on their previous knowledge from mathematics when interpreting graphs and rainfall bar charts.

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

Pupils enter school with smiles on their faces, excited about their day ahead. Pupils proudly represent their school, take their responsibilities seriously and attend very regularly. They are motivated to do their best during independent work, group work or when working as a class.

The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff rarely need to remind pupils to behave well. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities on offer. Older pupils demonstrate a positive influence on the school community when acting as 'buddies' for the younger children.

Pupils' wellbeing is central to the school's work. Leaders ensure that pupils feel happy and safe. Each morning staff check how pupils are feeling. They put in place physical activities or quieter activities in response to this so that all pupils start the day successfully. Pupils know that adults in school will give them the help they need. They know who to go to if they have a worry or concern.

The school is ambitious that all pupils will succeed both personally and academically. Teachers typically put in place the right help for pupils who need it. Occasionally, planned activities do not meet the precise needs for those pupils who need the most specialist

support. Over time, some pupils have not achieved as well as they could, especially in writing and mathematics. Improvements are in place. Standards are rising for all pupils, particularly in reading.

Parents and carers recognise many positive changes at the school. They trust staff to care for their children and to provide them with memorable experiences to help them learn. One parent commented, 'The teachers do an amazing job, as shown by how happy the children are and the positive atmosphere around the school'.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics demonstrates consistent progress from their starting points.
 - Leaders should ensure that the teaching of writing supports pupils to spell accurately, write fluently, and use punctuation and grammar precisely across all subjects.
 - Leaders should continue developing staff expertise so that planned activities carefully match the targets set for those pupils who have education, health and care plans.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Crofty Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer Simon Hague, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mike Hosking.

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 headteacher, senior leaders, other leaders and staff to consider their views. The lead inspector held a discussion with the chief executive officer and director of education from the trust as well as members of the trust board and the local governing body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Daniel Clayden

Lead inspector:

Richard Light, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Mark Mitchley, Ofsted Inspector

Leanne Thirlby, 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 20 January 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

192

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

300

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

20.99%

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

2.60%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.90%

Below 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	56%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	62%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49%	60%	Below

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%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	79%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

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	63%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	79%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49%	71%	Below

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	67%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	75%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	73%	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 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	20%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	38%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

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	53%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	75%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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	40%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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	40%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

'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 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	20%	68%	-48 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	38%	67%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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	53%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	75%	80%	-5 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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	40%	78%	-38 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	63%	78%	-15 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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	40%	80%	-40 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

'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)	3.5%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.0%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	7.0%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	12.2%	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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