

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



27 February 2019

Chris Stoyles  
Head of school  
Ladock Church of England School  
Ladock  
Truro  
Cornwall  
TR2 4PL

Dear Mr Stoyles

### **Short inspection of Ladock Church of England School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 2019, 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 school was judged to be good in June 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Approximately 18 months ago, trust leaders recognised that weaknesses in the school's provision were undermining the quality of education in the school. As a result, trust leaders took appropriate action to arrest the decline by making necessary arrangements to improve teaching, particularly in key stages 1 and 2. Your appointment to head of school in March 2018 was a key part of the trust's improvement strategy. You have added further impetus and increased rigour in holding teachers firmly to account. Your determination and focus immediately started to challenge teachers to raise their expectations of pupils. While you recognise that there is more still to do, you have been instrumental in getting the school 'back on track'. Most parents and pupils also understand this. They are effusive in their praise of your work. Under your leadership, the school is being revitalised and is highly valued by the local community.

Following your arrival, you set about overhauling systems to ensure that vulnerable pupils are better identified and tracked. You hold challenging conversations with teachers about their professional development and performance. You also implemented appropriate school improvement plans, correctly identifying the main priorities. Your ongoing work is continuing to have a discernible impact on raising pupils' achievement, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. However, this is not without its challenges and some improvements are still fragile. You are fully aware of this and

are continuing to use effective support from the trust to tackle weaknesses. The weekly visits from a school improvement partner of the trust are continuing to provide high-quality mentoring and support from an experienced colleague. This partnership is proving to be beneficial to you and effective in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

You have taken effective action to address most weaknesses identified at the last inspection. You have been successful in implementing strategies to improve pupils' fluency and understanding of number, especially in Years 5 and 6. Again, this requires further consolidation but is beginning to see tangible improvement. You have been explicit in identifying weaknesses in teaching and learning. Consequently, the weakest teaching has been tackled and teachers are implementing agreed systems and approaches to raise achievement.

However, during the inspection, I noted that there remain some key challenges to sustaining improvement. Firstly, teachers are not consistently identifying precise targets or steps for vulnerable pupils. Secondly, teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of pupils across the range of subjects, particularly in writing. This leads to some variability in the quality of work seen in different workbooks. Thirdly, other leaders, including subject leaders and the school monitoring council (SMC), despite making increasingly valuable contributions, are not yet making the most of their roles and responsibilities in the school to have even greater influence in building leadership capacity.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have taken effective action to review safeguarding procedures and practice in the school. You work well with others, including SMC representatives, who check that the school is complying fully with current safeguarding requirements. Consequently, staff are well trained and know what to do to keep pupils safe. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. You ensure that any concerns are well logged and swiftly responded to. For example, you work in a timely manner to ensure that pupils receive the early help they need to stay safe at home and to improve their attendance and well-being.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is improving well. In addition, the proportion of those with persistently high absence is reducing rapidly. In fact, the current figure is now better than the national average. Pupils say that they feel safe and trust staff. Pupils, staff and parents typically agree that behaviour is good. Staff are approachable and help to resolve issues quickly. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem at Ladock. Leaders also seek pupils' views of safeguarding and make plans to address any concerns that pupils may have. Pupils show a good understanding of current safeguarding matters, including online safety, and can explain clearly what to do in the event of a fire or school evacuation.

## Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I concentrated inspection activities on the achievement of vulnerable pupils and evaluated how effectively teaching is meeting pupils' needs, particularly those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Following your arrival, you have ensured that a robust process for tracking vulnerable pupils has been fully implemented. This ensures that the particular needs of all pupils are identified to help them learn well.
- The SMC has also become more involved and, consequently, knowledgeable about the spending of pupil premium grant and its impact. Leaders now check how well pupils supported by this additional funding are doing. You are diligent in working with other leaders in a transparent manner to evaluate the school's effectiveness. This has led to continual amendments and improvement in the quality of teaching and provision for targeted pupils.
- However, teachers' planning and the next steps that they set for targeted pupils, including those with SEND, lack precision. Consequently, they are not ensuring the most rapid and sustained improvements with a consistency that these pupils need. As a result, although the majority of pupils are making good progress, there are some whose barriers to learning are not identified or overcome quickly enough.
- Pupils enjoy writing. They are given different contexts, based on meaningful experiences, to write. In addition, pupils are often provided with strong models of text, with helpful ideas or prompts, to construct their writing. As a result, pupils are gaining confidence to write at length and compose their writing with clear intent and purpose.
- However, teachers' expectations of pupils are variable. This results in inconsistent writing being produced in different subjects or at other times. For example, the quality of writing in science falls below the standards which the pupils are capable of. When pupils make errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, these are not consistently addressed, which impedes pupils' progress and lowers the quality of work. Handwriting is also sometimes erratic and can be linked to poor pencil grip and control.
- You have worked effectively with teachers to introduce a range of activities to support pupils' understanding of number and fluency. As a result, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are showing a good understanding of number and calculation. They can explain the steps they take to solve problems with confidence.
- In addition, you have introduced a common approach to the teaching of number across the school, which pupils understand well. Pupils feel well supported and challenged in equal measure. They are confident to 'have a go' and enjoy working through a variety of mathematical problems. However, there are times when teachers do not check the knowledge that some pupils have well enough. Teachers make assumptions that pupils know more than they actually do, for example in numbers and in the expression of these as fractions, decimals and percentages in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, some pupils have 'gaps' in their knowledge that are not routinely identified and lead to misconceptions in later learning.

- Finally, you have a strong vision with well-matched plans and ambition for the school. The school development plan is well aligned to the trust's plan. Leaders are taking effective action to identify and tackle weaknesses. You are working well with the SMC to improve the quality of education. You are also ensuring that staff training and professional development meet staff's needs. In this way, other leaders, including subject leaders and SMC members, are rapidly developing their skills and knowledge for school improvement. However, you know that there is more that still needs to be done to ensure that they can add even more value. You and trust leaders have rightly identified that building capacity through others is a priority.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all leaders' roles and responsibilities are fully evaluated and developed further, particularly subject leaders and those on the SMC
- individual learning plans for vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, are more precise and checked rigorously to raise achievement further
- teachers have the highest expectations of pupils' writing across the curriculum, including the quality of their presentation and handwriting.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

Stewart Gale  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We worked extensively through a range of inspection activities to evaluate the key lines of enquiry. I checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments and records by comparing these to what pupils know, understand and can do. I also talked with pupils during lessons and breaktime. Additionally, I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I spoke with pupils and staff about their understanding of safeguarding procedures. I also reviewed evidence of various referrals and communications with external agencies for safeguarding pupils.

I met with other staff, including teachers. I also met with representatives of the SMC and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and a sample of records of monitoring councillors' and trust leaders' visits. I took full account of the 39 responses on Parent View as well as reviewing the free-

texts received through the inspection. To supplement this, I met directly with some parents at the start of the inspection.