

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Joanne Dean
Headteacher
St Ives Infant School
Trenwith Burrows
St Ives
Cornwall
TR26 1DH

Dear Miss Dean

Short inspection of St Ives Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 September 2103.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have strengthened the leadership team, whose members are determined, capable and increasingly effective. You have led the school with positivity, working effectively in partnership with parents and members of the local community. You have developed a strong and positive atmosphere where everyone works well together for the benefit of pupils. Parents appreciate the friendly, welcoming school where staff are, to quote one satisfied parent, 'approachable, polite and simply amazing'. Nearly all the parents who responded to the online inspection survey would highly recommend the school to other parents. One parent explained that the school is 'dedicated to keeping the children safe, happy and enthused about their learning'.

Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning well to deepen pupils' thinking and help them improve their written work. The school environment is bright and cheerful. Teachers use displays of pupils' work effectively to celebrate their achievements and raise their aspirations. As a result, pupils behave extremely well and are motivated to learn productively with each other. Teachers encourage and value pupils' ideas and weave them into their teaching to deepen pupils' learning and secure good progress. You run an inclusive school where pupils feel valued and safe. Regardless of ability, pupils enjoy the challenge that you encourage teachers to offer them based on their individual starting points and needs.

You have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on thorough self-evaluation. Your plans set out clearly what needs to improve with

specific and measurable targets. For example, you identified that since the implementation of the new mathematics curriculum, not enough pupils were attaining the higher levels. You took prompt action to address this, with support from the local mathematics hub. Pupils' attainment at higher levels is increasing and was above national averages in the key stage 1 tests in 2017 in reading and mathematics. Pupils are clear about how well they are doing and what needs to improve.

Aspects of phonics and spelling were required areas for improvement in the previous inspection report. Leaders' actions have brought about an improvement in pupils' achievement in phonics so that it is line with the national average. You also increased teachers' focus on pupils using correct spellings in their written work. Nevertheless, teachers' expectations need to be consistently high to gain further improvement in writing and number work. This includes ensuring that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable achieve well.

When the school was last inspected you were asked to work more closely with parents to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. You have appointed a home-school liaison officer to work with parents to address this issue, particularly where their children's attendance has been intermittent. As a result, attendance is slowly improving, and persistent absence is declining. Nonetheless, highlighting the importance of regular attendance with parents continues to be a priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

The caring ethos in the school is evident and pupils' safety and well-being are paramount in the school. You have a good understanding of pupils' specific needs and parents typically comment that you deal with issues quickly and sensitively.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. You have made sure that recruitment procedures and checks on adults working and volunteering in the school are robust and thorough. Governors have a broad range of skills which they use well to support and challenge leaders to evaluate and improve the school. For example, they regularly check the school's single central record and other documents. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures. You liaise effectively with external agencies, when appropriate, so that pupils get the extra care they need.

Comprehensive risk assessments help ensure that pupils and staff are safe. Pupils say that bullying is rare and there is always an adult to talk to if they are concerned about anything. Pupils can explain how they keep themselves safe online and say that they feel very safe in school. This view is supported by most parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I met with you to discuss the key lines of enquiry I would follow. First, we agreed that I would focus on the actions that leaders have

taken to ensure that good teaching, learning and assessment bring about strong progress from children's starting points. Second, I examined how leaders ensure that disadvantaged and most-able pupils are challenged as effectively as possible across the school. In addition, I looked at how leaders ensure that reading and writing are taught effectively so that pupils' skills are in line with national expectations at the end of the key stage. Finally, I explored how leaders have improved pupils' attendance at school.

- Outcomes for pupils at the end of the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 were generally lower than national average figures in 2017. In key stage 1, you have identified correctly that this was largely due to circumstances that were unavoidable and unique to this group of pupils. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has been increasing over time but did not match national figures in 2017. Nevertheless, when matched against their starting points, children's progress was good. However, there are not enough planned opportunities in the Reception classes to develop children's, especially boys', writing and number skills fully. This results in some children not being prepared well enough for the Year 1 curriculum.
- Work in books shows that current pupils are making good progress across the school. Children join the school with a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding which are fostered and built on. They make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. School assessment shows that some children made rapid progress by the time they left the school at the end of Year 2. Most pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Where progress stalls, staff plan carefully designed intervention work to help pupils catch up.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not attain as well as other pupils in the tests in 2017 and a few most-able pupils did not reach the higher levels. Leaders plan learning opportunities to support these groups of pupils and many of them only just missed the levels required. Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress currently, and a higher proportion are meeting the expected standards. Differences between this group and other pupils are diminishing significantly. This is because there is a good range of intervention work to support learning.
- Not enough of the most able pupils who left the Reception Year in 2015 achieved the higher levels in the tests in 2017 in writing and mathematics. Pupils currently in Year 2 show a higher level of achievement in both writing and mathematics, as shown in their books. Leaders have robust plans to improve progress, particularly in mathematics, where teachers plan work carefully in order to deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers and teaching assistants ask challenging questions to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts further.
- Pupils' skills in reading and writing were not in line with national expectations at the end of the early years foundations stage or key stage 1. Pupils can now decode words well and read their own work to edit and improve their writing. For example, they add adjectives and check that their punctuation is correct. Leaders involve parents and carers well in their children's learning, conducting workshops to help them understand how phonics is taught and the new mathematics curriculum. The school also sends out leaflets which help parents understand grammar and punctuation requirements as well as how to support their children's

reading homework.

- The gender differences seen in the outcomes of the early years assessments in 2017 have diminished. Boys are performing equally as well as girls throughout the school. Activities, such as taking a coastal train ride, inspire some high-quality extended writing from all pupils. However, the teaching of writing skills is not consistent across key stage 1 classes. Teachers' level of support and challenge to pupils to write sentences independently differs from class to class. This means that the quality of writing and the language used by pupils varies too widely.
- My final line of enquiry focused on how leaders are improving attendance. Since the previous inspection the appointment of a home-school liaison officer has improved regular attendance by many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. She works effectively with families to help them understand the importance of good attendance. Additionally, she helps sort out practical problems such as getting pupils to school on time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers are consistent in the way they teach literacy skills across year groups so that pupils make good progress in writing
- there are more planned opportunities in the Reception classes for children, especially boys, to develop their writing and number skills.

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

I met with you, other leaders, governors and pupils, and also spoke to a representative of your performance management group on the telephone. Together, we observed teaching across a range of year groups. Together, we reviewed information relating to pupils' progress and achievement.

With leaders, we scrutinised a range of pupils' work and discussed pupils' progress. I took account of parents' views through the 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 15 free-text comments. I had a discussion with pupils from Years 1 and 2 and listened to a small number of pupils read.

I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-

evaluation and development plan. I checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, attendance, monitoring and improvement. I reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.