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Mrs Dianne Jones
Headteacher
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Higher Trehaverne
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Dear Mrs Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE School, Truro

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 second 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We jointly observed six lessons and looked at pupils' books and teacher's planning. Most of Year 6 pupils were visiting the secondary school they are moving on to in September. I examined the school's information on pupils' progress, attendance, and the quality of teaching. I also examined the local authority's monitoring reports and minutes of the meetings of the governing body.

Main findings

The headteacher, governors, deputy and middle leaders are tackling the areas for improvement identified in the last s5 inspection with rigour and determination to provide the highest quality of education possible for the pupils. Consequently, rapid and sustained improvements are evident in all aspects of the school's work.

The quality of teaching and learning is now consistent and more effectively promoting the progress of all pupils. In particular, teachers' marking is helping pupils to know precisely how to improve their work. Pupils are given time to respond to teachers' comments and teachers make sure that the improvements are being made. The local authority has asked the school to share its practice in marking with other schools.

Lesson planning is shared with teaching assistants so that they know what is expected of the pupils they support. The teaching assistants are developing skills in questioning the pupils, rather than giving them the answers, to develop their thinking and understanding. This is leading to better progress, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The previous gap in achievement in English and mathematics between disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and all other pupils, is closing rapidly. Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) are making better progress than others overall. Leaders and managers are monitoring their progress regularly and are making sure that the funding provides additional support to develop their literacy and mathematics skills.

All pupils, including the most able, are being challenged to make more rapid progress. This is because teachers are making better use of information about pupils' progress to plan lessons that meet their needs. As a result, the school's information indicates that attainment is likely to be above the national average in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' attendance is also likely to be above average.

During the visit, pupils' enthusiasm for learning was palpable and contributed to their improving skills in English and mathematics. Children in the Reception class showed high levels of engagement and skill in using 'ipads' to make films about the pirate stories they had written. They used the technology confidently and could explain the decisions they made about the back drop 'locations' for their pirate peg dolls. They referred appropriately to the beginning, middle and end of their texts. In Year 1, pupils made good use of the high quality displays to help them with their spelling. Year 5 pupils wrote a biased report on a 'quidditch' match based on J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter' books. They wrote at length, using complex sentences and joined handwriting, and thoughtfully edited each other's work.

Progress in mathematics was also evident across the school. Year 2 pupils were busy finding bar codes in the school grounds which linked to different levels of mathematics challenges on their 'ipads'. They applied a range of methods in solving problems such as calculating the total number of legs on 21 spiders. In Year 3, pupils enjoyed challenging each other to locate places and animals such as kangaroos, on maps of commonwealth countries, using either two or four coordinates. Year 4 pupils also challenged each other, this time to explain the equivalence between decimals and fractions.

Through creative curriculum planning and improving the quality of teaching and learning, all leaders and managers are ensuring that improvements are sustained. The improvements are underpinned by rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, including lesson observations, examination of pupils' books and analysis of the information on pupils' progress. This informs the school development plan, which in turn is evaluated by the leadership team and governors to make sure that all pupils are making as much progress as possible. For example, recent actions include extending teachers' skills in checking pupils' progress during lessons and in adapting activities, the pace and their questions to promote consistently good progress for all pupils. Pupils are now using their individual targets, and teachers' written comments in marking, to improve their work.

I recommend that the next section 5 inspection is brought forward.

External support

The school is briskly and successfully acting upon external advice from the Ofsted monitoring visits and Getting to Good seminar, the local authority termly monitoring visits and its training for governors. It is also making effective use of the 'Achievement for All' initiative funded by the local authority, particularly in engaging parents in its work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector