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Mrs Paula Sharpe  
Headteacher  
Trewirgie Infants' School  
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Cornwall  
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Dear Mrs Sharpe

### **Short inspection of Trewirgie Infants' School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 2018 with Kathy Maddocks, HMI, 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 March 2014.

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.**

The school has faced some challenges since the previous inspection. The school has grown considerably. During this time of rapid expansion, school improvement slowed.

The governing body has been strengthened recently as a result of new appointments. Leaders, including governors, are focused on remedying the remaining relative weaknesses in the school's performance. You have sought guidance about how to ensure rapid progress and have already had some success, with much improved progress in mathematics across the school.

Pupils say that they enjoy their learning. Together with staff and governors, you ensure that the school provides an inclusive and happy environment for all pupils. Most pupils show good attitudes to learning. Typically, pupils are inquisitive about the topics being taught and they respond positively to teachers' questions and guidance.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve teaching so that more teaching challenges the most able pupils. In the early years, more than double the proportion of children, compared to others nationally, exceed the early learning goals in reading, writing and number. However, by the end of Year 2, few pupils reach the higher standards.

The decline in standards at the end of Year 2 last academic year came as a shock to all of your team. You and your deputy have worked with urgency to bring about swift change to the way you make checks on how well pupils are achieving. You have shifted your focus from the progress pupils make within a year to how well pupils are achieving over time. Enhancing your monitoring this way means that you have a greater focus on pupils' attainment. You have rightly identified that there is more to do in this respect.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils are kept safe at school because leaders have ensured pupils' welfare is given a high priority. Leaders' checks on the recruitment of staff are stringent. Leaders make sure that staff are trained well to identify signs of harm. However, more needs to be done to ensure that the safeguarding culture is strong beyond compliance. For example, a few staff who have read the school's policies are still unclear about the 'Prevent' duty. Pupils are taught well about how to keep safe in and out of school and online. Governors make careful and regular checks to ensure that the school is compliant in meeting its statutory obligations. However, more needs to be done to ensure that the safeguarding culture is strong beyond compliance.

Senior staff make well-informed decisions to intervene and respond effectively to concerns about pupils' well-being. Careful records are kept of the decision-making process. Senior leaders ensure that they follow up communication with external agencies so that pupils receive the support that they need in a timely manner.

### **Inspection findings**

- The first area of focus we agreed was to review the actions you are taking to support disadvantaged pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Your own analysis has highlighted that disadvantaged pupils are not catching up with others quickly enough. In the past, governors have invested heavily in several interventions to support these pupils with varying degrees of success. Support for pupils' emotional needs has helped pupils to be ready for learning. However, disadvantaged pupils' academic progress remains weak. Too few catch up from their low starting points to reach the standards expected for their age by the time they leave the school. There is now a sharper focus on the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. You have rightly identified this as a school priority this year and are holding teachers to account rigidly for the progress of disadvantaged pupils in their class.
- We also explored how effective the support is for low-ability pupils and those who receive special educational needs support in phonics and reading. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 has been declining and has remained below the national average. Leaders have invested in staff training and have adopted a new approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. Teachers engender a love of reading. They use questioning well to support pupils' skills of inference and deduction. However, those pupils who need the

greatest support continue to struggle. Teaching does not support pupils' secure acquisition of phonics in order to read and write with accuracy.

- Next, we explored the effectiveness of teaching in the early years in supporting boys' attainment, particularly in writing. Over time, too few boys go on to achieve the early learning goal in writing. Leaders have noticed that boys are not doing as well as girls in writing across all year groups. Effective analysis by the early years leader has identified that boys' under-developed fine motor control limits their ability to write well. A focus on appropriate pencil grip has supported some improvement in boys' writing and mark making. However, teachers are not helping boys to make better progress in writing by building on what they can already do. Scrutiny of boys' writing and mark making showed that where teachers were not making their expectations clear some boys writing and fine control was regressing.
- Another line of enquiry related to the school's effectiveness in supporting the most able writers to make good progress. This area also forms part of your school improvement plan. Until very recently, your checks on pupils' progress have focused on in-year progress. You have not made sure that teachers have a good enough understanding of how pupils achieved prior to joining their class. Following the disappointing writing moderation at the end of the summer term, your 'writing lead' has provided teachers with support and training. As a result, teachers' subject knowledge and skills in assessments are developing.
- However, teachers' expectations of pupils' writing are still too low. When we looked at books, the challenge for the most able writers was not high enough. Too often, pupils are repeating skills they have already achieved. In addition, errors in punctuation, grammar and spelling were repeated. Leaders have failed to identify the extent of the inconsistencies in teachers' application of your revised criteria. We agreed the need for leaders to develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring the effectiveness of school improvement priorities.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the impact of leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance. Some groups of pupils have not attended regularly enough in the past. Too few pupils attend well, particularly disadvantaged pupils. You have worked closely with external agencies to ensure that everything that can be done is being done to ensure that pupils are safe and attend regularly. You ensure that the importance of regular attendance and its effect on pupils' attainment and progress is understood by parents and carers. However, the attendance of some groups of disadvantaged pupils remains low. Leaders and governors know that continuing to improve attendance remains a key priority.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders at all levels check more precisely how their plans are improving pupils' writing and phonics attainment and progress, including for disadvantaged pupils so that underachievement is eradicated quickly
- teachers make good use of what they know pupils can do to plan pupils' next

steps, including for children in the early years

- leaders continue to work closely with families so that pupils' attendance improves.

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

Tracy Hannon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss your evaluation of the school. We visited lessons together with you and your senior leaders, and we looked at the work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning. An inspector listened to pupils read. Additionally, we looked at books and external reports. I also looked at information about pupils' attainment and progress. I spoke with four representatives from the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. I considered the 26 survey responses from Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire for parents, as well as the eight responses to the staff questionnaire. An inspector checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.