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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Theresa Mills
Headteacher
South Petherwin Community Primary School
South Petherwin
Launceston
Cornwall
PL15 7LE

Dear Ms Mills

Short inspection of South Petherwin Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have successfully strengthened the capacity of middle leaders since your appointment in September 2015. You and your leadership team are focused on continuous improvement through staff development so that the school's vision of 'Learning today to change tomorrow' is realised fully. You articulate a clear vision of high expectation for all involved with the school.

You know the school very well and are clear about its strengths and what needs to improve. For example, you know that standards in mathematics need to improve and assessment needs to be more precise. You understand that improvements such as these are necessary to enable all groups of pupils to make strong progress. Good practice is celebrated and shared, and partnerships with other schools help to identify where assessment, teaching and curriculum can be improved. You value the degree of challenge and support from governors, who possess a wide range of skills and professionalism. Good-quality governance helps ensure that leaders stay focused on the key issues.

You have developed a staff team that shares your drive to enable pupils to become resilient learners. Current pupils' achievement across the school is good because you have a clear understanding of what good learning looks like. Pupils say that teachers ask questions that help them to understand how to do things. One pupil said, 'They don't just tell you how to do things', showing they enjoy discovering answers for themselves. Pupils engage well with their learning because they find

work interesting and stimulating. As a result, their behaviour is good. They follow instructions carefully, pay avid attention to the teacher and work very well with each other.

Since the last inspection, you have successfully improved the quality of the teaching of phonics and early reading in the early years and key stage 1. You have done this by improving the consistency of approach taken by staff in teaching letters and sounds. Assessment is used more effectively so that the teaching of phonics supports each child to make the best possible progress. This includes those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, the proportion of Year 1 pupils that met the expected standard in phonics in 2016 was above the national figure.

Leaders and staff have created a welcoming school. Pupils enjoy their school experience and those who spoke to me said they always involve 'new people' in their playground games. Parents are highly supportive of the school's work. Those who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that their children are happy in school, make good progress and are taught well. The majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics, the progress made by different groups of pupils across the school and the effectiveness of actions to reduce absence for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. We also considered whether safeguarding is effective. The findings from these lines of enquiry are reported below.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of safeguarding, safety and welfare is paramount throughout the school, showing that you and your staff take your responsibilities very seriously. All staff are well briefed on current policies in order to keep up to date with requirements. You have ensured that policy, practice and procedure meet all statutory requirements, including the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. Leaders, along with the governing body, make sure these arrangements are robust. You ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities for reporting concerns. These are carefully recorded and followed up rigorously. You are assiduous in working with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Pupils report that they feel safe. They are happy and 'really safe' in school because they feel well supported. Pupils who spoke to me said they would readily talk to any member of staff if they had any worries. Parents who responded to the survey agree that the school keeps their children safe, makes sure pupils are well behaved and deals effectively with bullying.

Inspection findings

- Following results in mathematics in last year's national tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, which were below what you expected, you set about immediately to understand and tackle the reasons for this underachievement. The actions you have taken have led to a rapid improvement in pupils' reasoning skills. Pupils are also now more fluent in the recall of number facts and relationships. Moreover, they are better able to think more deeply about the mathematics they are learning. You and the mathematics leader have worked hard to develop the quality of teaching and the curriculum in mathematics. You acknowledge that this work needs to continue if standards are to improve over time.
- We visited mathematics lessons and looked at the quality of pupils' work and their engagement with learning. It is clear that there have been impressive improvements in a short space of time. Pupils say they work together sometimes as it really helps to have others' points of view and that they learn to work in 'greater depth' when considering what operation to use and what steps to take. However, monitoring and evaluation of pupils' attainment is, in some cases, over-optimistic and leads to the need for catch-up programmes in some classes.
- Work in books shows that current pupils in all year groups, including disadvantaged pupils, are making strong progress. Leaders have identified that too many pupils were not making the progress they were capable of following a dip in their results in 2016. Leaders have taken action to address this through improved monitoring of the quality of teaching, high expectations and effective training for staff. In addition, staff work successfully to develop pupils' resilience in learning. One pupil said 'Mistakes are a good thing you can learn from, they are not bad.'
- All groups of pupils, including the most able pupils, are challenged to think more deeply. This encourages them to take an interest in their learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils work through a range of challenging extension tasks. Pupils say that they would never learn if the work was too easy. For those pupils who do not understand a particular mathematical concept there is extra support to ensure they do not fall behind in their learning.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics for Year 6 pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities and left the school in 2016 were low. Leaders have taken swift action to ensure that current pupils are given the necessary support to achieve more highly in all three subjects. Pupils' progress is being carefully tracked to identify and remedy weaknesses.
- Attendance for pupils overall is improving and is now in line with the national average. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally in 2016 but is now average. This is because staff work closely with the education welfare officer to take prompt action when pupils are absent from school, working with parents to support them. For example, when school transport funding was withdrawn, the school stepped in to find a solution to prevent this from causing further absence.
- The leadership structure has undergone significant change over the last 18 months. While you have a comprehensive and ambitious plan for school

improvement, the impact of these plans is not yet fully realised. Lack of precision in the evaluation of pupils' progress and attainment, including in the early years, is hindering pupils, particularly the most able, from fully making the progress of which they are capable. This delays plans to accelerate progress across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in teaching and learning are fully established in order to further raise achievement in mathematics
- teachers monitor pupils' progress and attainment more precisely so that they can use this information to move pupils forward more swiftly in their learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and with leaders responsible for mathematics and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also met with representatives of the governing body and with pupils. I considered the most recent report from the school's area adviser.

Together, we visited the foundation stage and observed pupils' attitudes to learning in all classes, including in phonics and mathematics lessons. The work in pupils' books was scrutinised in detail.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, current progress information and attendance information. I also scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of matters relating to pupils' safety and welfare, including staff vetting and recruitment procedures.

I took account of 61 responses to the Parent View online survey.