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3 February 2017

Tom Harman
Executive headteacher
St Martin-in-Meneage Community Primary School
St Martin-in-Meneage
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Dear Mr Harman

Short inspection of St Martin-in-Meneage Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are working effectively with the academy directors and your staff to safeguard pupils' entitlement to a good-quality primary education.

Following the previous inspection the school faced a period of unsettling change. The closure of your pre-school in December 2016, falling pupil numbers, a complete change of teaching staff and two unsuccessful reorganisation attempts eventually resulted in the school becoming part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) in 2014. This has resulted in a welcome period of stability for the school that is allowing you and your staff to focus on ensuring that the few remaining pupils in the school receive their entitlement to a good education. You and your directors are working closely with the regional schools commissioner to review the long-term future of this school.

Along with your directors and staff, you acknowledge that the MAT has been a lifeline for this school. You have worked closely with directors since the previous inspection to ameliorate any negative changes, particularly in staffing, that might have had an impact on pupils' learning and progress. To this end, leaders have worked determinedly to establish mutually beneficial working relations with other schools in the academy trust. For example, the youngest pupils in your school now travel once a week to a nearby partner school in order to participate in joint-

learning activities. Pupils who spoke with me said they enjoyed these times, especially as they were able to get to work and play alongside other children and make new friends. Senior leaders recognise the positive impact this work is having on developing pupils' self-confidence and independence. Parents similarly say they appreciate the increased social interactions and learning potential these visits offer their children. Teachers are now wisely planning to make sure similar, further visits provide for pupils' academic as well as social learning.

The professional development of all staff has been enhanced through the MAT. For example, teachers regularly meet together to keep up to date with safeguarding requirements, as well as to review the quality of pupils' work across the MAT and compare outcomes to national expectations. Teaching assistants' training and development is similarly incorporated into the MAT's improvement plan. However, the impact of teaching assistants' work is not currently evaluated as thoroughly as it is for teaching staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including directors, have successfully established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils are learning in a stimulating and spacious environment. Staff are regularly trained in ways to keep pupils safe. They have a very good knowledge of the pupils in their care and are particularly vigilant to spot any child who might be at risk from harm. Records show examples of how leaders take swift action to address safeguarding concerns. This has helped to keep children safe and to stop issues escalating unnecessarily. Staff work closely with external agencies, when needed, to ensure that pupils are well looked after. Pupils who spoke with me said that they felt safe in school at all times. Pupils know there is an adult in the school to whom they can turn if anything is worrying them. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are compliant with current regulations and are fit for purpose. Records of any behaviour concerns are clearly recorded. However, the monitoring of pupils' behaviour is not regularly recorded so that trends in behaviour can be spotted and reported to directors.

Inspection findings

- This is a significantly smaller school than when it was inspected last in 2011.
- Pupils continue to thrive and benefit from receiving a good-quality education. All staff are working determinedly to maintain good standards of education for the 14 remaining pupils in the school.
- My initial line of enquiry to find out whether the school remained good was to consider how well leaders had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. These included how well pupils are acquiring their essential numeracy skills; whether teachers' verbal and written comments are helpful to pupils on how well they are working, and what they need to do next to improve; and whether teaching assistants are now better trained to provide support for pupils of all abilities. I found that teachers possess good subject knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils' learning needs well and use this information to plan lessons and experiences that are tailored to

meet the learning needs of individual pupils. Furthermore, teachers are working closely with other colleagues within the MAT to compare the quality of pupils' work with all other pupils nationally. Currently, information provided by the school indicates that most pupils are making the expected good progress, especially in developing their mathematical skills.

- My second line of enquiry asked how effectively the school is supporting pupils within the school to develop their writing skills. Again, you were able to show high-quality examples of pupils' writing in their books and displayed throughout the school. The work on 'Little Red Riding Hood', for example, was successfully completed as the follow-up work with another nearby partnership school. Pupils focused on art, design and storytelling, which led to them successfully completing an extended piece of writing based on the fairy tale.
- In pupils' books, the progression and development of pupils' writing is very clearly recorded. Typically, pupils write clearly and with purpose. Verbal feedback is regularly offered by teachers. Pupils redraft and improve their work in response to their teachers' written feedback. This approach is consistent with the MAT writing policy. Where pupils review their own work in books is also clearly recorded. Grammar skills are taught discretely alongside writing tasks. Handwriting is practised daily and monitored closely. Teachers keep detailed notes on each pupil's progress, which is having a positive impact on the standard of pupils' overall written presentation.
- My next line of enquiry focused on how well the school's senior leadership, including directors, was demonstrating the capacity to drive improvement. In particular, I looked at how carefully actions from the school improvement plan were being monitored and evaluated for the impact they were having on pupils' learning.
- Directors have recently appointed a number of adults from within the learning community, including some parents, to be 'partners in learning'. Their main role is to undertake visits to the school to observe first-hand how the school works. This innovative strategy has the potential to strengthen communications and provide directors with reliable information to hold the school rigorously to account. However, the strategy is relatively new and not fully embedded within the school. Also, the reports and minutes provided by senior leaders during the inspection are overly descriptive and lack evidence of concise evaluative impact.
- My final line of enquiry was about attendance. The most recent published information suggested that there was persistent absence within the school for a few pupils. However, current data for this year showed that overall absence was now back in line with the national average. This is because the school keeps detailed tracking records on each pupil. Where absence becomes a cause for concern, the school is quick to engage with families and work closely with external agencies in order to support pupils' attendance. Other positive strategies, such as a letter home to affirm pupils' good attendance, have been successfully introduced.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- senior leaders' reports to directors include succinct evaluations of the work of the school
- directors clearly evidence in their committee minutes and visit notes the impact of any school improvement work
- all behaviour and critical incident logs are monitored regularly so that trends in behaviour can be spotted and reported to directors
- the work of teaching assistants with pupils is evaluated as thoroughly as it is for teaching staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of directors, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met regularly with you and the assistant executive headteacher as part of a professional dialogue throughout the day. I also met with members of the directors' governing body, including the chair. I talked to other staff informally during the day. I undertook observations of learning in lessons, either with you or your assistant headteacher. I examined pupils' work, focusing on writing and presentation. Before the inspection, I examined a variety of documents made available by the school, including the school's website, published performance data and a summary of its self-evaluation. I made myself available to speak with parents at the start of the day and also took into account the online survey, Parent View.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry:

- How well has the school addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous report?
 - Pupils' progress in developing their mathematical skills.
 - Pupils' progress in developing their ability to write for a range of audiences and at length.
 - How well is the school's senior leadership, including directors, demonstrating the capacity to drive improvement?
 - Are strategies for feeding back to pupils about their work fully embedded

across the school?

- Are teaching assistants now better able to support the learning needs of all pupils?
- Attendance – how successfully is the school working with families and external agencies to reduce pupils' absence?
- Is safeguarding effective?