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2 July 2015

Mr B Storry  
Headteacher  
Mount Tamar School  
Row Lane  
Higher St Budeaux  
Plymouth  
PL5 2EF

Dear Mr Storry

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mount Tamar School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. 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:

- improve the quality and use of the school's development plan so that
  - it can be robustly used by all staff and the governing body to measure successes and identify areas where further improvements, or adaptations, need to be made
  - the document is used to regularly measure the students' achievement and raise standards, particularly for the most able
- help raise students' achievement by cross-referencing information relating to students' attendance, behaviour and participation in lessons, using this to ensure students are reaching their potential
- improve the rate of students' progress in mathematics to mirror that seen in English.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers for primary, secondary, curriculum and accreditation, two members of the governing body, and the school's improvement partner to discuss the action taken since the last section 5 inspection. The school's draft development plan was evaluated. A selection of students' books, the school's documentation about students' progress, behaviour, and attendance and actions taken since the last inspection were scrutinised. Twenty-one parental responses to the school's own questionnaire were taken into account. The inspector visited the 'Diggin It' alternative provision and the 'Estover' site that the school is considering using.

## **Main findings**

A draft development plan has been drawn up that focuses on what needs to be done to help the school improve to being good or better. It makes clear who is responsible for planned actions. However, too much of this is allocated to the senior leadership team, and in particular the headteacher. The plan does not yet ensure that teachers and those with specific leadership and management responsibilities are sufficiently accountable for making sure that planned actions are timely and are of high quality. Too many of the intended outcomes do not link precisely with students' achievement. This makes it difficult to judge whether an action has been successfully completed or to adjust it quickly if progress begins to falter. Not enough focus has been given through the plan to help ensure students reach their academic potential by the time they leave the school, particularly the most able.

Weekly meetings with the local authority education welfare officer, individual attendance contracts and frequent meetings with families have helped students improve their attendance. Rewards are now offered to students when their attendance improves, which has increased students' motivation to attend school more regularly. As a result, unauthorised absences have dropped and attendance continues to improve. In addition, exclusions and students exhibiting extreme or anxious behaviours have decreased. However, the school does not have a robust monitoring system to link students' attendance, behaviour, and involvement in, and punctuality to, lessons. Consequently, leaders cannot easily see patterns in individual student's behaviours and readiness for learning over time. This hampers their ability to identify where further changes can, and should, be made to keep students calm and focused on learning. The school is aware of this weakness and has invested in a new electronic system to bring this information together so it can be easily analysed and acted upon quickly. It will be deployed from September 2015.

Since March 2015, there has been a big drive throughout the school to improve students' literacy. Greater emphasis has been placed on developing students' writing skills in all classes and through all subjects. This has raised the profile of literacy throughout the school with the result that students' progress in English is improving. There has not been the same emphasis to ensure mathematical skills are being

developed as frequently. Consequently, although improving, students' progress in mathematics is slower than for English.

Since the last inspection, changes have been made to the curriculum, with a greater proportion of time being allocated to the teaching of English and mathematics. More opportunities for students to undertake work-related and vocational activities are planned for September 2015. The organisation of the off-site units has also been changed. Although early indications are positive, it is too soon to judge how effective these changes will be in raising students' standards and improving students' behaviour. New school events, such as a revision evening for parents and mock examinations for students, have helped to increase the involvement of families in students' education, which they like.

The school has judged that the current website is not fit for purpose. A new website has been commissioned and is due to be initiated by September 2015.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Vacancies still exist on the governing body, including that of the Chair of the Governing Body. Nevertheless, members know what they need to do because of the good quality training and support they have been given through the local authority. Newly elected members have a good range of experiences and skills that complement and enhance each other. The local authority is aware that the school continues to need support to ensure that teachers' expectations of what students should achieve are sustained. They, and the school improvement partner, are providing good quality support to help the school on its journey to get to good and beyond.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**