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Mrs Lisa Michell
Acting Headteacher
Veryan CofE School
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Dear Mrs Michell

Short inspection of Veryan CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 2016, 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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, the executive principal of St. Piran's Trust and governors are using your complementary skills and expertise to secure a good rate of improvement at the school. Together, you articulate a clear vision of high expectations for all involved with the school. A culture of staff development, through effective training, lies at the heart of your efforts. Despite turbulence in leadership and governance during the past 18 months, the quality of education remains good. Parents recognise that there has been a period of change but the overwhelming majority support the actions now being taken. Strong leadership and clear direction by the trust and governors have secured rapid improvements to pupils' achievement and the quality of the teaching and illustrate your capacity to bring about further improvements.

The executive principal uses his knowledge and understanding well to promote an aspirational culture in the school and wider community. His removal of some administrative tasks from your role has allowed you to focus clearly on securing rapid improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Due to the small numbers of pupils and staff at the school, you have been able to influence change and make improvements very quickly. Together you demonstrate the attitude and foresight to inspire all.

Pupils' achievement across the school is good because you have a clear understanding of what good learning looks like. Your rigorous improvement plans and well-considered actions have abruptly reversed the decline in

performance that had been evident. Consequently, these planned actions are quickly raising pupils' achievement to the previous high levels seen in the school. Variations in the current published achievement information partly reflect the differences in the starting points of pupils and the small number of pupils in each cohort. However, current leaders and teachers are robustly tackling the underachievement of some pupils in Years 5 and 6, following a period of weaker teaching and leadership in the past. As a result, pupils in Year 6 have attained above the national average in reading and mathematics. You have detailed plans in place to improve pupils' writing skills. In 2016, pupils reached the standards expected for their age in the Year 1 national check on phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and disadvantaged pupils have achieved as well as their peers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff act as effective role models for pupils in the way they talk, act and behave towards each other and with children. They take great care to be vigilant in their approach to pupils' welfare and staff know individual pupils and their needs well. You diligently follow up any concerns to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need. For example, additional training for staff has helped in their understanding of the early help requirements so that additional support can be accessed for vulnerable pupils. The positive culture of keeping all pupils safe is illustrated by pupils' ability to express what it means to feel safe: they reported, 'we can trust teachers to help us out as we are all part of this small family'.

All staff are well briefed on current policies in order to keep up to date with requirements. You are rigorous in implementing the agreed safeguarding policies and procedures. Your ongoing commitment to this area of work is demonstrated by changes to the routine for parents when collecting their children at the end of the school day and the additional information you include on your single central register. Record-keeping is thorough and shows the school's emphasis on ensuring that pupils' personal needs are met. Aspects of keeping pupils safe are woven cleverly into the school's curriculum. For example, children in Reception demonstrate their understanding of beach safety when writing instructions on 'how to save a dolphin'.

Inspection findings

- The quality and impact of leaders' monitoring and evaluation is very effective. The findings are being used to drive rapid improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. The speed of improvement is both clearly evident and impressive. Regular checks on pupils' progress are rigorous, informative and measured carefully against key milestones. Staff receive regular, precise feedback and use this alongside training and coaching with other staff from schools within the trust to improve their practice. As a result, staff feel supported, challenged and keen to improve further.

- Leaders' actions and plans to support and secure improvements are detailed and clear. Training and guidance from 'subject champions' and working groups across the trust develop teachers' subject knowledge effectively. Training is also helping teachers develop a more consistent approach to their lessons. Consequently, in lessons, activities are meeting the needs of most pupils well. Joint moderation of pupils' assessed work ensures that teachers are more accurate in their judgements. Visits by teachers to observe good and outstanding practice across the trust are raising teachers' awareness, expectations and aspirations of what pupils can achieve. The findings from such experiences are used well to inform the priorities for the school's high-quality and detailed improvement plans.
- Teachers are held to account for the achievement of pupils in their classes through half-termly progress meetings; pupils who are at risk of falling behind are identified and given close support. Teaching assistants also play an important role in checking pupils' progress. Your investment in training for all, combined with your careful monitoring of its impact, ensures that most pupils receive good-quality support, particularly with reading.
- The consistency of approach in teaching phonics and early reading supports pupils' good progress. In teaching phonics, teachers watch carefully, listen and check accurately pupils' gains in their knowledge of individual sounds. Your reorganisation of the curriculum for phonics, combined with additional training and the strengthening of the leadership of early reading, is proving successful.
- All staff teach writing using topics and themes that motivate and engage pupils, especially boys, and encourage them to write at greater length. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school confirm that many pupils are writing more, writing confidently and making good progress. The pupils spoken to were excited and enthusiastic about this approach, talking positively about their stories of dragons and superheroes, for example. However, lower-attaining pupils are not given enough support to help them structure and organise their thinking when tackling more demanding and extended pieces of writing. More generally, teachers are not giving the same consistent emphasis to specific aspects of writing, including pupils' spelling, handwriting and presentation. As a result, pupils' standards in writing are below those in reading and mathematics, and the progress of lower-attaining pupils is slower in writing than that of their peers and of other pupils nationally. You are aware of this issue and you are taking effective actions to improve pupils' achievement in writing.
- The range of approaches used in mathematics lessons is supporting well the development of pupils' understanding of the four operations of number. Pupils' mathematical skills are also promoted through topic activities or practical approaches. For example, pupils use their knowledge of money, costings, time and measure carefully to plan holiday trips. However, planned activities do not always place enough emphasis on developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in order to secure their deeper mathematical thinking. Pupils' learning falters when activities jump between topics before they have developed a deeper understanding

of the mathematical concepts being taught, as required by the new national curriculum for mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, especially lower-attaining pupils in key stage 2, are supported effectively to improve their achievement in writing
- teachers check the spelling, handwriting and presentation skills of pupils in key stage 2 more carefully so that they improve rapidly
- pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills are developed so they can deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the executive principal of St. Piran's Trust. I spoke with three representatives of the governing body and the chair of the trust executive board. I accompanied you and the executive principal on visits to lessons and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I took into account 29 results from 'Parent View', the online questionnaire for parents. I met with 10 pupils from Years 2 to 6 to discuss their work and gain their views of the school. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and reviewed a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.