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27 June 2018

Mrs Kate Whitford  
Head of School  
Padstow School  
Grenville Road  
Padstow  
Cornwall  
PL28 8EX

Dear Mrs Whitford

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Padstow School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in September 2017.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school should only appoint newly qualified teachers in consultation with the lead inspector, before the next monitoring visit.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2017**

- An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - evaluations of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are accurate
  - those responsible for governance at all levels hold school leaders to account for improving the school
  - those responsible for governance check the accuracy of the information they receive about the school's performance and make sure that actions bring about rapid improvement.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better, by ensuring that teachers:
  - make accurate assessments of how well pupils are developing their skills and understanding
  - use assessments effectively to ensure that teaching and learning build on what pupils already know, can do and understand and so enable them to make rapid progress
  - provide teaching and learning that motivate and challenge pupils to engage fully in their work and become resilient, effective learners
  - check that all pupils understand the guidance they receive and heed this advice
  - fully support children in the early years to develop their learning in mathematics and writing.
- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment throughout the school by:
  - making sure that all pupils across the range of abilities and starting points make at least good progress
  - addressing shortcomings in pupils' arithmetical knowledge and developing pupils' ability to reason mathematically and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems
  - improving pupils' reading skills by encouraging them to more readily use and apply their phonic understanding when tackling new words
  - further developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 7 June 2018 and 8 June 2018**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised safeguarding, teachers' performance and policy documentation. She met with the head of school and the deputy chief executive officer of Aspire Academy Trust (AAT). The inspector also held meetings with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the early years leader, the chair of ATT, a hub councillor (governance), and the pastoral lead. She also met with parents during the two days.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the trust has strengthened the governance of the school. The head of school was made permanent in October 2018. The school has joined a 'hub' of two good and two outstanding schools. There are currently two temporary teachers working until the end of the academic year. Leaders have appointed a new leader of the early years following the retirement of a previous member of staff. A Year 6 teacher who was on a temporary contract at the time of inspection was made permanent in January 2018. In addition, leaders have made a new appointment with responsibility for the leadership of teaching assistants and pastoral care.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Senior leaders have made a resolute start in dealing with the challenges faced by the school. Trust leaders have also responded swiftly to recommendations from the recent review of governance and hub councillors have received training in holding leaders to account. As a result, leaders have been quick to action school improvement. The executive principal is working closely with the head of school to provide effective challenge and support. Consequently, the board and senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness.

The foundations for improvement have been established. Senior leaders have established robust systems and designed cycles for checking the school's effectiveness, which include a clear role for governance. The school's post-inspection plan responds comprehensively to the priorities set out in the inspection report. The plan identifies specific times to review the impact of planned actions. These reviews are suitably spaced to allow time for changes to be secured.

The trust has commissioned an external review of the school's expenditure of pupil premium funding. The review is in progress but is not complete. However, leaders have wasted no time. They have established clear systems for checking the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Previous weaknesses in teachers' use of assessment information in the past have slowed down the improvement needed to

raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils will be a focus for me on my next visit.

The head of school demonstrates strong and decisive leadership. She has challenged teachers to look afresh at how they teach. However, up until this point, there has been a lack of leadership within the school beyond the head of school. Consequently, while there have been improvements in mathematics, developments in other subjects have lacked direction. The quality of teaching across different year groups still remains too variable. Trust leaders recognise that the dearth of middle leadership is holding back swift improvement. Nevertheless, the appointments of a new early years lead and a pastoral lead in January 2018 are positive steps towards addressing the lack of leadership within the school.

The trust has invested in additional hours for the SENCo, following concerns regarding the identification of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders have prioritised this so that pupils who have complex needs receive the support they require. There is still more to be done, however, to ensure the correct identification of pupils' needs.

The majority of parents and carers are effusive in their praise for the current leadership. They comment on improved communication and the head of school's high expectations. However, a small majority of parents express concerns about the high turnover of staffing in some year groups.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Leaders' clear guidance is supporting improvements in the quality of teaching. The head of school has introduced a set of minimum expectations for teachers. These are followed up by personal professional development discussions, which identify future actions for each individual teacher. Teachers are responding well to leaders' clear guidance. However, this work is in its infancy and has yet to result in pupils making swift enough progress to catch up for previous inadequacies.

Developments in the school's system for tracking pupils' progress are helping teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders are in the early stages of gathering an accurate understanding of pupils' achievement. Teachers are moderating their judgements of pupils' attainment with other schools to ensure accuracy. This work is also at an early stage.

The new, rigorous approach to improving the quality of teaching is having some positive impact; however, there is still too much variation between subjects and year groups. There are still weaknesses in teachers' use of what pupils know, can do and understand to accelerate pupils' progress. For example, while effective training in mathematics has led to an improvement in teachers' subject knowledge so that they are more adept at matching work to pupils' needs, some pupils are still sometimes undertaking activities that do not build upon previous learning. Pupils

are compliant and better teaching is engaging more pupils than previously. This is reflected in the reduction in poor behaviour. However, teaching does not yet motivate and challenge pupils to be resilient, effective learners.

The teacher in early years has established teaching and assessment routines that are supporting children's progress in writing in particular. The teaching of phonics is effective in supporting children's early reading and writing. Leaders' investment in resources for mathematics has been effective in supporting children's mathematical development. Leaders recognise that outdoor provision for children is not good enough.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Leaders have introduced a new approach to managing behaviour. This makes expectations and consequences clear to pupils. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are considerate and polite. They explained that behaviour has improved since the inspection in September because 'the new headteacher doesn't let us get away with anything. She is fair but strict'. Pupils' work in books, particularly in mathematics, indicates that pupils are taking greater pride in their work.

Pupils' overall attendance remains below the national average. Leaders are taking a strong stance and are not authorising holidays in term time. However, although leaders are challenging the reasons for absence rigorously, this is currently having little impact. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils.

Senior leaders have ensured that staff training is up to date and in line with current legislation. Trust leaders have insisted on safeguarding audits. These have ensured that previous inconsistencies in the recording and reporting of information have been eradicated.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Underachievement over time has been such that better teaching in recent weeks has not made up for previously weak teaching. However, work in books in Year 6 suggests that more pupils are on track to reach the standards expected for their age than previously.

Leaders' actions are leading to improving standards in mathematics. Pupils' basic number skills are developing and pupils are more adept at explaining their thinking. Teachers are tackling gaps in pupils' understanding. Most of the pupils spoken to said that mathematics was their favourite subject now.

Leaders know that improvements in English are less marked than in mathematics. Their own analysis shows that only half of the school's pupils are working at the standards expected for their age in reading and writing, compared with two thirds

of pupils in mathematics. An analysis of work in books shows variability in pupils' written work. Leaders have raised the profile of reading, with a renewed focus on the teaching of phonics for younger pupils. However, too few of the pupils who did not meet the standard in the phonics check last year have caught up this year.

### **External support**

The trust has provided strong support. School leaders have been proactive in working with good and outstanding schools within the trust. Additional support from the Cornwall Maths Hub developed staff subject knowledge in mathematics and is leading to improved outcomes for pupils.