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30 May 2015

Mr Phil Banks
Executive headteacher
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Dear Mr Banks

Short inspection of St Minver School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You became the executive headteacher of St Minver School in 2014. Later that year, the school became an academy as part of the Aspire Academy Trust. You are also the executive headteacher of another school in the trust, Padstow School. At St Minver, you work closely with the deputy headteacher to provide strong leadership, maintaining a keen commitment to school improvement at all times. School staff share this ethos and their morale is high. All the staff who responded to the survey of their opinions stated that they were proud to work at St Minver. Many went on to highlight the sense of a team working together in the pupils' best interests that I also observed in the school.

You and other leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to work on. As a result, the school has made improvements in a number of key areas recently. For example, a school-wide focus on writing has led to an improvement in the quality of pupils' work. In addition, resolute work to improve attendance has borne fruit in the form of reduced rates of absence. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that there are other areas that they need to focus on, such as improving pupils' spelling and fully embedding recent changes to the key stage 2 mathematics curriculum. My discussion with members of the hub council, the body within the trust accountable for the school's performance, showed

that they too have a clear understanding of the school and can talk in detail about the way they monitor and challenge the school's leadership in the quest for improvement.

Parents recognise the work that school staff do for their children. The vast majority who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's survey of parental opinion, would recommend the school. Many parents took the opportunity to praise the work that teachers and support staff have done to help pupils who need to catch up or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. My observations around the school during my visit, including talking to pupils, staff and parents, confirm these perceptions as accurate. School leaders have successfully created a positive learning community in which pupils are happy, polite, well behaved and, crucially, making good progress in their education.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a well-developed safeguarding ethos. Staff who take the lead on safeguarding are knowledgeable about their roles and use their experience well to keep children safe. Work with external agencies is meticulously recorded. There is a culture of constant vigilance and systems are in place for staff to report any concerns they might have quickly and efficiently. All staff training is up to date, including in the government's 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. The school has carried out all the necessary checks on teachers and other staff to determine their suitability to work with children. Overall, therefore, the leadership has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry on this inspection related to the progress made by middle-ability pupils in mathematics at key stage 2, particularly middle-ability girls. In the national curriculum assessments in 2016, middle-ability pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally of the same ability. The progress made by middle-ability girls was in the bottom 10% of schools. School leaders have reacted to this by appointing new leaders in mathematics and by changing the curriculum in a number of key ways.
- There is now a much greater emphasis on reasoning, problem solving and increasing the level of challenge for all pupils. In addition, teaching has been adapted to match the needs of girls more closely. As a result of these initiatives, pupils are making better progress in mathematics. Scrutiny of current pupils' work revealed no significant differences between the work of middle-ability girls and other pupils. Nevertheless, school leaders are well aware that some of the initiatives in mathematics teaching are relatively new and will need to be fully embedded before they reveal their true impact.
- The inspection's second line of enquiry investigated whether the level of challenge presented to pupils in key stage 1 was sufficient for them to achieve greater depth within the expected standards. In 2016, the national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 showed that overall attainment was broadly in line

with that of other pupils nationally in each of reading, writing and mathematics. On closer examination, however, there were some prior-attainment groups that were well below the national average for attainment of greater depth in reading and writing. Nonetheless, work scrutiny shows that current pupils who were exceeding the expected standard when they left the early years are making good progress. They are developing the characteristics of pupils able to work at greater depth within the standard. Teaching in key stage 1 is characterised by a good understanding of what is required to reach greater depth. For example, school leaders identified the need to work on pupils' ability to make inferences from what they are reading and have adapted the curriculum accordingly. This is facilitating better progress.

- The third line of enquiry concerned attendance. Last year, absence and persistent absence were both higher than the national figure, especially for disadvantaged pupils. School leaders and other staff within the school have been working hard to address this issue. As a result attendance has risen and is now close to the national figure. Most notably, the rate of persistent absence has fallen dramatically and is now well below the national figure. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also improved. Overall, therefore, school leaders are successfully promoting good attendance but they are also aware that they need to maintain a resolute focus on this issue to ensure the improvements are built upon further.
- My final line of enquiry looked at the writing of pupils in key stage 2, including their writing across the curriculum. In our initial meeting, you identified this as an area the school had been focusing on in recent years. School leaders have developed a culture of high expectations in writing and this is evident both in pupils' literacy books and in their work in history, geography and science. In addition, writing is celebrated prominently across the school via a multitude of displays of pupils' work. Across all year groups, current pupils are making good progress in developing a sophisticated understanding of what makes good writing and an ability to demonstrate it in their work across the curriculum. Whether it is writing a letter, describing Egyptian religion or explaining the digestive system, pupils typically write well. They can transfer the skills they learn in literacy lessons to their other work with relative ease. Despite this, some pupils' spelling is not as secure as their creative abilities and this can undermine the quality of their work at times.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent changes to the mathematics curriculum aimed at developing pupils' mastery of the subject are fully embedded
- pupils' spelling improves, especially in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher at the start of the day to discuss the school's self-evaluation and draw up the key lines of enquiry to follow up during the rest of the inspection. I undertook a series of learning walks with you both, during which I took the opportunity to look at pupils' work and to talk to them about their learning. I also had a discussion with a small group of pupils and listened to some of them read. I met with members of the hub council and spoke to the deputy chief executive officer on the telephone. I examined the school's safeguarding records and talked to the members of staff who take the lead on this. In reaching my judgements, I took account of the responses of parents and staff to Ofsted's online surveys of their opinions.