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5 March 2018

Mrs Julie Larter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Larter

### **Short inspection of St Just Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 2018, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since that inspection, the school has joined the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust, consisting of 20 schools.

You provide strong leadership and the drive and determination to ensure that children leave the school well equipped for their next steps in learning. Staff morale is high, as demonstrated in the responses given to the staff questionnaire, where every respondent strongly agreed that they were proud to be a member of the school. Since your appointment, you have led initiatives that have continually improved the school. Effective leadership, at all levels, has ensured that systems to improve the quality of teaching, behaviour and support for pupils have led to improving outcomes.

Governors have a deep understanding of the school and they describe themselves as, 'inquisitive, appreciative and supportive guardians' of the school. There is a positive and professional relationship between governors and staff in which governors provide the right balance of support and challenge to leaders. Governors understand the importance of holding leaders to account and they ensure that they receive the information necessary to understand fully the performance of different groups of pupils. Governors take full advantage of training opportunities and they utilise their individual expertise to support the school. For example, the headteacher welcomes the advice and support offered by two governors who have a wealth of experience as school leaders.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked school leaders to improve the quality of

writing in Years 1 and 2. You and your colleagues have introduced a number of writing initiatives that have raised standards of writing across the school, including in Years 1 and 2. Writing outcomes have improved significantly, with Year 6 pupils in 2016 and 2017 achieving progress scores that placed the school in the top 10% of schools nationally.

Leaders were also asked to make sure that all learning activities were designed to meet pupils' differing needs. During our visits to classrooms, we assessed the challenges given to pupils at different stages in their learning. There was clear evidence to show that teachers across the school are planning activities that challenge pupils at all levels. Evidence also shows that pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves in lessons. This is particularly evident in mathematics lessons, where pupils can select increasingly difficult tasks that are designed to help them to master specific mathematical concepts. Pupils enjoy this challenge. One pupil, who had selected a complex number problem requiring a two-step solution, announced, 'Now, this looks really hard but I think I can do it!' He could!

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. There is a culture of safeguarding in the school, underpinned by the diligent way that all staff get to know each pupil well. School leaders, governors and experienced administrative staff ensure that checks of staff and visitors to the school are completed effectively.

You work well with other agencies, making timely referrals should the need arise. You follow up any referrals to make sure that pupils gain the support that they need and challenge external agencies when you feel that more help could be given. Your records are of good quality and clearly detail all actions taken.

Pupils told me that they are well looked after at school. They said that bullying was rare and they gave clear explanations of who they would talk to if they had concerns. Most parents who completed the online questionnaire stated that their children were happy and safe at school. You are aware that a small number of parents have concerns about the welfare of their children and you are taking steps, with your governors, to ensure that these parents appreciate the effective support given for all pupils.

You teach pupils how to stay safe through your curriculum, including when they use social media and online games. Pupils gave me excellent advice on how to use the internet safely, including ignoring the temptation to open special offers when they appear. As one pupil noted, 'If it sounds too good to be true, then it is!'

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus.
- The first line of enquiry considered how well leaders are ensuring that children in the

Reception Year are reaching their potential in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of children reaching an overall good level of development has been below national averages for three years. It is important for leaders to make sure that children are making at least good progress from their starting points in their vital first year in school.

- Your accurate assessments show that most children enter the school with skills that are lower than are typical for their age. Progress made by the children over time, as shown in their workbooks, shows that they make at least good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers provide many stimulating learning experiences in the classroom, outdoors and in the local community. Recently, all of the children visited a well-known pizza establishment in a local town in order to learn how to make pizzas. Back at school, they turned their classroom into a pizza café and produced menus for visiting guests, their parents and other family members. These activities enable pupils to develop their writing and calculation skills effectively.
- The early years leader has an excellent knowledge of each child's progress and her current analysis is showing that an increasing proportion of the cohort are already working at a good level of development across all areas. She is very well supported by highly effective support staff who play a crucial role in making ongoing assessments of children's progress.
- The next line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders are acting to ensure that teachers challenge pupils to make good progress in mathematics in key stage 1. Attainment in mathematics at key stage 1 has been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for the last two years.
- This aspect is a priority on the school's improvement plan for the current year and school leaders have received effective support from other schools in the multi-academy trust. Teachers have adapted their approaches to teaching mathematics and are providing appropriate challenges for all pupils. Consequently, standards in mathematics are rising throughout the school, including key stage 1. While standards are rising, they are not yet matching national expectations at this key stage.
- Teachers and support staff are challenging pupils to reach higher levels in mathematics, as shown by the progress seen in pupils' workbooks over time. Teachers use time in lessons effectively to correct misunderstandings and to provide further challenge for pupils.
- My third line of enquiry investigated leaders' efforts to check that additional funding is being used effectively to raise standards in reading for the most able disadvantaged pupils. While outcomes were good for disadvantaged pupils in reading at the expected level in the 2017 national tests, none of these pupils achieved the higher level of reading.
- I met with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6. This group shared their love of reading and explained how the school had helped them to become better readers with a good knowledge of different authors and an interest in fiction and non-fiction texts. All of the pupils read with skill and expression, supporting the school's assessment that a significant proportion of the pupils were already reading at the higher level.

- My final line of enquiry investigated why the attendance of specific groups of pupils was below national averages and assessed the impact of actions taken by leaders to address this. In 2016, rates of absence for boys, disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities were well above national averages. You have introduced a wide range of strategies, including supporting and more strongly challenging parents whose children are persistently absent. You continue to work well with outside agencies and parents to reduce the absence of vulnerable pupils. Although rates of absence fell in 2017, you acknowledge that some pupils are still absent too often.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the percentages of key stage 1 pupils reaching the expected level and greater depth in mathematics are in line with or above national averages
- the attendance of pupils continues to improve.

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

Paul Hodson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, governors, the chief executive officer of the trust and a fellow headteacher from the trust. You joined me in observing learning classrooms and looked at pupils' workbooks to assess the progress being made by pupils. I spoke with pupils in class and at a separate meeting. I considered the school's information on the progress being made by current pupils.

We looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. I looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the single central record and examples of referrals made to external agencies. We also assessed current rates of attendance for specific groups of pupils.

I considered the views of parents, including 40 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.