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18 June 2019

Mrs Caroline Gilbert
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Dear Mrs Gilbert

Short inspection of Constantine Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 June 2019 with Jonathan Jones, Her Majesty's 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school became an academy in 2016, joining The Learning Academy Trust. This increased the leadership capacity in the school by providing a chief executive officer and an executive headteacher. Since your appointment as the head of school in January 2019 you have benefited from the trust's support. You recognise the confidence this support is giving you in tackling your new leadership role.

You are using your first-hand knowledge of the school effectively to identify what needs to improve quickly and to gauge what to prioritise in improvement planning. You are taking swift action to rectify weaknesses, such as the teaching of phonics, to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are at risk of falling behind, learn to read fluently as quickly as possible. The local advisory board, Trenance Learning Academy, which is a national English hub school, and your staff team are supporting you well in making these changes. You are careful that staff have time to secure new ways of working before moving on to the next new thing and are mindful of workload pressures. You are, wisely, prioritising improving the teaching of reading first, as you know that being able to read fluently is a pupil's gateway to the whole curriculum.

The pupils clearly enjoy attending Constantine Primary and are very proud of their school. Over lunch, Year 3 pupils told me about their lessons, clubs and general experiences of school. They described in detail their favourite lessons, their friendships

and what they had learned during the morning. Older pupils are enthusiastic about learning, whether it is rehearsing their 1940s dance routines for the D-Day landing celebrations in the village, hearing the books the teachers read aloud to them, such as 'Carrie's War' or 'Pig Heart Boy', reading for themselves or learning to swim 50 metres in the 'deepest pool in Cornwall'.

The progress and standards achieved in English and mathematics by most pupils meet national expectations and they experience all the subjects in the national curriculum. However, you have identified that achievement for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) could be better. This is one of the reasons why you are working with a national English hub school and have bought in a new reading/phonics scheme and training to ensure that the pupils in each class at risk of falling behind are supported to learn to read well.

Pupils behaved exceptionally well when they came in from the playground during the heavy rainstorms that descended without warning. They made no fuss while finding space for their soaking coats. They were kind to each other and polite to me as a visitor to the school. The atmosphere in most classes throughout my visit was calm and purposeful. No time was wasted, whether it was Reception learning tennis skills in the hall or Year 4 solving mathematical problems. Pupils focus on their work and respond well to instructions from teachers. However, where staff's subject knowledge was comparatively weaker pupils' attention wavered, and they did not make enough progress. You recognise this and have plans to improve their expectations.

The trust and the experienced executive headteacher are supporting you to challenge weaker teaching where needed and provide coaching and mentoring to ensure that necessary improvements are made. Your commitment to the school, the community and the children of Constantine is clear. Although you are relatively new to your role, staff, pupils and parents testify to the quality of your leadership. One member of staff, representative of many others, said: 'We could not wish for a better leader.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You prioritise the care and well-being of the pupils effectively. Staff know the systems for reporting concerns and, as designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that these are followed up. Pupils talk about feeling happy and safe in school and relationships within the school appear warm and friendly. The vast majority of parents would recommend this school. You encourage pupils to take risks in their play and outdoor and adventurous activities. For example, surfing and other water sports are regular features of the curriculum. Your arrangements for these meet local and national requirements.

Inspection findings

- Your decision to press ahead quickly and send all the Reception and key stage 1 staff on national reading training in support of the new phonics programme is already paying dividends. Staff explained how the training is improving the quality of their phonics teaching and this was evident in most of the reading sessions we

observed together. This is a great start to your improvement plan for reading. You recognise that additional coaching is required for pupils who are not keeping up with their peers. Further training is planned in autumn for yourself and key stage 2 staff to ensure that momentum is not lost.

- You have made good use of funding from The Kernow English Hub at Trenance Learning Academy to buy the additional resources to implement the new phonics programme. You told me that your next priority is to remove the book banded books that pupils take home to practise their reading and replace them with books that match more precisely the phonic stage they have reached. These books are ready to be put on the shelves and be taken to read at home.
- The pupils who are already using books matched to their phonic knowledge are making rapid progress and enjoying the new-found power that being able to decode and recognise words gives them. For example, one child decoded 'k-i-ss' and, once he had read it, turned and said, 'that says kiss!' Smiling at his success he raced ahead, enjoying the text and celebrating his success by repeating the new words he had read several times over.
- Pupils who are fluent readers enjoy the computerised system that provides some competition on the number of books they read. However, this system works less well for weaker readers, because it does not identify what they are struggling with and, so, staff miss some of the issues that are preventing pupils from becoming fluent.
- During lesson observations I noted a wide variety of pencil grips, some of which prevented fluent handwriting. Looking at pupils' books, I could see that the presentation varies considerably. In the lower part of the school, although staff encourage pupils to write, they do not remind pupils how to hold their pencil or correct their grip. This means that good writing habits that lead to fluency are not being reinforced strongly or regularly enough. The standard of handwriting is not strong in the lower part of the school.
- The teaching of science and mathematics is hindered in some classes by the difficulty some pupils have in reading and comprehending the worksheets or questions. The science content of the lessons I saw was appropriate for the age group but, in one class, a small proportion of pupils were struggling to make sense of the words and this was a barrier to their progress in learning science.
- In the wider curriculum, staff make good use of the locality. The involvement in village celebrations of 75 years since the D-Day landings is helping to secure pupils' historical knowledge and respect for the community. You make good use of expertise in school and in the community to ensure the full national curriculum offer. For example, a member of support staff teaches music and pupils in Year 5 were singing confidently along to a CD, practising for their end-of-year production. Parents also support the school, for example offering rugby coaching, while a local illustrator helped Year 6 pupils produce detailed observational paintings of wildflowers. This adds to the positive ethos in the school.
- You have appointed a consultant to be a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to the school. As a temporary arrangement, this is working well. The paperwork has been refined to ensure that the right actions are taken for pupils on

the special educational needs register. The expertise of the SENCo is helpful for staff. However, the SENCo is not an employed member of staff, so this arrangement is not meeting the statutory requirements.

- The curriculum leaders are keen to improve the teaching of their subjects across the school. They feel well supported by you and by the local mathematics hub and other schools in the trust. They work well together to ensure that there is a whole-school approach and are particularly positive about what they have achieved in improving the teaching of mathematics. In discussing the wider curriculum, subject leaders are starting to focus on what they want pupils to remember and the progression that is necessary in planning their subject.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the plans for improving the teaching of phonics and early reading are implemented as quickly as possible; these include the headteacher and all remaining key stage 2 staff attending the national training and facilitating regular monitoring of phonics teaching by the reading leader and/or headteacher
- staff provide additional support for any pupil falling behind in their reading and that this is prioritised regularly
- reading materials match the phonic stage of pupils at the early stages of learning to read to build fluency in decoding
- staff remind pupils regularly about good handwriting posture, particularly when they are first learning to form their letters.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer (CEO) 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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, the CEO of The Learning Academy Trust, the executive headteacher, members of the local advisory board, staff and pupils. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils at work and to look at their books. I heard some pupils read from their reading books and looked at their reading records. I talked to pupils in lessons and at lunchtime to find out their views of the school.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's development plans. I also looked at safeguarding documentation. In addition, I took account of 86 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through the online questionnaire and through discussions during the inspection.