

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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17 March 2017

Mrs Janet Pascoe  
Headteacher  
St Buryan Primary School  
Rectory Road  
St Buryan  
Penzance  
Cornwall  
TR19 6BB

Dear Mrs Janet Pascoe

### **Short inspection of St Buryan Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 March 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 school was judged to be good in July 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school lies at the heart of village life. It is a place where pupils are eager to participate in the interesting activities that await them. Parents, staff and pupils used the word 'community' to describe the caring, friendly atmosphere at St Buryan. Parents particularly welcome the before- and after-school care service for working families. All report that regardless of differences in their age, all pupils work, play and learn together well in a supportive, welcoming environment.

You play a pivotal role in the ongoing success of your school. You use your detailed understanding and knowledge of your pupils to identify any potential barriers to learning and improve the quality of education across all levels in the school. Your approach to developing a nurturing community in a secure environment is evident from first entering the school. Pupils learn in a positive way, at ease with their peers, where adults teach them to respect each other. Your promotion of 'community' and 'all-round' virtues are at the heart of the curriculum and underpin everyone's approach. Pupils' understanding of sustainability, democracy and tolerance are strongly promoted and taken very seriously. Pupils know that such qualities will enable them to become responsible citizens of the future. Differences are celebrated and the importance of equal opportunities advocated. Overall, you are proud of your school and the learning that is taking place, but are aware that there is always room for further improvement.

Your careful curriculum planning is delivering the academic rigour needed, alongside the personal care required to cater for pupils' individual needs well. Pupils' personal successes and academic achievements are celebrated through the colourful and informative displays that also showcase the exciting and rich curriculum you offer. Parents, staff and pupils all recognise the benefits of the outside, 'natural' approach to the curriculum offered. Visits to London and, most significantly, camps on the Isles of Scilly, provide memorable experiences to all, for years to come.

You have successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Your strong focus on pupils' learning habits is developing their ability to reflect on their achievements and identify next steps in learning well. Pupils routinely review one another's work and provide clear points for developing aspects of writing and mathematics, for example. As a result, pupils are clear about what they need to do next to improve their work and achieve well.

The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are highly complimentary about you, your staff and all you do to make their children feel happy and well cared for. All parents feel that their children are safe in school. Parents typically commented on the rich curriculum and projects studied that engage and motivate their children by bringing learning to life.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The welcoming and caring atmosphere created, allied with up-to-date training for staff, ensures that your school has a strong culture of safeguarding. You and your governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and comprehensive. Members of staff are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse and fully understand more complex issues, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Parents are positive about the school's work and the difference it has made to pupils' lives. A particular strength is the way the school works with other agencies and providers at the time of transition in and out of school. This helps to ensure the smooth flow of information and so ensures that pupils' individual needs are met. You are reorganising the significant amount of paperwork involved in record-keeping following your recent office move.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school due to the care and attention they receive from adults. Pupils know how to report concerns and understand the process for doing so. They are confident that staff will help them if they have any issues. Your commitment to pupils' welfare is evident in the way you follow up matters when brought to your attention. Safety also features strongly in the curriculum, helping pupils to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and settings. Pupils are made aware of online safety and taught how to manage risks when working outside in the local environment.

### **Inspection findings**

- We decided to focus on how well pupils, including the most able pupils, are achieving in mathematics. We also looked at how well teaching was supporting

boys' achievement in reading and writing at key stage 1. Finally, we examined how effective the monitoring of teaching and learning was at bringing about improvement.

- Staff spoken to are fully supportive of your leadership. They are happy to be members of the school team and this permeates through their work. You monitor teaching through a variety of means and use a wide range of information. However, records of monitoring activities provide some 'broad-brush' statements on pupils' learning rather than 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. This restricts the ability of the governing body to establish whether planned actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are successful.
- You and your governors rightly explored why the 2016 standards achieved by key stage 1 boys in reading and writing are lower than in mathematics. When we listened to some boys read, you were quick to identify that pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to decode what sounds letters make. You also noted that boys are competent in the 'basic mechanics' of reading. Boys' enjoyment of reading and their success when segmenting more complicated sounds, then blending them to read, was also evident. However, the teaching of reading does not routinely develop boys' deeper comprehension, fluency and understanding sufficiently. A few boys are therefore not catching up to reach the standards expected for their age.
- We also looked at some writing from key stage 1 boys' books together. In some cases, it was clear that boys do not routinely use their knowledge of phonics to aid them when writing and spelling. At times, spelling and phonological errors go unnoticed, uncorrected or reinforced in boys' work. This is also the case in Years 3 and 4, where pupils' presentation is not as good as in other year groups. Work in books therefore illustrates that some boys are repeating the same mistakes.
- Another area we explored was how well girls in key stage 2 were being pushed in mathematics. Your analysis of girls' performance, following results from the 2016 national tests, revealed that they were reluctant to risk error in mathematics. This hindered them from learning from mistakes and bettering their performance. Training from the Cornwall mathematics hub is having a positive impact on developing pupils' depth of learning. Your emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical language and reasoning is ensuring that more girls than last year are on track to go on from their starting points and achieve well.
- The curriculum in mathematics is not, however, enabling more pupils to reach the higher standards. Across the school, concepts are not developed sufficiently well for pupils who are capable of working at a 'greater depth'. Topics jump from one area of mathematics to another and present as a 'piecemeal' approach. As a result, not enough middle ability or more able pupils are progressing as well as their peers, particularly in Years 3 and 4. You are aware of this and have clear plans in place to address this issue.
- Despite these deficiencies in the quality of the curriculum, discussions with Year 5 and 6 girls indicates their good understanding of mathematical concepts. Girls challenged each other well to explain the conundrum of why six divided by one

half results in a larger answer, despite it being a division calculation. Girls demonstrated good reasoning skills when articulating the different operations required between 'taking away' and 'taking away from'.

- Some good curriculum examples in mathematics exist, for instance, in Years 5 and 6. Complex problems are set which challenge pupils' thinking well, such as calculating the perfect angle to perform a 'dab' or to make a 'bottle flip' land successfully. Pupils confidently use technological devices to measure and calculate angles and reason why they are the perfect angle to make the 'dab' or bottle flip work. Some pupils apply algebra to explain their thinking well and thoroughly engage in the 'contemporary' activities planned.
- Your increased focus on the most able pupils' achievement is raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils are capable of. Pupils spoken to about reading showed a good understanding of more complex inference and deduction skills. When studying texts in detail, the contents are used to establish different ways of interpreting books. Your ongoing focus on developing pupils' resilience when tackling more challenging work is also paying dividends. Pupils also enjoy the new approach adopted to challenging their learning in daily lessons. Pupils' progress is improving because they are guided well by teachers to select from a range of activities (RAG or red, amber, green) at increasing levels of difficulty.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- monitoring activities focus on precise gains in pupils' knowledge, skill or understanding and align more closely with the priorities set out in the school improvement plan and training for staff
- you continue to embed your work on stretching and challenging the most able pupils across the school
- boys in key stage 1 use the knowledge of phonics and spelling to write more accurately, and those in Years 3 and 4 improve their presentation or written work
- the comprehension skills of boys when reading improves
- the curriculum in mathematics is developed so that understanding of concepts is fully developed within and across year groups and all pupils are supported to reach even higher standards.

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

Richard Light  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

**Information about the inspection**

I met with you, two members of staff and all Year 5 and 6 girls. 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 questionnaire for parents, together with responses to discussions with pupils and staff. I also 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.