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Mrs Julie Curtis
Executive Headteacher
St Mellion CofE VA School
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Dear Mrs Curtis

Short inspection of St Mellion CofE VA Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

St Mellion CofE VA Primary school is part of a federation of two schools, which includes nearby St Dominic School. In your role as leader of Sir Robert Geffery's School in Landrake, you act as executive headteacher across this federation. In this role, you work alongside the head of school, who is jointly responsible for St Mellion and St Dominic. Together, you have led important improvements at St Mellion. You have accurately identified the strengths of the school, and where further improvements are needed. You have focused keenly on the recommendations made at the previous inspection. For example, the quality of pupils' writing continues to improve. Pupils say how much they enjoy their English lessons, and their books show that they write confidently and at length for a variety of audiences and purposes. On the other hand, you rightly recognise that further work is needed to embed improvements in mathematics, and we agreed to make this aspect a focus for the inspection.

St Mellion Primary School is a well-regarded and popular school in the community. Pupils who spoke to me said how much they 'love coming to school' and working with their teachers. They enjoy their lessons and like learning through different themes and topics throughout the curriculum. Along with the head of school, you have worked hard to develop a 'learning community', where staff have opportunities to learn from practice across the federation. Governors, too, reflect on

how effective approaches to governance in other schools can further enhance their own work in support of St Mellion.

During this short inspection, in addition to looking at pupils' learning in mathematics, we agreed to focus on a small number of other areas. Firstly, we looked at how well the school is improving pupils' reading. Secondly, we agreed to consider how school leaders are developing the curriculum. Lastly, we considered the impact of the governing body in supporting and challenging the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff understand their responsibilities well and any concerns about children's welfare and well-being are followed up thoroughly. Record-keeping is detailed and leaders are tenacious in ensuring that any referrals are dealt with promptly by external agencies. Leaders make sure that staff training, including first aid training, is regularly updated. Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are well established.

Attendance is above average and leaders make sure that any concerns to do with pupils' absence are looked into carefully. Bullying is very rare and is tackled promptly and effectively. A pupil said their school is a 'happy school where everyone gets on with one another.' Through the curriculum, pupils learn about staying safe and living healthy and active lives.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' focus on improving reading is developing well. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and to develop their comprehension skills. Children who spoke to me said how much they loved reading and enjoyed tackling 'harder books'. Older pupils in particular read confidently and fluently, with good pace and expression. Although actions to raise the profile of reading are bearing fruit, leaders have not thought enough about how they will know that these actions are having the impact they intended. For example, some parents felt their child's reading had not benefited enough from the new approaches being used.
- I also saw the progress you are making in improving teaching and the curriculum in mathematics. There is a good focus on developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in mathematics, and on improving their problem-solving skills. However, pupils' work and my discussions with them showed that the development of their deeper understanding and reasoning in mathematics is inconsistent across the school. Leaders rightly recognise that this is a key next step. For some younger pupils, their untidy presentation of work in mathematics is occasionally a factor that holds them back.
- Leaders are working hard to establish an effective curriculum. Your aim is for the curriculum to be engaging and challenging enough to raise standards further. We agreed that some pupils should be doing even better, particularly children currently in school who have achieved well in Reception and in key stage 1. However, it is clear that improvements to the curriculum are having a positive impact. Pupils enjoy the different topics and themes which help them to make

links between different subjects, for example when they applied their knowledge of living and working conditions in Victorian Britain to their writing in English.

- Although there have been recent changes to the governing body, the impact of governance is developing well. Governors are improving their understanding of the school, including through visits to meet with staff and talk to pupils. Nevertheless, they rightly recognise their role should be strategic, including, for example, their scrutiny of how additional funding is used to benefit pupils. They are open to advice and guidance to help them to do this. They are ensuring that a small number of policies in need of review are updated promptly. Governors also agreed that there was scope to share what they do more clearly with parents and the community, including on the school website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- continue to raise pupils' achievement and enjoyment in reading and mathematics to match that in writing
- develop teaching and the curriculum to improve pupils' understanding and reasoning skills in mathematics
- ensure that action planning makes clear how the impact of new initiatives will be measured and evaluated
- further develop governors' strategic role, including in holding the school to account for the impact of its work and through raising the governing body's profile on the school website.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held various discussions with you and with the head of school. I also met with staff at the school and spoke both formally and informally with pupils at times throughout the school day, including listening to six pupils from Years 2, 5 and 6 read. I looked at school improvement planning, assessment records and the school self-evaluation. I scrutinised safeguarding records and considered evidence of how staff and governors assure pupils' safety, well-being and welfare. Along with the head of school, we visited classes where we also looked at examples of pupils' work. I met with three governors and scrutinised recent minutes of meetings of the governing body. I considered parents' responses to the online questionnaire 'Parent

View' and spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day. The responses of 12 members of staff to a staff questionnaire were also considered.