

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 April 2018

Ms Susannah Storey
Headteacher
St Levan Primary School
The Bottoms
St Buryan
Penzance
Cornwall
TR19 6HD

Dear Ms Storey

Short inspection of St Levan Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 the school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead and support your dedicated staff team with enthusiasm and a determination to achieve the ambition of providing a school 'where all pupils shine for life'. You make sure that pupils' welfare is at the centre of all decisions and that every child is valued and cared for. All the staff members who responded to the staff questionnaire said that they are proud to work at the school. They value your leadership and feel respected by school governors and by the local community.

School governors are passionate about maintaining high academic standards and levels of care for pupils. They provide the right balance of support and challenge to you and other leaders. Governors have a deep understanding of the performance of different groups of pupils. They regularly gather information from parents, carers and pupils and act on the excellent advice offered by the local authority consultant. Governors use this knowledge to ask you the right questions.

The school listens to and works closely with parents. Parents who spoke with me during the inspection, and those who responded online, were impressed with the high quality of education provided by the school. They also noted the strong support given to meet pupils' individual needs. One parent stated, 'The school educates with kindness, passion and the highest of expectations.' Another commented, 'I feel lucky that my child can have such a fantastic primary education.' Parents told me that they were particularly attracted to the school by the wide curriculum and focus on giving pupils exciting first-hand learning experiences. These experiences enable pupils to demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the

wider community and the diverse nature of the country as a whole.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to ensure that teachers shared more fully in taking responsibility for sustaining improvements in teaching and learning. You were also asked to enable all pupils to develop higher aspirations for their own achievement. You have secured high-quality training for teachers, and this has led to a significant rise in collective leadership across the school. Teachers and support staff apply themselves diligently to their leadership responsibilities. They seek out the latest research and liaise with other successful schools to find the most effective teaching and learning approaches. An example of this is the research undertaken by the leader of mathematics. She has reviewed findings from studies of the most effective schools in the country that have mixed-age classes. The school has adopted many of the recommendations, and this has sharpened practice in mathematics teaching and learning in both classes.

Since the previous inspection, school leaders have enabled pupils of all abilities to become responsible for monitoring their own academic progress. Pupils in both classes can describe in detail how well they have progressed over time. Pupils of all levels of ability are appropriately challenged. During the inspection, all pupils in a mixed-age class were working with enthusiasm through a series of progressively difficult mathematics challenges. I asked a pupil what would happen when he finished the task he was working on. He told me, 'There will always be another challenge! I love that!'

Improved teaching has led to significant improvements in pupils' outcomes in reading and writing in all year groups. Progress has also been good in mathematics. However, you are aware that fewer pupils have reached the higher levels in mathematics than in reading and writing. You are also aware of the need to continue working with families who struggle to ensure that their children attend regularly so that overall attendance at least matches the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Training is up to date, records are well maintained and you make appropriate checks on staff before they start employment. Governors play an active role in ensuring that there is a strong culture of safeguarding and monitor it closely. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe and that leaders and governors listen to any worries and act quickly to address any concerns. Leaders and governors challenge external agencies effectively in order to gain the best possible support to meet identified needs.

Pupils know how to stay safe in school, in the community and when online. They gave me very useful advice to follow when using social media or computer games. They said that bullying is very rare and this was further verified by the positive responses from pupils and parents to the online questionnaires. All parents who spoke with me during the inspection said that their children are happy and safe at your school. Parents described a caring ethos that 'permeates ... the whole school community' and staff who are 'extremely kind to the children'.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus.

- The first line of enquiry considered how effectively leaders ensure that teachers challenge pupils to achieve the higher levels in mathematics. While outcomes in mathematics were close to the national averages in 2016 and 2017, no pupils reached the higher levels at key stage 2. Similarly, very few pupils have reached the higher level in mathematics at key stage 1.
- Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' progress in mathematics in all year groups, as shown by the ongoing improvement in pupils' workbooks. During our visits to classrooms, in both key stages, we looked for examples of pupils being challenged to reach the higher levels in mathematics. I talked with pupils from every year group and asked them to show me the progress that they are making over time as shown in their workbooks.
- I found clear evidence that teachers, in both classes, have high aspirations and challenge all pupils appropriately. I spoke with a number of pupils who were working at greater depth in mathematics. For example, I spoke with two most-able pupils from Years 4 and 5 who were working on a higher-level challenge along with Year 6 pupils. They both accurately described their calculations to solve multi-step, algebraic mixed-fraction problems. One of these pupils asked if I would like to hear him recite pi to 30 decimal places. On completion of this task, he said, 'Now, I used to be able to do this to 60 decimal places!' Other strong examples of pupils working at a deeper level were the mathematical challenges pupils created for the school's Twitter page. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks confirms the school's assessment that at least two of the current Year 6 pupils are already working at the higher level in the subject.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are also challenged to work at greater depth in mathematics. During the inspection, the teacher challenged Year 1 pupils to use technical descriptions for shapes. The pupils worked in small groups, sitting back to back with a collection of three-dimensional shapes. As one pupil described placing a shape on a surface, the other followed without looking. Part of one Year 1 pupil's description included, 'Now, place the triangular prism onto the rectangular face of the cuboid and put the square-base pyramid on top with the triangle side up.' Progress in pupils' workbooks shows that a number of key stage 1 pupils are working at the higher levels.
- The next line of enquiry assessed progress against a recommendation from the previous inspection. This was to ensure that all teachers become more involved in leading improvements across the school. You have made sure that teachers have been given opportunities to improve their leadership capacity. Your improvement plan requires 'all staff supported to take on an area of leadership, linked to the school improvement plan and their professional development with all accountable.'
- Teachers and support staff have risen to the challenge of taking on leadership roles. This has resulted in a shared approach to leadership in which staff members actively seek out professional development opportunities. Pupils' rising outcomes in English and mathematics provide evidence of the positive impact of improving leadership and the adoption of effective teaching and learning strategies.

- The final line of enquiry investigated what action leaders have taken to improve pupils' attendance. Overall rates of absence at the school have been lower than the national average over time. However, in 2017, the rate of persistent absence rose to a level well above the national average. Leaders have introduced a wide range of strategies to improve attendance, and these are leading to better attendance figures for the current year. Governors have worked hard to find solutions for families that struggle with this important aspect of school life. They are particularly proud of the school's use of 'flexi-schooling' that encourages families who choose to teach their children at home to try school life for agreed periods. This approach has led to a number of families deciding to enrol their children full-time. The current attendance rate for all pupils is improving, but is still below the national average. Leaders acknowledge that improving attendance remains a priority for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current effective initiatives become embedded so that more pupils achieve higher levels in mathematics at both key stages
- rates of persistent absence continue to reduce so that pupils' attendance is in line with national averages.

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

Paul Hodson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, various school leaders, the chair of the governing body and the local authority consultant. We visited both classrooms to assess the progress being made by pupils. I looked at pupils' workbooks and talked with pupils in classes and at a separate meeting. We considered the school's information on the progress being made by current pupils.

I looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. I looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the single central record and examples of recent referrals made to external agencies. I also assessed current rates of attendance for groups of pupils and considered the school's approach to flexi-schooling. I gathered views from parents and took account of 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed several free-text responses from parents and results of the staff and pupil questionnaires.