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8 October 2018

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Dear Mrs Yeates

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Five Islands School

Following my visit with Karl Sampson, Her Majesty's Inspector, Bradley Simmons, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Tracey Ledder, Social Care Regulatory Inspector, to your school on 18–19 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in September 2016. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may only appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection in conjunction with myself.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Truro, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Isles of Scilly. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2016.

- Improve pupils' progress so that it is at least good, particularly at key stage 2 in writing and mathematics and key stage 3 in humanities and languages, by:
 - checking that teachers give pupils regular opportunities to develop their spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation skills and that writing is given a high priority in all classes
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - ensuring that all of the most able pupils are given tasks that challenge them to work in greater depth
 - making sure that pupils experience a well-planned programme of study that fully meets the requirements for the national curriculum in mathematics and French
 - ensuring that teachers develop the appropriate subject knowledge required to deliver the mathematics curriculum
 - making effective use of assessment information to address gaps and plan challenging learning activities.
- Improve behaviour so that pupils make better progress and are able to thrive at school, by:
 - promoting positive attitudes to learning and study in all age groups and across all subjects
 - dealing effectively and consistently with any behaviour issues, and regaining the confidence of the school community
 - developing pupils' resilience and perseverance further when tackling new tasks and challenges.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership, by:
 - focusing classroom monitoring activities on how well pupils are learning, particularly the most able and disadvantaged pupils
 - using the findings from monitoring and evaluation to plan improvements to the quality of teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress, and regularly checking whether these plans are working
 - reorganising the curriculum at key stage 2 so that pupils in each of the island bases have the same opportunity to succeed as others, and at key stage 4 so that pupils can achieve the range of qualifications of which they are capable
 - clarifying the roles of middle and subject leaders and holding them to account for their areas of responsibility

- actively recruiting and appointing staff with sufficient skills to remedy the current shortfalls in leadership
 - strengthening governance so that governors hold accurate information on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and can provide the right degree of challenge to hold the headteacher to account
 - ensuring that effective safeguarding practice is consistently applied in all the school settings and on all island bases.
- Ensure that leaders and managers identify the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision and have clear development plans in place to quickly tackle shortcomings.
 - Ensure that professional, working relationships between the school and carers are developed to provide the best possible all-round support to boarders.
 - Ensure that the boarding provision is subject to robust external scrutiny from governors which includes regular monitoring and review of policies, practice and records.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 September 2018 to 19 September 2018

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive principal and other members of the school's extended leadership team. Discussions were held with two members of the interim executive board (IEB), staff, pupils, parents and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors visited each of the school's island bases to evaluate the progress made against recommendations identified in the previous inspection report.

A social care regulatory inspector (SCRI) visited the school's boarding house on 17 and 18 September 2018. The inspector met with pupils who reside at the boarding house. The inspector also reviewed leadership systems and safeguarding arrangements at the boarding house and school.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times and conducted visits to classrooms to observe pupils' progress and their attitudes to learning. Pupils' work across a range of subjects and year groups was scrutinised. Curriculum plans were scrutinised in detail in key stages 2 and 3. A range of other documentation, including the school's improvement plans and minutes of IEB meetings, was reviewed. Inspectors checked a wide range of information about safety and safeguarding, including in the boarding house, and the school's single central record of checks on staff recruitment.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there have been several staff changes. The strategic lead for primary education left in December 2017. The executive principal is now responsible for the strategic leadership of the primary phase as well as the secondary phase. The role of primary teaching and learning leader has been established since the last visit. A leader responsible for special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has been seconded from Mounts Bay Academy. A number of other senior leaders and staff from Mounts Bay Academy work part time at the school to bolster leadership capacity.

New staff have been appointed in SEN, French, humanities and English in the secondary school. There are temporary staff on one of the off-island bases. The executive principal has increased the time she spends at the school to two days per week, since September 2018. The executive principal and the headteachers of three primary schools have also supported the extended leadership team (ELT) with new systems for curriculum and assessment provision.

The school had an academy order issued in November 2016, but the conversion to a sponsored academy is still to take place. Current plans to become an academy

under the Leading Edge Academies Partnership (LEAP) are expected to be finalised by April 2019.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive principal has taken determined action to drive whole-school improvement. She has not shied away from taking difficult decisions. Her strategic leadership since the last monitoring visit, to bring all teaching phases and off-island bases together as one staff team, is impressive. Consequently, staff morale has increased markedly. There is a consistent rationale of curriculum design from Year 1 to Year 11. This is in its infancy, but staff buy-in across the school is increasingly strong.

The day-to-day leadership of the school is increasingly effective. The headteacher has taken swift action to put right weaknesses outlined in the single central record (SCR) at the last monitoring visit. The SCR is up to date and in line with legislation. Staff with responsibility for safeguarding have ensured that all training and the latest changes to legislation are understood by school staff. Risk assessments have been improved for site safety on off-island bases. Day-to-day leadership of teaching is bringing about further improvement.

Leaders know that more work is required to ensure that the intended curriculum is implemented well and that national curriculum requirements are met fully. Leaders have not yet ensured that a modern foreign language is taught regularly at key stage 2, nor have they enabled the teaching of languages in the secondary phase to be fully effective. Religious education is not covered in the depth and breadth expected and does not yet follow the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

The headteacher has ensured that all leaders have clear roles and responsibilities. The work of the ELT has become stronger since the last monitoring visit. Each member of the ELT provides a specific function to check whole-school effectiveness. This has ensured that week on week leaders' strategies to improve teaching, learning and assessment continue to strengthen. However, considerable staff changes and absence have hindered the progress that some pupils make in a few classes in the primary phase. Some changes to subject leadership in the secondary phase are very recent. These changes have ensured that the planned curriculum is stronger. However, it is too early to see the impact of the curriculum on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders across the primary and secondary phases are working on the right aspects for improvement. Since the last monitoring visit, they have refined the school's assessment systems. Achievement leaders have an acute understanding of the strengths and remaining weaknesses in the school's performance in all year groups and subjects. As a result, leaders are now able to support teachers to target additional support and challenge for individuals and groups of pupils. Next, the ELT and special educational needs coordinator need to work more closely together to

use the information they have gathered about pupils' current performance to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The quality assurance of teaching does not yet provide teachers with specific and practical advice about how to make immediate changes to their teaching so that all groups of pupils make consistently good progress.

The IEB is relentless in its challenge to school leaders to bring about swift and tangible improvement to whole-school effectiveness. They hold senior leaders and the extended leadership team to account well. As a result, the IEB is increasingly effective in ensuring that leaders are securing better teaching and outcomes for current pupils. The IEB and senior leaders hold regular meetings with parents, so they are well informed about progress against the areas for improvements from the last full inspection. Month on month, parental confidence in the school and its leadership continues to strengthen.

The conversion to academy status has not happened yet. Considerable complications have slowed this process. It is imperative that the school moves quickly to resolve the uncertainty about its status. Despite these complications the IEB has maintained its focus on improving teaching, pupils' progress and outcomes overall. As a result, pupils' outcomes at all key stages in 2018 improved markedly. Pupils in Year 6 and Year 11 were much better prepared for the next stage of their education than previous cohorts.

The IEB and school leaders work in close partnership with house parents at Mundesley boarding house. Leaders have ensured that children settle quickly and benefit from wide-ranging and motivating activities throughout each week. Leaders have ensured that house parents have received some training since the previous inspection. However, the impact of this training is yet to be fully seen. Houseparents require further support to identify and act upon safeguarding concerns promptly and effectively. Leaders have taken rapid action to devise a short-term action plan to address the remaining weaknesses in boarding provision. However, it is too early to see the impact of leaders' actions. Leaders must now focus with urgency on ensuring that the minimum standards not met at the section 5 inspection are delivered by the time of the next inspection.

The executive principal and headteacher are beginning to establish a performance management system appropriately tailored for all staff. Systems in place to support teachers' improvement have strengthened since the last monitoring visit. However, this change is very recent for some support staff. Consequently, some staff are not yet clear about leaders' expectations and structures set out in this new system.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Effective action has been taken since the previous monitoring visit to develop the quality of the curriculum at key stage 3 in history and geography. Current teaching is making a positive difference to the quality of education that pupils receive. Very

recently the geography curriculum has been rewritten to reflect leaders' high expectations. More time is needed to embed this further so that the implementation of the curriculum is consistently strong.

Key stage 3 is no longer disconnected from the key stage 4 curriculum offer. As a result, most teachers understand how the key concepts within subjects should evolve over a five-year period. Consequently, teachers' subject knowledge is improved and continues to strengthen quickly.

There are notable improvements to whole-school systems to plan the curriculum. Teachers' planning in the secondary phase is underpinned by the intention to teach blocks of knowledge that then build together explicitly into larger units of learning. As such, pupils are expected to use, apply and recall their understanding of knowledge and skills taught over time. As a result, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 can talk much more confidently about what they have learned and the progress they are making within a unit of work and over time.

The school's strategy for planning through the 'quadmester' cycle has been extended to almost every subject in key stages 3 and 4. It has raised expectations and increased the level of challenge necessary for pupils to attain the highest standards. Teachers' assessments are more precise and used diligently to plan for pupils who have gaps in their knowledge and skills to help them catch up. However, leaders know that there is more work to do because some previously high-attaining pupils, and some boys, are not yet making the progress that they should. Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of previously lower-attaining pupils or those who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils do not receive sufficient time to practise and consolidate their learning before moving on.

Religious education and French are not yet taught effectively. This remains a priority for further improvement.

The 'quadmester' approach to teachers' planning has been extended to the primary phase in the last few weeks. Teachers have improved the breadth and depth of the intended curriculum offer at the primary phase, including on the 'off-islands'. However, the improved curriculum offer is too recent to see its impact. This remains a key priority for improvement.

Nevertheless, because of staff training over the last two terms, teachers' planning is more thorough and ongoing assessments are used to inform better teaching overall. Teachers' assessments are increasingly accurate. Teachers use their assessments to address pupils' prior underachievement. Leaders' strategies for improving core subject teaching have improved teachers' subject knowledge and brought about considerably improved outcomes in 2018 in writing.

The teaching of mathematics continues to strengthen in the primary phase. Where pupils have underachieved in the past, most are catching up. Teachers' approach to

planning means that all aspects of the national curriculum are now taught routinely. However, the quality of teaching mathematics is too variable in a few classes. Teaching does not make explicit what pupils are expected to do when they work independently in some classes. This slows pupils' progress. Pupils do not make full use of the time available to consolidate and practise new mathematical concepts. Conversely, in some classes, the teaching of mathematics is strong, and pupils quickly immerse themselves in challenging tasks that deepen their understanding well.

High levels of staff turbulence, in the primary phase, have hindered teaching and the progress pupils make on one off-island base and, to a lesser extent, on St Mary's. Current teaching in mathematics is enabling pupils to catch up but it is not yet fully making amends for the previously inadequate teaching that pupils received.

While teachers' expectations continue to rise, the school's approach to timetabling long English and mathematics sessions does not yet enable pupils to deepen their understanding well enough. As such, pupils with average or above-average attainment are not challenged effectively in some classes.

There remains a stark difference between the best and the weakest English teaching in the primary phase. Coaching programmes are in place to develop teaching further. This is work in progress. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in the long English lessons are not yet consistently high enough. Tasks in lower key stage 2 are not sufficiently challenging. Too few middle-attaining and most-able pupils are expected to write with the depth and complexity appropriate for their age. In the poorest examples seen, some activities filled time and did not meet pupils' learning needs well enough. As a result, pupils take the extended time period now available in a lesson to complete short tasks that are too easy.

The teaching of early reading is regular and systematic. Accurate teacher assessment in reading enables teaching to focus precisely on pupils' learning needs. However, the teaching at the end of key stage 2 did not enable pupils to make consistently good progress in reading last year. Leaders have reprioritised the teaching of reading this year to ensure that reading outcomes do not slip for a second year running.

The teaching of a modern foreign language in key stage 2 is too sporadic and is not yet good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

A consistent behaviour system has been agreed across the primary and secondary phases from September 2018. This allows staff and pupils to have a shared understanding and language of the behaviour system as they progress through the school. However, in the recent past, teachers have not consistently recorded behaviour incidents. As a result, leaders' current analysis is not as accurate as it

could be, and this hinders positive communication with parents in line with the school's policy. Leaders know that this needs to be sorted out quickly. Plans are already in place to rectify this weakness.

The boarding house continues to provide a valuable and essential service for children who live on the 'off islands'. Pupils new to boarding at Mundesley house have settled quickly this year. They told the inspector that they have fun and access social opportunities and experiences that would not otherwise be available to them. Pupils report that they are happy and enjoy their boarding experience.

There has been some updating to the boarding house since the last monitoring visit. However, areas of the boarding house continue to require attention. Pupils say that they are happy in the home, however, the home still lacks a warm and inviting feel and has the potential to dispirit children.

Inspectors saw some good examples of pupils concentrating on tasks that they find difficult. However, pupils' resilience to learn remains too inconsistent, in a few classes, particularly in the primary phase. When teaching is not closely matched to pupils' needs they do not maintain high levels of concentration or the resilience required to sustain and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Outcomes for pupils

There have been notable improvements in pupils' outcomes in 2018 in all key stages.

At the end of key stage 4, pupils achieved well overall. Pupils made above-average progress in English and mathematics. There were also tangible improvements to pupils' outcomes in humanities, sciences and languages. In 2018 more pupils accessed the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). However, this measure remains lower than the school aspires to. Boys did not perform as well as girls overall.

Pupils currently in key stage 4 who need to catch up are benefiting from bespoke plans and additional teaching intervention this year. Leaders' precise analysis of pupils' current performance means that they can pinpoint additional help for the pupils who need it. Consequently, leaders are acutely focused on ensuring that pupils currently in key stage 4, including boys, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with previously high attainment, make strong progress. This remains a high priority.

Leaders' strategy to improve teaching in key stage 3 is paying off. Pupils are making stronger progress in key stage 3 than previously. However, some pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, still need to catch up.

Transition between key stage 2 and 3 continues to improve. This year, pupils entered key stage 3 with greater knowledge and ability to use and apply

mathematical concepts. Consequently, less time has been needed this term to address pupils' gaps in knowledge and skills.

In the primary phase, 2017 outcomes remained poor. Only one third of pupils at the end of key stage 2 met the standards that are expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This was significantly below the national average. This year, the proportion of pupils achieving well has increased markedly. However, pupils at this school do not do as well as others nationally. In 2018 pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6 improved considerably in writing and mathematics. However, pupils' outcomes in reading dipped to fall in line with the national average.

At the end of key stage 1, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics also improved. The proportion of children in early years who achieved the good level of development, the standard that is expected at the end of Reception Year, improved steeply in 2018.

Better teaching in mathematics is enabling pupils who have previously underachieved to catch up. However, there is still some inconsistency in the progress that pupils make over time in the primary phase in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.

Current pupils' outcomes in English are improving steadily. However, the most able pupils in some classes are not challenged sufficiently. As a result, pupils do not write with the complexity and accuracy expected for their age. Leaders have strengthened the quality assurance systems to check pupils' current progress and attainment across all learning bases. However, ELT members need to use this information more precisely to hold staff to account for adapting their teaching within 'quadmester' units of work, so that those pupils who are falling behind receive the right work and catch up.

External support

The local authority has commissioned external monitoring of the school through Cornwall local authority. This has enabled the IEB to benefit from an external evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the progress it is making since the last inspection.

The school has brokered additional school to school support from Mounts Bay Academy, and three primary schools in Cornwall. This has included leadership support, support to improve teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics, French, curriculum design and ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate. As a result, leaders and teachers are developing their knowledge and skills well. Consequently, teaching and pupils' outcomes are improving steadily.