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Mr Paul Walker
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Paul Walker

Short inspection of Penryn College

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 2017 with Andrew Lovett, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Chris Hummerstone, Ofsted Inspector, 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 April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and other senior leaders provide strong leadership that has sustained the strengths and values of the school and led to further improvements. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and the areas that need some further improvement is detailed and accurate. The evaluation of current pupils' progress and achievement is accurate. You are very well supported by governors who know the school inside out. They are rigorous in challenging and holding school leaders to account. The involvement of pupils in the life of the school, including discussing changes and evaluating their impact, is exceptional. All staff are proud to work in the school.

There is a clear focus on the all-round development of pupils. This is important as many are vulnerable. A significant proportion of pupils arrive in the school with a history of poor attitudes to learning, achievement and attendance. The depth and breadth of senior leaders' understanding of the individual circumstances, strengths and needs of pupils is impressive. It results in well-focused and effective support for those that need it. Pupils speak very positively about the help they receive from other pupils, especially those chosen for this role, as well as from staff. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress, academic and personal, are secure.

The systems for evaluating and improving all aspects of the school are extremely robust. Senior leaders, subject leaders and governors meet regularly on different scrutiny panels. Each panel focuses on pupils' achievement, attendance, behaviour or disadvantaged pupils. The process is highly effective. These panels link well with subject scrutiny and ensure nothing is overlooked.

Expectations of pupils are high and they mostly respond well. The large majority of pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. It was pleasing to see so many pupils and teachers smiling and clearly enjoying themselves in lessons. Pupils in all years mostly get on and support each other really well. However, there are sometimes incidents of unacceptable behaviour. While these are dealt with effectively, you know that the number of such incidents needs to be reduced. You are fully aware that a small group of boys in Year 7 become involved in these incidents and you are working hard with partner primary schools to address this as early as possible. It is noticeable that the number of incidents falls markedly in Year 8 and beyond. This is testament to the effectiveness of the actions you take and how well you learn from your evaluations.

The transition arrangements with your partner primary schools are strong. You have excellent relationships with these schools that ensure that the very large majority of pupils are prepared well for secondary school. However, you recognise that more could be done with the small group of boys whose behaviour and attitudes are not acceptable when they join you.

You are clear about the variability in the quality of teaching and the impact of this on pupils' achievement; some is of a very high quality but it is not yet securely good in a small number of subjects. Teaching and learning are mostly strong in subjects such as English, mathematics and geography, but not consistently strong in, for example, science. Pupils in some classes are not clear about how well they are doing or how to improve their work. Pupils with lower prior attainment are sometimes expected to cover too much ground rather than doing less work well. In science, pupils often do not talk or write about their understanding enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and records meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Staff training is comprehensive and effective; its impact is closely monitored.

Ensuring that pupils are safe and very well looked after is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils are well informed about all aspects of keeping themselves safe including e-safety and cyber bullying through the curriculum, assemblies, tutor time and other focused activities. The regular newsletters for parents often include updates on keeping children safe. Senior leaders recognise the need for constant vigilance to keep up to date with best practice. Leaders keep detailed records which they evaluate carefully to identify and act on the lessons to be learned from any incidents that occur, including the rare racist incidents.

Governors monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding carefully. Regular reports are provided for full governing body meetings and meetings of sub-committees, and these are scrutinised thoroughly. The governors responsible for safeguarding meet frequently with the school safeguarding lead and other staff. Regular formal meetings are supported by frequent informal discussions. Governors are very well informed and fully involved in the analysis of all incidents and identifying and implementing the lessons learned. They ensure that any safeguarding implications are raised at the scrutiny panels. There are detailed and robust arrangements for dealing with concerns raised by parents, and these are rigorously followed.

Inspection findings

- Pupils in all year groups make strong progress in English and mathematics and across a wide range of subjects, but not all do so. In some subjects, teachers do not give feedback to pupils that helps them to be clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work and make more progress.
- Senior leaders know that, for example, achievement in science needs to improve. Science teachers are now clearer about what is expected, for example in the use of investigative work and helping pupils to show their understanding. However, this is not yet fully embedded across the department. Senior leaders have made good use of external support to help a science department that has seen significant change in recent years.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now above average. Leaders are very effective in improving the attendance of pupils who join the school with poor past attendance.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Their attendance has improved to be in line with the good attendance of other pupils. They are now better prepared for their next steps when they leave school at age 16. In previous years the most able disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as expected. This has been tackled well and currently these pupils make at least good progress in all year groups.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported, including in subject classes. They mostly attend well, although some have medical needs that affect their attendance. Overall, they make strong progress.
- The achievement of boys is above the national average for boys. However, senior leaders are fully aware that they do not make as much progress as girls in some subjects. Leaders are tackling some boys' attitudes to their work with noticeable effect.
- The most able pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects.
- There is clear evidence of the impact of leaders' work to develop pupils' reading and writing skills through their subject work. The strategy to develop pupils' numeracy skills is at an early stage. Although some progress can be seen in science, it has had little impact so far.

- Pupils praise the work of the team of pupils who provide support for others. They help maintain the calm atmosphere in the school, listen to other pupils' concerns and provide a link to adults who can provide help. They should be very proud of what they do.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers give clear feedback to pupils that helps them know how well they are doing and how to improve their work
- pupils of all abilities including low attainers are given work that enables them to produce their best work
- pupils can show their understanding through discussions and writing
- their work with partner primary schools helps to equip a small group of boys with the social skills they need to cope with the transition to secondary school.

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

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Discussions took place with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, five members of the governing body and with pupils in formal meetings, in classrooms and around the school. Inspectors also reviewed case studies of individual pupils. A range of documents was evaluated, including the school self-evaluation and the analysis of attendance, pupil progress, destinations and other information.

Inspectors visited classrooms, accompanied by senior leaders, in all year groups and across a range of subjects. They looked at pupils' work and talked with them about it.

Inspectors undertook a range of activities to check the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including checking documents and talking with pupils, teachers, school leaders and governors.

Inspectors took account of 183 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 84 with additional comments, 30 responses to the online pupil survey and the views of 79 staff who completed the online staff survey.