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Mr Rick Gill
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gill

Short inspection of St Erth Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 the predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have worked effectively to ensure that standards across the school remain high. Well supported by governors and the trust, leaders have brought about improvements where needed, while also embracing innovation and research findings. The school has benefited from support from the trust in its work on improving mathematics, resulting in better attainment. The school works with neighbouring schools across the trust in a triad, allowing staff to share best practice and have opportunities to collaborate.

The local governing body and the trust work together cohesively. While the trust provides a scaffold for the school, governors value how St Erth maintains its unique character and place at the heart of the community. Recently, the trust has provided further leadership capacity through your appointment as executive headteacher. This has provided valuable support for the interim head of school. Furthermore, all staff have benefited from taking on more responsibilities and have done this seamlessly. Staff across the school, at all levels, work as a well-oiled machine.

Pupils are at the heart of all decisions. Staff know every pupil and use this information to plan the school's curriculum. Staff keep a watchful eye over pupils' progress and provide further support or challenge in a timely manner. The curriculum is highly relevant to the pupils at St Erth Community Primary School. Furthermore, it engages and enthuses pupils. Pupils behave well and relationships between adults and pupils are rooted in mutual respect.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that recruitment systems are robust, so that they only appoint staff who are suitable to work with children. This information is recorded effectively on the school's single central record, which is monitored by representatives of the local governing body and the trust. Once appointed, staff are given training that heightens their awareness of both national and local issues. For example, leaders trained staff about county lines, where gangs target and groom children, exploiting them to handle and sell drugs. Leaders have done this as they are aware that it is becoming an increasing concern in the local area, particularly in nearby market towns. Leaders recently trained staff about the updates to 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2018.

Leaders work in a timely manner when they have concerns about pupils. The school's system for recording concerns is concise, and leaders monitor this closely. Leaders ensure that they pass on concerns about pupils to external agencies, where this is warranted. Leaders have also worked closely with parents and carers to provide support or to refer them to early help. The trust supports leaders when they complete the school's safeguarding audit, to ensure that safeguarding continues to be effective.

Pupils' attendance has historically been in line with national averages, but in 2017 absence rates increased. The school's attendance information shows how this is moving back towards national averages. However, persistent absence remains too high. Although for some pupils there are mitigating factors, leaders acknowledge that this is an aspect of the school's performance that must improve. Leaders have prioritised this in their school development plan.

Inspection findings

- First, I considered the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress and attainment. In recent years, by the end of key stage 2, progress has been in line with or above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, attainment has fluctuated in some year groups, particularly in 2017, where attainment in writing and mathematics was below national averages in key stage 2, and reading, writing and mathematics below national averages in key stage 1. In 2018, attainment improved across key stages 1 and 2. Leaders acknowledge that attainment remains low in some year groups, despite strong progress, and have prioritised improving this in the school development plan.
- Leaders, both in the school and at trust level, have focused on improving the quality of mathematics teaching. This has contributed to improving outcomes across the school, with attainment of the expected standard at key stage 2 in 2018 above 90% and pupils' progress a strength. Furthermore, in most year groups, attainment is highest in mathematics when compared to reading and writing.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning, assessment and pupils' progress is robust. They know where standards are high and act in a timely manner if pupils

are at risk of falling behind. Interventions are closely matched to pupils' needs, enabling pupils to move on in their learning. Due to the school's curriculum design, it is very easy for staff to pinpoint which interventions will have most impact. As a result, the proportions of pupils working at the expectations for their age and at the higher standard have increased in most year groups. However, there is still more to do to ensure that the proportion of pupils who are ready for the next stage of their education increases.

- Second, I considered how well pupils in the early years and key stage 1 are taught to read and comprehend what they have read. Over the previous two years, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been in line with national averages. In 2017, the proportion of pupils meeting the standard by the end of Year 2 fell below the national average but rose again in 2018. Key stage 1 reading outcomes were lower than national averages in 2017 but, as in phonics, increased to be in line with national averages in 2018.
- The teaching of early reading is a strength. In line with the aims of the school's phonics programme, sessions are snappy and engaging. Adults closely consider pupils' emerging needs, to provide further challenge or support. Pupils have opportunities to review previously taught sounds before moving on to the focus for each session. Pupils apply the sounds they have practised when they are reading. The books they are reading are closely aligned to each pupil's stage of reading. Adults ensure that pupils read fluently and at a pace that allows them to comprehend what they have read.
- To ensure that all pupils have access to a range of high-quality texts, regardless of their stage of reading, teachers have introduced 'floor books' into their classrooms. This was done after the trust carried out action research about their use and benefits. Adults share a book such as 'The day the crayons quit' with the pupils and discuss key features of the story, plot development, text structure and language features. Pupils value these sessions. For pupils who may find it difficult to decode individual words, it provides them with opportunities to answer questions about a text they have listened to.
- Alongside phonics development, pupils also experience a rich reading curriculum. Leaders have designed a curriculum that promotes a range of reading skills such as 'decoding', 'comprehending', 'reading detective' and 'language lover'. All of these enable pupils to develop their reading knowledge and understanding. Staff closely monitor the books that pupils read to ensure that they have the correct level of challenge and broaden pupils' reading experiences. Because of this work, reading progress across the school is strong and pupils enjoy the breadth of the reading curriculum.
- Finally, I considered how leaders use the pupil premium funding to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes in writing. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment in writing have been lower than in reading and mathematics. While progress has improved, attainment is still lower than national averages. In 2017, key stage 1 attainment was particularly low. However, closer scrutiny shows that an overwhelming majority of disadvantaged pupils were also pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders'

assessment information shows that current disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress in writing across the school.

- There is a clear approach to the teaching of writing for disadvantaged pupils. They learn to write for a purpose, and across a range of curriculum subjects. For example, pupils consider their knowledge about the Stone Age to write an information text. Teachers actively seek out links between subjects with the aim of engaging pupils and furthering their knowledge. Pupils enjoy lessons, they engage well and focus throughout. Pupils' workbooks show how they make strong progress. Books demonstrate how pupils apply new learning effectively and are not afraid to try new things. Pupils' application of a variety of sentence structures is a strength, they skilfully manipulate the order of words to ensure the biggest impact on the reader. Leaders' actions to engage pupils in writing in this way is paying dividend.
- Class teachers seamlessly interweave their expectations of pupils regarding use of grammar, punctuation and sentence structures with rich curricular content. Consequently, pupils use these key features well in a purposeful, engaging way, such as continuing the story of Beowulf. Leaders' actions to improve pupils' vocabulary are also evident in lessons and pupils' books. Pupils are using ambitious vocabulary in their writing because of this, adding another quality to their writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities also make strong progress. Leaders track this cohort of pupils closely and ensure that interventions and support are bespoke to the individual pupil. Leaders can demonstrate how pupils have built on or maintained their prior attainment. The school's curriculum ensures that teachers can pinpoint what each pupil needs to make progress and enables them to provide specific support.
- The pupil premium strategy pinpoints disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning, such as poor attendance or a lack of intrinsic motivation. Leaders act effectively to overcome these barriers. Through the school's 'Achievement for all' programme, leaders can demonstrate how improvements in attendance were made. However, leaders' academic targets in the pupil premium strategy lack precision. They do not consider closely enough pupils' prior attainment or information about specific cohorts such as pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, the school's own attainment targets have not been met. Expectations that all pupils will be working at age-related expectations are too blunt, particularly with the varying cohorts of disadvantaged pupils across the school. This limits leaders' monitoring of the effectiveness of the pupil premium.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- persistent absence reduces so that figures are in line with national averages
- academic targets in the pupil premium strategy are more precise and consider pupils' prior attainment, so that leaders can closely monitor the strategy's effectiveness and disadvantaged pupils' progress continues to improve

- across the school, pupils' attainment rises, so that greater proportions work at the expectations for their age and reach the higher standard, preparing pupils well for the next stage of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I conducted all inspection activities alongside the executive headteacher and the interim head of school. I spoke to representatives of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils and scrutinised the work in pupils' writing books. I considered leaders' assessment information and met with middle leaders to discuss the approach to the teaching of reading and writing. Furthermore, I met with the designated leader and deputy designated leader for safeguarding.

I looked at a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, and discussed the school's current improvement priorities. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of 16 responses to the Parent View online survey, 12 responses to the pupil survey and five responses to the staff survey.