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Mrs Helen Ward  
Headteacher  
Otterham Community Primary School  
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Cornwall  
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Dear Mrs Ward

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

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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. Your school is a joyful, happy and enjoyable learning community where pupils are consistently well cared for. Pupils settle into the school quickly because they see that staff are kind and friendly, and give them enjoyable work that they say is fun. Because of good teaching overall, pupils also make strong progress and leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The curriculum is exciting. For example, in the older years, pupils learn to edit Mayan folktales and make pyramid temples from different materials. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 find out, for instance, about the Greeks, including their culture, their myths and pottery. Lessons are supplemented by a large number of wide-ranging extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils and parents I met told me that they value these greatly.

Classrooms are purposeful learning spaces, where pupils listen well to each other and to adults. During the inspection, we visited classes and saw pupils cooperating happily and sharing ideas so that they could learn together. Pupils behave well and are respectful. They take note of the instructions and advice of staff, try their best, complete their work and greet visitors politely. The many spacious, varied outdoor areas enable pupils to learn well, as well as play energetically.

The school governors hold you to account for all aspects of the school's work. A perceptive chair ensures that he and his colleagues play an effective strategic role in helping Otterham Community Primary to improve further. They also support new

members of the committee to understand their responsibilities, and show them how to ask you searching questions so that any areas of minor weakness are addressed effectively.

You have correctly judged the school to be good. Your reasons are set out in a clear self-evaluation document that contains appropriate evidence from different sources. This includes information about the achievements of pupils, both over time and for each small cohort. You and your staff are using the school's assessment system well. Teachers make accurate judgements of the progress and attainment of different pupils. They are quick to identify where any pupils are not making the gains you expect of them and adjust the curriculum and teaching accordingly. For example, you noted that last year, pupils were not acting upon the written feedback from adults in line with your school assessment policy. You have amended your approach so that more are now using the feedback provided to improve their work further.

Your school development plan is effective because it sets out the correct priorities to move the school on. For example, you have correctly identified that the curriculum in mathematics requires further development. The development plan shows clear actions for improvement across the different priorities. It sets out who is responsible for the actions and when these need to happen. It also sets out clear monitoring arrangements. This clarity ensures that the school governance committee are able to see whether actions have been successful or not.

You continue to attend successfully to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The most able pupils are routinely challenged and strategies to improve their learning are proving effective. A large majority of parents and carers express positive attitudes to the school, stating that their children are safe and happy.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff ensure that pupils are safe. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are kept carefully. All staff receive effective training in safeguarding, and so are vigilant about any of the many indicators of potential abuse. They also understand their responsibility to report any concern immediately. Your proactive approach to safeguarding is evident in the way you use additional external audits to enhance your school's work. For example, to provide emotional support for those pupils who require it. You are not complacent as demonstrated by your wish to move your recording system to an electronic format. Although your current system is perfectly adequate, you recognise a new approach could allow for thorough analysis and follow up of concerns.

Pupils I met said that they felt very safe in school. They were keen to tell me how staff teach them about potential dangers, such as roads, strangers and what to do if there is ever an earthquake. They also demonstrated a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe online or when using mobile phones.

## Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we decided to focus on how well pupils were progressing in their writing, phonics and mathematics. Due to the small numbers in the school, we looked at work from all year groups. We also examined how effective monitoring was bringing about improvements.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates the rich curriculum on offer at your school. Pupils are encouraged to write for a range of purposes and audiences across different genres. Teachers know how writing in different genres should develop, so that pupils become more skilled in their writing. When this is coupled with the technical aspects of composition, pupils make swift progress. This is evident in pupils' work to craft their own versions of Mayan folktales.
- During our joint book scrutiny, you were quick to identify the wide range of opportunities pupils receive to enthuse their development of writing. Effective links are made across subject areas to enhance taught aspects and bring subjects to life. Trips, such as to Newquay airport to observe 'Bloodhound', the world's fastest car, stimulate pupils' interest and link effectively to their understanding of forces in science. You are aware that there is scope to challenge the most able pupils in the younger classes even more, so they are fully stretched in their writing.
- Strategies to improve pupils' performance in phonics are proving successful. On our learning walk, we noted pupils' accuracy in their knowledge of phonics when reading aloud. Teachers and other adults are technically precise with their delivery so that pupils confidently identify sounds that do not conform to traditional phonetic patterns, such the 'a' in want. Such approaches are ensuring that pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check is on track to be at least the national average. Therefore, the firm foundations on which to build future successes in reading are being established.
- Younger pupils make good attempts to use their knowledge of phonics to write accurately. As pupils' writing develops they become more confident in attempting more complex words and spelling. Some pupils' accuracy is held back due to weaker motor control skills which affect their letter formation.
- Following a review of mathematics outcomes in 2017, your analysis has resulted in changes to the planned curriculum from this academic year. Training and new approaches to develop pupils' mathematical skills are beginning to have an impact. Pupils are being required to think more deeply about concepts and explain their reasoning.
- Scrutiny of books pointed to some minor variation in practice across the school. Pupils generally build on their skills well. Bright and engaging activities are promoting pupils' enthusiasm for mathematics. Precise questioning to check pupils' conceptual and procedural knowledge is helping younger pupils overcome barriers to learning and to make good progress. Older pupils cover a much broader range of activities and topics.
- Occasionally, planned activities fail to build the depth of conceptual understanding, problem-solving and reasoning required for the raised expectations of the new curriculum. Some pupils are moved on to a new concept

without securely grasping the one they are studying.

- Training and collaborative working with other schools is ensuring that all staff are able to contribute more to school improvement than in the past. Leaders hold significant amounts of information on the attainment and progress of pupils. A broad range of monitoring activities is used from which improvements are made. You agree that monitoring needs an even sharper focus on the precise gains in knowledge, skill and understanding made by different groups of pupils. This would allow even more penetrating analyses of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able younger pupils are fully stretched and challenged in their writing
- the fine motor control skills of younger pupils are developed so they can form letters accurately when attempting more complex spelling
- the curriculum in mathematics develops pupils' conceptual understanding alongside their reasoning and problem-solving skills
- monitoring places a sharp focus on pupils' progress, and the findings are used to bring about precise improvements to teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum.

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**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the special needs coordinator. Six members of the governing body, including the chair, met with me to discuss actions taken since the previous inspection. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also met with two parents. We visited classrooms together to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and to review the quality of pupils' work over time. I listened to pupils read and talked informally with them about their experiences of school. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4 to 6.