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2 January 2018

Mr Matthew Strevens  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Matthew Strevens

### **Short inspection of Trythall Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders, including governors, have established a clear vision for the school that is shared and supported by parents, teachers and pupils. You provide a clear ethos for how pupils should be taught. Teachers use the rich, outdoor environment to provide adventurous teaching activities that stimulate pupils' interest in learning.

Leaders are proud of the school and the education the children receive, both in core subjects and in broader preparation for secondary school. For example, a wide range of learning activities ensure that the emotional and social well-being of pupils is at the heart of everything the school does. This pride is mutual and clear from the overwhelmingly positive responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, gathered as part of the inspection. One parent summarised the views of many with the comment, 'Trythall School has a genuine community ethos where every child is included and encouraged to participate.'

In 2017, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was better than the national average. Results for pupils reaching the higher standard were not as strong, but they are now improving. The work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information shows that pupils in Year 6 are making strong progress from their starting points.

Pupils' writing across key stage 2 has steadily improved and this is evident in their writing in English books. Consequently, a quarter of Year 6 pupils are currently working at the higher standard in writing. However, you agree that some aspects of writing development need strengthening further, for example ensuring that pupils are more accurate in their spelling.

Leaders regularly monitor teaching and learning within classrooms and provide constructive feedback on where improvements can be made. However, the outcomes of monitoring of some aspects of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous and this slows the pace of improvement in these areas. For example, in key stage 1, writing activities are not well matched to pupils' ability, which is limiting pupils, especially the most able, from working at the higher standard.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to develop the role of governors by providing training so that they are able to ask more challenging questions about the achievement of the different groups of pupils at the school. Your work in this regard is effective. Governors understand the national assessment information and know that this should be used to compare the outcomes of the pupils at Trythall with those of other pupils nationally. The chair of the governing body, who has high expectations for all members of the school community, leads the governing body well. He, together with other governors, has been instrumental in improving the focus of governance. Consequently, they fulfil their statutory duties well.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors carefully consider serious case reviews and high priority is given to ensuring that pupils are kept safe. You make sure that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is regular and comprehensive, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties.

Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school because of the effective guidance they receive. Focused work on health and safety ensures that pupils are confident and able to explain what they would do to stay safe in the school's vast outdoor learning spaces, including the forest. Pupils report that there is no bullying of any kind in school. They say that such behaviour, which they know to be wrong, is not tolerated.

### **Inspection findings**

- We agreed that the first line of enquiry would be to evaluate standards across key stages 1 and 2. This was because some of the school's previous achievement information was low. However, caution needed to be taken when interpreting previous end of key stage assessments, due to the very small numbers in year groups.
- Teaching has increased the level of challenge for pupils in mathematics this year

with a greater emphasis on problem-solving. Pupils in key stage 2 are solving problems with increasing complexity, reflecting the raised expectations. They also calculate with greater accuracy. Teaching has been adapted to match the needs of the most able more closely. Consequently, pupils across key stage 2 make strong progress in mathematics.

- There was a dip in the number of pupils meeting the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. Inspection evidence demonstrates that over 77% of pupils currently in Year 1 are working at the expected standard. This is evident in their reading ability. However, pupils' writing is less strong because the most able pupils are not provided with writing activities matched to their ability.
- Pupils achieve well across curriculum subjects. Teachers use the inspirational outdoor learning environment to lead practical technology activities, such as designing and making bird boxes. These activities are used effectively to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding and skills.
- The teaching of spelling is weaker than in other subjects, especially for the most able. Teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high and pupils do not have regular opportunities to apply their spelling skills to their writing. As a result, pupils are not consistently using accurate spelling patterns. School leaders have recognised that this is an area for improvement and have recently introduced new approaches to improve the teaching of spelling. However, these changes are still relatively new. Consequently, inspection evidence was unable to confirm any impact on pupils' spelling ability at this time.
- My second line of enquiry explored the impact of leaders' actions to improve the governors' role in asking challenging questions of school leaders. This was a development point at the last inspection.
- Governors provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. They question senior leaders to ensure that additional funding is having a positive impact for disadvantaged pupils. Governors make regular checks, and challenge, on pupils' progress. Consequently, governors are working on the right aspects for improvement. They target their challenge more precisely to ensure that leaders' work to improve standards in spelling across the school has the desired impact.
- My final line of enquiry was to evaluate the impact of the school's systems to ensure that pupils' attendance is good, and particularly in addressing the problem of persistent absence of boys. This was because pupils' attendance has been below national averages since 2015.
- Inspection evidence confirms that there were tangible reasons for lower rates of attendance last academic year. You have implemented a culture of high expectation around attendance, introducing newsletter communication to parents to highlight the importance of regular attendance. You also use external support to follow up any issues or concerns you may have. Consequently, your current attendance rates are now improved.
- Scrutiny of case studies confirmed that the high rate of boys' persistent absence last academic year was specific to the health and welfare of some pupils with

significant medical needs. Consequently, your persistent absence rates this year are lower than national comparisons.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- most-able pupils make more rapid progress in writing to reach higher standards across key stage 1
- teachers have high expectations, insist on pupils spelling accurately and provide pupils with regular opportunities to apply this to their writing.

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

Susan Costello  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Together, we discussed your self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I looked at safeguarding records, including risk assessments and behaviour records. I explored your pupils' achievement record-keeping. I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. We carried out a learning walk in the school. Together, we looked at a sample of books from all year groups. I had a discussion with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school and their learning. I listened to a group of Year 2 pupils read. I also considered the 30 responses submitted by parents through Parent View.