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Mrs I Bennett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bennett

Short inspection of St Wenn School

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 2016, 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 February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Your school is a place where pupils arrive and are eager to participate in the interesting activities that await them. Parents, staff and pupils all used the word 'family' to describe the caring, friendly atmosphere at St Wenn. They told me that regardless of differences in their age, all pupils work and play well together in a supportive, welcoming environment.

Your clear focus on developing a nurturing community in a secure environment is striking from first entering the school. Pupils learn in a caring way, at ease with their peers, where adults teach them to respect each other and play their part as responsible members of the wider school community. Your 'community' and 'whole child' values are at the heart of the curriculum and underpin everyone's approach. Values such as sustainability, democracy and tolerance are strongly promoted and taken very seriously. Pupils understand that such qualities will enable them to become responsible citizens of the future. Differences are celebrated and the importance of equal opportunities advocated.

Alongside your strong commitment to developing pupils' personal qualities sits an equally determined ambition that pupils will also do as well academically. You check the progress that individual pupils are making regularly. You continue to amend your approach to align with the government's new arrangements for assessment.

It is clear that you have tackled the two concerns from the previous inspection.

Pupils' books show that the school's marking policy is being used consistently and pupils are very involved in improving their work. Your strong commitment to raising pupils' wider cultural awareness is evident across the curriculum and exemplified by a lesson in Indian dance provided by a visiting dance teacher from Leicester.

When pupils leave in Year 6, they do so with a good foundation in reading, mathematics, and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Attainment has been above average in these areas in recent years. You, your staff and governors have worked hard to improve writing and this has proved effective. Pupils' writing in 2015 was above average but not as strong as other areas. In Year 1, pupils' attainment in the national phonics check (the sounds that letters make) has been above average for the past three years. Disadvantaged pupils, though very small in number, achieve very well. Their attainment compares favourably with pupils from non-disadvantaged backgrounds.

Safeguarding is effective.

All involved in the school community are deeply committed to keeping pupils safe. You make sure that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date and regular, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. Thorough written records provide a high degree of reassurance in the way incidents are immediately picked up and tackled. Pupils and parents are confident that issues are followed up. Pupils are knowledgeable about matters of safety through activities planned in the curriculum. Daily routines such as walking to the village hall or church for assemblies are used well to reinforce aspects of road safety, for example.

Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development promotes their positive behaviour where respect and courtesy are the norm. De-escalation strategies are emphasised through your anti-bullying and behaviour approaches. Where pupils may display some inappropriate behaviour, you have appropriate strategies and training in place for staff to deal with any incidents safely. Your strong commitment to pupils' safety is demonstrated through your plans to further develop your work on 'e-safety'. While perfectly adequate, you feel greater involvement from staff, pupils, parents and governors would further enhance this area. Effective links are evident with external agencies to cater for vulnerable pupils. Overall, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. However, you are concerned that when you identify concerns with pupils' health needs, these are not acted on quickly enough or meet the threshold for intervention.

Inspection findings

- You and your governors are immensely proud of your school community. You are very proud of the learning that is taking place at the school but are aware there is always room for improvement. Your enthusiasm for the school, pupils and your work spreads across to staff at all levels. It is clear that everyone enjoys playing their part in making life at St Wenn interesting and exciting for your pupils.

- You draw on your partnership work with the Lanhydrock Trust well to identify what can be learned from the latest educational thinking or through conducting joint moderation activities. New ideas are thought through and introduced carefully. Approaches to the design of the curriculum or for tracking the progress of each pupil are reviewed before becoming established policy. You capitalise wisely on the opportunities the Trust provides. Teachers work closely to moderate pupils' work or benefit from training and to share their expertise.
- Staff who spoke to inspectors are fully supportive of your leadership. They are happy to be a member of the school team and this permeates through their work. Teaching is monitored through a variety of means and a range of information. Records of lesson observations provide some 'broad-brush' statements on pupils' learning rather specifying the precise gains in pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding. At times, it is difficult to see how monitoring links to the priorities set out in the school development plan and associated training for staff. These weaknesses restrict the ability of the governing body to establish if planned actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are successful.
- Governors provide a good degree of challenge for the school. Minutes of meetings illustrate frequent checks and questioning on strategic matters. Governors are familiar with the broad messages from the headteacher's report and local authority notes of visits. Board members know pupils extremely well and talk knowledgeably about the school's next steps.
- Your approach to developing pupils' spelling and handwriting skills is working as you had hoped. Teachers model handwriting well and promote accurate letter formation carefully. Engaging tasks allow pupils to explore suffixes and prefixes whilst also developing their concentration and resilience when spelling more complex words. Pupils use their good handwriting and knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to write in a range of contexts and genres effectively. As a result, pupils are spelling accurately with handwriting that is well-presented.
- You and your governors have rightly asked why standards in writing are not matching those achieved in other subject areas. Our joint book scrutiny pointed to some variation in practice across the school. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 build on their skills well over a sequence of lessons day by day, week by week. Older pupils cover a broad range of genres and activities when writing. However, work in their books lacks the depth of learning required to help them to immerse themselves deeply when composing texts. This is particularly the case for the most-able pupils and is holding them back from reaching their full potential.
- When we looked at pupils' mathematics books from Years 2 and 3 together, you were quick to identify the lack of variety in problem solving to fully stretch the most-able pupils. Training from the Cornwall mathematics hub is improving pupils' depth of learning in Years 4 to 6. For example, a wide range of methods to build pupils' knowledge and understanding of fractions is evident in their work. Where it is not evident, activities tend to be somewhat 'piecemeal' with not enough emphasis on developing pupils' deeper understanding of 'number', a requirement of the new National Curriculum for mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all pupils are challenged and stretched to reach their full potential, especially the most able, by:
 - developing the mathematical curriculum in Years 2 and 3 so that pupils are provided with a greater variety and depth of number problems and puzzles to solve
 - planning activities systematically and in depth in order to develop pupils' skills in written composition in Years 4 to 6.

- monitoring activities focus on precise gains in pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding and align more closely with the priorities set out in the school development plan and training for staff.

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 Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, five members of staff, and pupils. I spoke with four representatives from the governing body. I accompanied you on visits to lessons and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I took into account the survey results from Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire for parents, together with responses to discussions with pupils and staff. I spoke with pupils from across the school to discuss their work and gain their views of the school. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and reviewed a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.