

20 April 2018

Stephen Mulcahy
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mulcahy

Short inspection of Richard Lander School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018 with Carol Hannaford, Ofsted Inspector and Anita Hemi, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead a highly inclusive school which benefits pupils and the local community. Despite the large size of the school, you have created a strong community which is appreciated by pupils and parents alike. The following parental comment is typical of many: 'Richard Lander school fosters a strong sense of identity and cohesiveness within its pupils and staff.' The inspection team endorses this view. We found pupils respectful of each other and proud of the school and its achievements.

Since the last inspection, you have maintained a focus on teaching. You expect strong leadership in subject departments and monitor this effectively. When issues arise, you are swift to tackle them. This is evident from the overall progress pupils make, which is significantly above the national average. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and has helped keep the school on track. However, as discussed, the planning that emerges from your evaluation is not sharp enough and targets are not easy to measure. You agreed that more precise planning would help governors to improve their accountability checks. In addition, you would like to see these processes used more widely across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Governors and the leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are of a high quality. Staff are trained well on how to keep pupils safe, including from abuse,

sexual exploitation and the influences of radicalisation and extremism. They are vigilant in assessing risks. Leaders meet regularly to make sure that the increasing numbers of pupils with complex needs are well supported. Staff appointed to manage the well-being of pupils work determinedly, yet sensitively, with parents, carers and external agencies to monitor and support them, especially the most vulnerable.

Inspection findings

- First, we looked at any areas of concern with regard to subjects. Mathematics has been weaker than English for the past two years. Your work on reviewing teaching led to improvements in the subject in 2017. You have maintained this focus and have asked external experts to validate your findings. Their reviews provide valuable information which you and the subject leader are putting into practice. Teaching is engaging and pupils are motivated to learn well in the subject. Pupils are making better and more rapid progress as a result. You are aware that this is the beginning of an improving journey and one that must be maintained. Leadership in history is strong. The geography department has been without a substantive head of department this year and a new head of department will take up post in September 2018. Good teaching in languages means more pupils are taking the subject at key stage 4. Consequently, more pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate and the increased number better reflects the ability of the pupils.
- Next, we looked at the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. There is an area resource base for pupils with very complex and high-level needs on the school site. These pupils are part of the school population and their outcomes are included in the school's overall results. You are rightly proud of the work done, both in the specialist unit and when pupils integrate in the main school. The SEN coordinator is a strong leader who has a very good grasp of the progress pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make in school and in the unit. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained extensively to support these pupils. Current teaching approaches are leading to better learning. You and the SEN coordinator are maintaining the emphasis on this work.
- One fifth of pupils at Richard Lander School are disadvantaged. Increasingly, the school receives a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils on in-year transfers. Your inclusive ethos welcomes these pupils into the school. For many, this transfer provides them with a fresh start and they make good progress. There are a few exceptions where progress is slower because pupils have not been in the school long enough to benefit from the extra provision. They are not able to make the rapid progress needed to attain outcomes that reflect their potential. The school works hard to ensure that strong links with local colleges, schools and businesses afford these pupils the right next steps in employment, education and training.
- Finally, we looked at the attendance of vulnerable pupils, the disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Overall school attendance is above the national average and few pupils are persistently absent. Absence rates are higher

for vulnerable pupils. This is because the poor attendance of a small number of young people with complex medical and emotional needs has a disproportionate impact on the attendance of the group. Your highly efficient welfare team check on pupils daily so that their needs are known and met.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in mathematics continue so that more pupils achieve better standards in the subject
- school self-evaluation processes are broadened and sharpened so that they have even greater impact on improving outcomes.

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

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, subject leaders of mathematics and history, and a group of governors, including the chair and vice chair. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons in a range of subjects. Inspectors looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books and considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. We took into account 135 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 108 comments written by parents and the 82 staff responses. In addition, we considered emails received from parents.