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Mr Chris Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wilson

Short inspection of Blackwater Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since that inspection, the school has joined the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust, consisting of 20 schools.

You have high aspirations for the school, which are shared by your dedicated staff team and well-informed governing body. You are rightly proud of the school's ethos of inclusivity where every child is valued and cared for. Staff expect that all pupils will achieve their potential regardless of background, prior attainment or additional need. A good example of this is the effective provision for vulnerable pupils that have moved from other schools. Skilful, nurturing support is enabling these pupils to integrate effectively so that they become fully involved in the life of the school.

The school values its partnership with parents and carers, who are encouraged to play an active role in their children's learning. For example, parents of children in the early years have opportunities to add to the school's detailed assessments of their children's learning. Parents say that this is giving them a good understanding of how to help their children with their learning at home. One parent, who summed up the views of many, wrote, 'The learning opportunities they provide are incredibly varied and very inspiring.'

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to ensure that all teachers challenged pupils effectively and gave feedback consistently so that pupils knew how to improve. You and your colleagues have introduced a new assessment system that is understood by staff and pupils. Teachers use this approach effectively to plan learning

activities that meet pupils' needs and challenge pupils to work at increasingly higher levels. Leaders' close tracking of pupils' progress enables them to provide timely interventions where necessary.

You have made sure that high-quality training has been provided to improve the skills of teachers and teaching assistants, particularly in mathematics and writing. You have also ensured that pupils and staff are aware of the learning expectations for each stage of the pupils' journey through the school. Staff and pupils refer to these when they are describing the progress that pupils are making and workbooks show lively conversations about learning when pupils respond to teachers' challenges.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong and staff are clear about how to report any concerns. You have ensured that staff and volunteers are trained in identifying and supporting pupils who face risks, including from sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Your child protection records show that you take swift action when you identify that a child needs additional support. When required, you seek external support for pupils and families and challenge agencies if you believe that more can be done.

Pupils told me that they are well looked after at school. They said that bullying was very rare, and they gave clear explanations of whom they would talk to if they had concerns. Nearly all parents who completed the online questionnaire stated that their children are happy and safe at school. One parent wrote, 'Each child is treated as an individual and their needs are respected, which promotes feelings of safety and happiness.'

Appropriate checks are made of staff before they start employment. You are aware of the need to ensure that all safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed by governors and are readily available on the school's website for parents.

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 leaders are ensuring that pupils in key stage 2 are reaching their potential in writing. This has been identified as a key priority for the school and is in response to falling outcomes in writing in the 2017 national assessments, particularly for writing at greater depth.
- Your detailed analysis of pupils' current progress in writing shows that standards are rising across the school. Work in books shows that teachers are challenging pupils to write at higher standards and to understand which features improve writing quality. Pupils can describe how teachers are helping them to improve. One pupil commented, 'The teacher asked me to use fronted adverbials and this has helped my description to flow better.' You accept, however, that pupils' writing in subjects across the curriculum does not match the quality of their writing in English workbooks. You recognise that it is important for pupils to use their improving writing skills to enhance their learning in all subjects.

- The next line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders are acting to improve outcomes in mathematics in key stage 2. Outcomes in mathematics were in line with the national average in 2016 but fell in 2017, with just above half of the cohort reaching the expected standard.
- This aspect has featured on the school's improvement plan for the current year and school leaders have secured effective support from other schools in the multi-academy trust. The leader of mathematics across the trust has provided effective training for teachers and support staff across the school. Consequently, standards in mathematics are rising throughout the school.
- Pupils' workbooks show that teachers and support staff are challenging pupils to reach higher standards in mathematics. For example, higher-ability pupils in Year 5 were successfully tackling multi-step problems during the inspection. They explained how they needed to call on a range of mathematical skills to solve problems faced by people in real-life scenarios. One Year 5 girl noted, 'This is really hard but I love it!'
- The third line of enquiry assessed how well leaders check that additional funding is used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils were strong compared with national averages. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils were weaker in 2017 and you immediately carried out an assessment of provision to check that funding was being used effectively for these pupils in all classes.
- Through our discussions, it was clear that staff have an in-depth understanding of these pupils and the barriers that they encounter. Leaders and staff use innovative, flexible approaches to ensure that provision is carefully tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. Staff use displays of work across the school to showcase the strong progress being made by disadvantaged pupils and by pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The next line of enquiry investigated why the attendance of vulnerable pupils was below national averages and assessed the impact of actions taken by leaders to address this. In 2016 and 2017, rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were well above national averages. Leaders and governors know individual pupils and their families well. Leaders have introduced a wide range of strategies, including the employment of an educational welfare officer. Attendance rates are improving for these groups but are still below national averages.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the extent to which leaders have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding across the school. This was selected for enquiry because some of the school's policies relating to safeguarding had not been reviewed at the required review date.
- Our discussions and scrutiny of safeguarding documents and procedures clearly indicate that the school is safe for pupils and staff. Staff are well trained and jointly work to provide a secure, nurturing environment for all pupils. You agree that the information on the website does not accurately convey the strength of safeguarding at the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of writing in subjects across the curriculum matches the quality seen in pupils' English workbooks
- leaders refine their monitoring systems to enable them to rapidly identify, and address, gaps in the attendance of groups and individuals
- information on the school's website complies with requirements and gives parents an accurate view of the school's work to safeguard pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer, 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, your senior leaders, governors, the chief executive officer of the trust and the trust's mathematics leader. We visited each classroom together to observe learning and behaviour. We looked at pupils' workbooks throughout the school and talked with pupils in each class and at a separate meeting. We considered the school's information on the progress being made by current pupils across the school.

We 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 central record and examples of referrals made to external agencies.

I gathered views from parents and took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I received several free-text responses from parents, a record of a telephone conversation made to Ofsted and results of the questionnaires for staff and pupils.