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Mr Tom Harman  
Executive Headteacher  
Grade-Ruan CofE School  
Ruan Minor  
Helston  
Cornwall  
TR12 7JN

Dear Mr Harman

### **Short inspection of Grade-Ruan CofE School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 October 2013.

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

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

As the executive headteacher of the multi-academy trust (MAT), you are working successfully with directors and staff to secure the future of the school for the benefit of pupils and their families. The school has undergone significant leadership changes since the previous inspection through becoming part of a MAT in April 2014.

Directors have recently taken steps to restructure the way they govern, in order to become more efficient with their time and hold the school more effectively to account. They have recently appointed a number of volunteers from the community, known as 'partners in learning', as part of their work to streamline governance and strengthen ways of gathering information about the work of the school. A partner in learning confirmed that this development has given him greater confidence in the way academic challenge is being managed by directors.

Parents overall are very happy with the way the school has developed since becoming an academy. Comments taken from the online survey, Parent View, confirm that you and your staff are working effectively as a team for the benefit of all pupils. The school enjoys the confidence of the parent community. Many spoke of the school as 'a welcoming and nurturing school with high expectations of behaviour and academic achievement'. A few parents raised concerns about the

management of pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes, while a few others said that they would like to have more detailed information about their children's academic progress. However, those parents who spoke with me during my visit all agreed that you and your staff are extremely welcoming and supportive of families. Parents also agreed that any concerns, when they do occasionally arise, are addressed in a timely manner. They also said that staff are 'great ambassadors for the school'. The strong community spirit and teamwork shown by your staff ensure that pupils who have transferred from other schools all settle quickly to learning. 'The school has bent over backwards to make pupils feel welcome,' said another parent.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders, including directors, have successfully established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are regularly trained in ways to keep pupils safe. They have a very good knowledge of the pupils in their care and are particularly vigilant to spot any child who might be at risk from harm. Records show examples of how leaders take swift action to address safeguarding concerns. This has helped to keep children safe and to stop issues escalating unnecessarily. Experienced staff work closely with external agencies when needed to ensure that pupils are well looked after. All the pupils who spoke with me said that they felt safe in school at all times. Pupils know that there is an adult in the school to whom they can turn if anything is worrying them. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are compliant with current regulations and are fit for purpose. Records kept are detailed and of high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are working appropriately on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Older pupils are now provided with regular opportunities to write at length and for a range of purposes.
- Teachers have begun to work successfully with colleagues from the other four MAT schools to assess and moderate pupils' work, in order to allow them to gain a more accurate knowledge of pupils' writing standards and what they need to do to improve.
- Recent assessment data suggests that the most vulnerable pupils in school are making better progress in developing their literacy skills. However, more-able pupils are generally not achieving the higher levels they should be capable of in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers now apply the principles of the school's marking policy consistently across the school. Written feedback provided by teachers is typically supportive. A joint scrutiny of pupils' books in classes confirmed that most pupils are now more aware of their learning objectives when writing. However, occasionally pupils do not follow up the suggestions for improvement provided by their teachers.
- Too many pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are of a poor standard, despite being a key priority identified in the school's improvement plan. This is

because handwriting and presentation is not being taught consistently throughout the school. For example, we saw in pupils' books titles of work and dates floating above the line and rulers not being used accurately by pupils to underline work. However, where pupils redraft a writing assignment, the quality of presentation of their final draft was generally of a much higher standard.

- The school is vigilant in monitoring pupils' absence. When individual pupils' attendance falls to an unacceptable level, the school is quick to take action and investigate. Where necessary, the school works closely with external partners in supporting pupils and their families to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Evidence seen during the inspection clearly shows that the school is doing all it can to improve pupils' attendance and remove any barriers that may contribute to pupils missing school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- senior leaders evaluate the school's development plan with greater rigour in order to better identify the progress and achievement of individual pupils and groups
- their work in the school focuses more keenly on monitoring the impact of school improvement initiatives and especially the achievement of the most able pupils
- middle leaders are given time to develop their subject leadership skills and monitor pupils' learning in order to gain a secure understanding of how well pupils throughout the school are performing compared to all schools nationally
- higher expectations are set for pupils' presentation of work and that the teaching of handwriting is applied consistently throughout the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the 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

David Edwards  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met regularly with you and the assistant executive headteacher as part of a professional dialogue throughout the day. I also met with members of the directors' governing body, including the chair. I talked to other staff informally during the day. I undertook observations of learning in lessons, either with you or your assistant headteacher. I examined pupils' work, focusing on writing and presentation. I listened to pupils reading aloud. Before the inspection, I examined a variety of documents made available by the school, including the

school's website, published performance data and a summary of its self-evaluation. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and also took into account 21 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and three responses to the staff survey.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry:

- How well has the school addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous report?
  - Is the school's marking policy applied consistently throughout the school?
  - Pupils' progress in developing their ability to write for a range of audiences and at length.
- Attendance – how successfully is the school working with families and external agencies to reduce pupils' absence?
- Is safeguarding effective?