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Mrs Nicky Edmondson
Headteacher
Penair School
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Dear Mrs Edmondson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Penair School

Following my visit to your school on 23 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure, through robust and frequent monitoring, that the agreed characteristics of classroom practice are secure and visible in all subjects
- ensure that actions taken to improve the school are measured against clearly defined success criteria linked closely to students' attainment and progress
- use the outcomes of the recent external review of governance, the planned training and the Ofsted survey report, *School governance: Learning from the best* to support the work of the governing body in evaluating the performance of the school and holding school leaders to account
- ensure staff and the governing body are familiar with the findings of the Ofsted report, *The Pupil Premium: how schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement* and its supporting tools in order to develop teaching and raise standards for this group of students.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, four members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's post Ofsted action plans, together with other documentation including governing body minutes and your changes to the assessment, tracking and reporting system. Documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and the management of teachers performance was also discussed. We also visited two lessons and looked at a sample of students' books.

Context

Since the previous inspection a new headteacher and three new teachers in science, mathematics and history have been appointed.

Main findings

You have made good use of the recommendations from the section 5 inspection to raise expectations of students' achievement through a direct focus on improving the quality of teaching. Your senior team, staff and governors recognise that a relentless and successful focus on ensuring that all students make progress in line with their capabilities will be crucial for the school to be judged good. All know that achievement is inconsistent for different groups of students, particularly boys, students eligible for the pupil premium and disabled students and those with special educational needs. Consequently, procedures to track the progress that students make within subjects and across the school have been significantly strengthened. Greater clarity and higher expectations about how teacher's performance is managed means that your staff are more accountable for the progress their students make. This is reflected in your post Ofsted action plans which set out clearly what needs to be done. However, not all of the success criteria are linked precisely enough to students' progress. This inhibits the ability of leaders and governors to evaluate clearly the impact of action taken.

You have overseen the introduction of a new and more comprehensive system for assessment, marking, feedback and reporting. The establishment of a set of 'non-negotiables' for classroom practice has been instrumental in setting out your expectations of good teaching. Already, the changes are beginning to provide all staff with a clearer understanding of the progress of students across the curriculum. You and your senior leaders are working more effectively to strengthen middle leadership through support and training and by delegating more responsibility to them. However, too much variation within and across subjects still exists and you recognise that these 'non-negotiables' now need to be fully embedded in all lessons across the school if students are to achieve in line with their capabilities.

Governors have yet to securely establish their important role in routinely challenging the school for tangible evidence of the impact of actions taken and the difference it has made to students. However, a good start has been made and the latest governing body minutes demonstrate a growing understanding of performance data and confidence in holding school leaders to account. At the same time, governors are making appropriate use of an external audit to improve their effectiveness and have recently audited their skills and experience. Governors recognise that there are gaps in their knowledge, particularly with regard to how performance data can be used precisely to drive more rapid improvement for different groups of students, including those eligible for the pupil premium. A new training programme has been drawn up to further improve the work of the governing body but it is too early to judge the impact this is having.

I will carry out a return visit specifically to monitor the impact of your work to improve the quality of teaching and the work of the governing body. Where necessary, I will provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The governing body have brokered an external review of governance led by a National Leader in Governance (NLG). Discussions with governors and a scrutiny of the latest minutes of meetings demonstrate the impact of this work to develop governor skills and expertise. Arrangements have been made for the school to work with a local school, rated as outstanding. Although the school is non-maintained a visit has been arranged by a local authority representative to discuss how they may work together in the future.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority for Cornwall and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector