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Susan Evans
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Dear Mrs Evans

Short inspection of Garras Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 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 December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There is no complacency and the school has had to rise to new challenges as pupil numbers have doubled since your appointment in 2013. There are three classes now instead of two and a new staff team is in place.

Parents' satisfaction with the school is extremely high; all parents who responded to Parent View recommend the school to others. Typically, they describe it as 'a happy place for pupils to thrive and learn'. Parents describe teachers as having 'contagious enthusiasm' and 'exemplary dedication'.

You have developed a strong leadership team across the federation of Sithney and Garras primary schools. This has strengthened expertise within the school. Together with the strong governing body, you hold teachers to account stringently for their work.

You are right in describing Garras as 'a school for everyone'. Pupils were observed running and skipping to school in the morning with beaming faces. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is a delight. In lessons, pupils engage in purposeful discussion about their learning. They have a clear understanding of the things they do well and where they need to improve. They are eager to talk about what they have learned and demonstrate a keen sense of responsibility to find things out for themselves.

Alongside your strong commitment to develop a love of learning in staff and pupils, you demonstrate a determination that academic standards will continue to improve. You have tackled the two issues from the previous inspection robustly.

The previous inspection report identified that teachers need to use the assessment information of what pupils know, understand and can do to inform planning. Leaders are providing teachers with effective challenge and support to help them meet every pupil's needs. As a result, pupils are making more rapid progress.

The previous report identified the need to make school self-evaluation more detailed. Senior leaders are incisive now in their analysis of how well pupils are achieving. Very small cohorts make direct year-on-year comparisons difficult. However, it is clear that the school's weaker aspects, such as writing in key stage 1, are now much stronger. Local authority checks confirm the accuracy of teachers' judgements.

Even so, there are issues that the school knows it has to address. These are ensuring higher rates of attendance and further improvements in teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff at the school provide pupils with high-quality care. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure; parents agree with this. Recruitment checks, training logs and records are meticulous. Safeguarding procedures are appropriate, recorded clearly and effectively applied. Leaders are tenacious when working with other partners and agencies to provide support for those families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school's website and weekly newsletters provide a comprehensive range of helpful information on e-safety. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know that it is important not to share personal information on the internet.

Inspection findings

- You and your governors tackle issues in a considered manner. The recent rigorous recruitment procedures employed by the governing body reflect the commitment to 'get it right' for the school. Governors share your ambition and provide good support. There is a strong degree of challenge. Governors show a good knowledge of the school's work as well as a firm understanding of their strategic responsibilities. For example, governors made the decision to federate to secure the immediate future of the school.
- School improvement plans target key areas and have clear timescales for improvement. Leaders' close attention to detail and support for teachers has been instrumental in the strengthening of standards. Subject leaders have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school.

- The school's curriculum is broad and well balanced. Its success is reflected in the pupils' good rates of progress. It enables all groups of pupils to develop a curiosity for knowledge. This was seen in the way pupils embraced the whole-school project 'What a disaster'. They discovered facts about natural disasters in the world and explored the science behind them. This included some thoughtful homework. Parents and pupils are unanimously positive in their views about the homework the school sets and how this supports pupils' learning.
- Younger pupils have benefited from strong teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make). This helped them to read well and spell accurately. Younger pupils demonstrate a sense of pride in their handwriting. The written work by key stage 2 pupils shows that, relative to their age, they do not consider the audience for whom they are writing. They do not have the same degree of care as younger pupils. Inaccurate spelling mars some of the older pupils' writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is stronger because of the clear guidance and support of the subject leader. Staff are more confident teaching the revised national curriculum. Pupils' basic mathematical skills are well developed. They talk positively about their enjoyment of mathematics. However, as yet, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply mathematical reasoning to deepen their learning.
- The school does much to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are highly reflective about matters of personal responsibility and belief. Cultural visits, such as one to the Houses of Parliament, provide pupils with opportunities to consider democracy in a broader national context.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress. They receive close support. Carefully planned programmes are effective in helping them to develop strategies to be successful.
- Pupils follow the school's chosen approach to teaching conscientiously. Pupils think for themselves, try to find out, then ask their peers or the teacher. The school calls this the 'brain, book, buddies and boss' sequence.
- In the past, there has been insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, their progress slowed. Leaders' effective analysis of pupils' progress has resulted in teachers having higher expectations for these pupils, which has halted the trend.
- The school emphasises the importance of good attendance through the school's website, weekly newsletters and rewards. The breakfast club has played a significant part in getting pupils to arrive on time and ready to learn. Attendance of the most vulnerable pupils has improved and is now in line with that of others in the school. However, overall attendance remains stubbornly below the national average. Your analysis shows that this is a result of holidays taken in term time. You have tackled this issue but it remains a priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance improves to be at least in line with the national average
- planned experiences for pupils in mathematics fully develop their conceptual understanding and reasoning skills
- teachers communicate the highest expectations of pupils' presentation of writing, particularly in key stage 2.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders to discuss your self-evaluation. I spoke with four representatives from the governing body and held telephone conversations with your school improvement partner and a local authority adviser. I accompanied you and your assistant headteachers on visits to lessons and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I took into account the results from the online Parent View survey. I spoke with pupils from across the school to discuss their work and gain their views of the school. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.