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Mrs Sue Russell
Headteacher
Jacobstow Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Russell

Short inspection of Jacobstow Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 January 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Jacobstow Community Primary school is part of the Bude Communities' Schools' Trust. The small size of the school brings a particular challenge to you and other leaders in continually refreshing and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within a small setting. The majority of your pupils take advantage of school transport and, as a result, communication with parents and carers is hampered. However, you respond to parents' concerns well and keep them suitably informed about the progress their child makes. You are successful in ensuring that pupils attending Jacobstow are happy and enjoy positive relationships with staff.

Teachers do not use information on the attainment and progress of each individual pupil consistently or efficiently to analyse their achievements. Therefore, teachers do not identify clearly enough pupils' areas of strength and those areas in which pupils still need to improve. Work is not matched well enough to pupils' needs and abilities.

You undertook an analysis following a dip in pupils' performance in key stage 2 in 2017, when progress in reading and mathematics was in the bottom 10% of schools. You have implemented a sharper focus on how far you expect different groups of pupils to progress at set milestones in the year. The progress of an increasing number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, is now improving.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good, although many remain too passive in their approach. Pupils do not have the key skills to enable them to be resilient learners when faced with trickier tasks. Support staff do not routinely reshape tasks in lessons effectively so that pupils can better understand what is required of them to make good progress.

Following a review of the impact of pupil premium spending on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, you and your staff have a common agreement of what you want to achieve for the school. Disadvantaged pupils are making stronger gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of interventions that are better matched to individual abilities and skills.

Reading is a priority for the school. Pupils follow a published scheme to ensure that phonics is taught sequentially. However, the teaching of phonics and reading does not prepare pupils well enough for key stage 1 and beyond. In 2017, the results in the Year 1 phonics check were well below those expected nationally. This inspection revealed some weaknesses in teaching phonics. Some pupils have difficulties tackling unfamiliar words when they are not carefully matched to their reading skills.

Since the last inspection, you have rightly focused on improving pupils' progress across the school, particularly in key stage 2. There has been some improvement following recent staff appointments. However, progress has been too slow for too long. The level of challenge in lessons continues to require further attention in order to be resolved fully by the time of the next inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff rightly place safeguarding at the heart of your work. All mandatory checks and arrangements to check the suitability of staff before they are employed are robust. Procedures for appointing and training staff meet requirements so that staff know what to do in the event of any concerns that pupils may raise. Governors are appropriately trained. You are proactive in working with other agencies to provide effective intervention and support for vulnerable pupils. Statutory requirements are met.

Pupils are happy and say that they feel safe. They know what to do and how to behave in order to stay safe in different situations. For example, pupils told me that they know not to engage in conversations with strangers when working online. Pupils mix happily and conduct themselves well around the school. They do not feel there is bullying and have confidence in staff to keep a watchful eye on their well-being.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders ensure that good teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 2 support outcomes from the early years and key stage 1. You and other leaders check pupils' learning through

book scrutiny as well as lesson observations. You also assess pupils' learning through regular assessment tasks to ensure that there are no gaps in learning and that pupils are not falling behind their peers. However, such checks do not pick up whether pupils' progress is secure from their different starting points. As a result, some pupils slip through the net and do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Progress has declined from 2016 and has been lower than average for the past three years in reading and mathematics. Following the disappointing results in 2017, you carried out a thorough analysis with support from the local authority school improvement partner. Current pupils in Year 6, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are predicted to make better progress this year. Additional interventions to improve self-esteem and resilience, alongside additional academic support which is better matched to pupils' abilities, are improving progress.
- However, pupils make inconsistent progress across the school. This is because work is not matched well enough to pupils' ability, resulting in work that is either too hard or too easy. Where work is too hard, many pupils rely heavily on teachers and teaching assistants to help them understand what they have to learn. This slows down the pace of work and rate of progress. In other cases, for example in upper key stage 2, mathematics problems are better matched to pupils' understanding and learning is more effective.
- My second line of enquiry explored how the teaching of early reading and phonics is preparing pupils to be fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1. You ensure that pupils receive daily phonics teaching and have opportunities to practise using phonics. You also ensure that pupils have a reading book to take home and share with parents. The school's focus on promoting reading for enjoyment, both at home and at school, involves parents where possible.
- Overall, however, the teaching of reading and phonics is not good enough. Some children across key stage 1 are not well supported to learn the letters and sounds expected of them quickly enough. Teachers and teaching assistants do not identify weaknesses in articulation or blending sounds consistently and promptly.
- Teachers and leaders do not have a rigorous system to assess reading and phonics. Sometimes, teachers give pupils activities that do not match their needs and move them on to new learning before they have grasped essential knowledge. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were expected to complete an activity using the words 'pie' and 'tie' before being able to read 'ie' with the correct sound. Additionally, pupils did not have good enough reading skills to read and understand the written questions.
- I also checked on the impact of phonics in pupils' writing. Current pupils achieve well in writing. Your revised tracking system enables you to assess the progress they make more systematically and to intervene quickly if needed. I saw a good variety of writing in pupils' topic work, covering a broad range of subjects.
- My third key line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders ensure that their evaluation of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment brings about an improvement in standards, particularly for

disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged and less-able pupils, did not make as much progress in key stage 2 as other pupils. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils and those of average ability did not achieve the higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics in key stages 1 and 2.

- The school has specific interventions to develop the skills of resilience and independence for disadvantaged pupils, which are starting to show in improved rates of progress. Governors challenge you appropriately on how well you use the pupil premium grant, particularly in helping pupils to achieve the higher levels. This results in teachers giving pupils more challenging work, which improves progress for some pupils. However, leaders are not always aware when pupils cannot access their learning or resources do not meet pupils' needs. Consequently, for some pupils, progress falters.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. Some of the most able pupils are given the same work as other pupils in the class and their progress is very slow. Sometimes, less able pupils have activities they do not understand clearly enough. Teaching assistants do not always play a full role in supporting learning as they do not always understand completely the reasoning behind the activities.
- My fourth key line of enquiry considered pupils' attendance. You work effectively with others, including the education welfare officer, to monitor pupils' attendance. You identify pupils who are at risk of low attendance and work with parents and families to tackle this. As a result, attendance is improving strongly and is just above the national average at this time. Furthermore, the number of pupils whose attendance is persistently low has fallen.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make particularly strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points by:
 - developing pupils' key skills so that they are more resilient learners and can work without being reliant on support from teachers and teaching assistants
 - making sure that teachers pitch work and intervention activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs, particularly for the most able pupils
 - making sure that teaching assistants play a full role in addressing pupils' understanding in order to develop their learning effectively
 - making sure that the teaching of phonics is improved rapidly so that pupils become confident and fluent readers.

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

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you, including sampling pupils' books and evaluating pupils' progress together. I scrutinised safeguarding records and documents related to the school's safeguarding arrangements, including staff recruitment, and training and vetting arrangements. Together, we visited all classes across the school. I listened to pupils read. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and development plan. I also held a telephone discussion with a local authority school improvement partner. I took account of the 16 responses to Parent View, including 11 free-text comments received for the inspection. I also spoke with pupils throughout inspection activities.