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Mrs Kate Sicolo
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sicolo

Short inspection of Fowey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have high expectations of pupils, staff and governors and act as an effective role model. Following your appointment in September 2017, you have identified those aspects which you deemed needed improvement, presenting a new vision, aims and values for the school. You have successfully gained the full support of staff, governors and the Peninsula Multi Academy Trust. Some new initiatives, such as the introduction of creative new enrichment activities and an after-school clubs programme, have been regarded highly by pupils and parents. Most parents value and support the school. However, a minority are critical of communications between home and school and the clarity of other new initiatives. An example of this is your drive to reduce school absence figures.

You have an accurate understanding of the school's current performance. Leaders and staff have worked hard to improve the school's assessment procedures to take account of the raised expectations in the national curriculum. Increasingly, middle leaders, as well as senior leaders, play an effective role in making sure these changes strengthen teaching and pupils' learning. Governors know the school very well. Their challenge and support to leaders have contributed strongly to school improvement. Throughout the school, teachers now have a more consistent and accurate understanding of what pupils are capable of achieving, resulting in more rapid academic progress.

You have improved the school in some major respects and have a vision to improve further the standard of education provided at Fowey Primary School. You and your

staff have refined the assessment system, which now allows you to check pupils' progress more accurately. This, in turn, helps staff determine swiftly which pupils would benefit from additional support. You have used your pupil premium funding to improve the writing skills of disadvantaged pupils as well as supporting their emotional and behavioural needs. You have sent teachers to examine practice in outstanding schools, which has helped make their teaching more effective, particularly when challenging pupils to achieve higher levels.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to make sure that pupils' writing skills were as good as those in reading and mathematics. My observations of pupils' learning in lessons and books showed that pupils are making good progress in writing, with many pupils achieving the higher levels. Attainment in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was as good as reading at both expected and higher levels and better than standards expected nationally. You were also asked to monitor carefully the progress of boys so that it matched that of girls in the Reception class. Boys now achieve equally as well as girls in all areas of learning. Additionally, the proportion of boys achieving a good level of development in 2017 was higher than that of girls.

The previous inspection identified the need to raise the quality of teaching by helping pupils to improve their work so they are able to reach the higher levels. The school was recommended to ensure that activities were finely matched to the differing abilities in class. Leaders have dealt with this area effectively. Most teachers now ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, have work specifically matched to their needs. The feedback that pupils receive from teachers is effective in improving their learning. However, occasionally the level of challenge is not exactly matched to the abilities of pupils. As a result, they find it difficult to explain their reasoning when solving mathematical problems. This slows their progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since your appointment you have significantly strengthened procedures for keeping pupils safe from harm, such as implementing a new morning 'dropping off' procedure that staff monitor carefully. You and your governors asked the Peninsula Multi Academy Trust to undertake a safeguarding review and are taking steps to deal with the actions required as a result of this. Leaders and administrative staff complete frequent additional checks to ensure that records and safeguarding policies, as well as training for staff, are now up to date and fit for purpose.

The school has also strengthened procedures for keeping vulnerable pupils safe from harm. Your work with external agencies and with parents is increasingly helping families who are experiencing a time of crisis. The school has improved procedures for checking pupils' personal development as well as their academic progress. This ensures that pupils' needs are identified and supported at an early stage.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and this is supported by the large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire. Attendance is improving slowly, although it is still lower than in schools nationally. Persistent absence has declined considerably this year, particularly for those whose attendance has been far too low for some time. This is largely due to your uncompromising stance on working with parents to improve the attendance of their children in order to raise achievement. This action has not been popular with a few parents.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how leaders ensure that good progress is maintained throughout key stage 2; how effectively core curriculum subjects are taught across all key stages; how evaluations of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment bring about an improvement in standards; and how well the school keeps pupils safe. You have a vision for where you want the school to improve and those aspects which need further development. However, written comments from parents responding to the online questionnaire, Parent View, indicate that a few are unhappy with some of the positive initiatives you have taken.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was above national standards, both at expected and higher levels. However, not all pupils who achieved well in key stage 1 achieved these higher levels in key stage 2. In response, you quickly provided staff with high-quality training. You also enabled them to visit other schools to learn from outstanding practice. As a result, teachers are now better able to plan work that challenges pupils of all abilities and develops their skills so that they make better progress. Increasingly, teachers present pupils, particularly the most able, with tasks that require them to think more deeply. Occasionally these tasks are too complex, and pupils have difficulty in explaining their reasoning to others.
- In mathematics, pupils are more able to solve problems confidently. However, pupils' ability to explain their methods is not yet extensive enough to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Since the start of the year, pupils write with greater fluency and with increasingly accurate spelling. They use their imagination well to create characters and atmosphere when writing stories. While many pupils develop the skills to write at the higher level, a minority of pupils are not making rapid enough progress to achieve these levels.
- You are successful in ironing out any inconsistencies in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. This is because you and your middle leaders monitor the policy and practices of teaching and learning regularly. Pupils' progress and achievement are still better in mathematics, although their reading and writing skills are improving considerably.
- You and other leaders have rightly identified that some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, have not made rapid enough progress in recent years. You have taken firm action to strengthen the support for these pupils across the classes and make better use of additional

funding. For example, the inclusion of disadvantaged pupils in 'writers block' sessions helps them acquire strategies to improve their writing skills.

- You and other leaders check that the staff support pupils' different needs effectively, including those pupils who have additional needs and disabilities. Teachers now have a better understanding of pupils' needs and starting points. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils identified as needing extra help. Their work with pupils in groups and individually accelerates pupils' progress and improves their literacy and numeracy skills. It is evident that pupils enjoy lessons and that teachers help them when they do not understand something. However, the application of aspects of your policy and practice to support learning in the classroom, such as peer support, is not consistent across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that pupils, particularly the most able, make more rapid progress across key stage 2 in reading, mathematics and writing by:
 - ensuring appropriate challenge in lessons for all targeted pupils to achieve the higher levels
 - making sure that all classes across the school have consistent processes in place to support learning
- ensure that when initiatives for school improvement are introduced they are clearly justified and communicated effectively to the parental community.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

With the chief executive officer of the Peninsula Multi Academy Trust, we agreed the timetable and activities at the start of the inspection. I worked extensively with you, reviewing pupils' books and progress together. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. Together, we visited all classes across the school. We scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks and I spoke with pupils in line with our agreed lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-

evaluation summary, development plan and minutes of governing body meetings. I took full account of the 65 responses to Parent View, including the free-texts received for the inspection.