

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Julie Jenkin
Mabe Community Primary School
Cunningham Park
Mabe
Penryn
Cornwall
TR10 9HB

Dear Mrs Jenkin

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Mabe Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 March 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

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 June 2019.

- Improve the impact of governance arrangements, by ensuring that statutory duties are met, including monitoring the impact of the pupil premium fund.
- Improve safeguarding arrangements urgently, by ensuring that leaders, including the trust board:
 - have accurate information about the culture of safeguarding in the school
 - are stringent in checking the accuracy of statutory safeguarding audits
 - ensure that the procedures for keeping pupils safe are clearly understood and applied by all staff, so that any actions required are taken quickly, and in line with current legislation
 - make sure that the school's internet filtering system provides effective protection for pupils when they are online
 - check that safeguarding records consistently meet the requirements as set out in the trust's policies, guidelines and current legislation.
- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, including in Reception, so that it is consistently good, by ensuring that:
 - teaching assistants and support staff are deployed and trained effectively so that their impact on pupils' progress is strong
 - there is a coherent approach to teaching phonics and early reading
 - pupils use and apply their phonic knowledge well to spell accurately
 - the most able pupils are challenged across a wide range of subjects
 - pupils who have low prior attainment or those with SEND receive work that is closely matched to their needs and make strong progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that teaching challenges pupils so that they are not overly passive in lessons.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 3 March 2020

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO of the multi-academy trust, the headteacher, middle leaders and pupils. The inspector also held telephone conversations with the chair of the interim academy board (IAB) and the chair of trustees. The inspector visited lessons in all classes. She scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and a range of relevant documentation, including information available on the school's website and external monitoring records.

The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions being taken by leaders and managers towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

Context

There is a new CEO and strategic leadership structure. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was part of The Learning Academy Trust. This trust combined with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence Trust in September 2019 to form the Kernow Learning Trust. There have been changes to school leadership. The long-standing headteacher retired in October 2019. There was an interim headteacher in place between October and December 2019. A new permanent headteacher took up her role in January 2020.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have implemented improvements across the early years foundation stage. Teaching staff in Reception and in the Nursery work closely together to plan a curriculum that provides challenge and support for the children in their care. Classrooms are safe and vibrant spaces for children to explore. The emphasis on children's early language and reading skills is paying dividends. Pupils demonstrate a lively interest in books and are gaining the necessary skills to read and write well.

At the time of the previous inspection, pupils' success in early reading was limited, because phonics teaching was not regular or coherently planned. Senior leaders are implementing a new phonics teaching programme to remedy previous weaknesses. Staff have received training in the teaching of phonics. As a result, teachers and teaching assistants have a secure grasp of what is required, such as the skills of pronouncing sounds accurately. Children in the early years are developing effectively their skills of segmenting and blending when reading unknown words. Pupils who needed to catch up are doing so. However, the approach is very new and needs time to embed to ensure that all staff are equally competent at delivering the programme.

In the past, the training and deployment of staff did not lead to pupils making strong progress. Teachers' assessment of what pupils know and could do was weak. Leaders are in the early stages of bringing about a more reliable assessment process. Moderation of teachers' judgements with other schools is contributing to this improved reliability. Leaders are tackling gaps in teachers' subject knowledge and assessment strategies head on.

Leaders' actions to prioritise reading, phonics and mathematics are bringing about significant improvements. Better curriculum planning in English and mathematics is ensuring that teaching staff are better placed to know what pupils need to learn next. However, there is more to be done to ensure that other curriculum subjects are planned effectively, so that pupils learn enough in every subject.

The leader for special educational needs has made inroads into the organisation and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. She has begun to monitor the effectiveness of the additional support provided, so that leaders can make informed decisions about the best way to support pupils. This work is establishing a firm basis for improvement.

A growing number of children who speak English as an additional language are joining the school. The curriculum is not developed well enough to meet these children's needs and staff require training.

Changes in teaching arrangements and staff training have contributed to pupils' improved attitudes towards their learning. Most pupils work purposefully and engage fully in lessons. They listen attentively and concentrate well. However, some staff do not follow the behaviour policy as closely as others. Nor do they demonstrate equally high expectations and skill in engaging pupils.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

The trust has successfully appointed a new headteacher. They managed the school's transition through interim leadership well. No time was lost before bringing about the necessary improvements. Support from the trust is building a firm foundation for continued improvements. Senior leaders provide staff with clear guidance. Staff are embracing the changes in the school and bringing them about increasingly well.

The appointment of the new headteacher has served to further steady the school's journey. She has established a well-thought-through plan for raising pupils' achievement. Plans identify appropriate actions and success criteria. Leaders are providing effective training for staff. This is bringing about notable improvements already.

Leaders' actions to improve the culture of safeguarding and keep pupils safe are taking hold well. New policies have been devised and implemented. Pupils say they feel safe in the school, and they are safe. Local authority audits reflect that the trust

has established effective systems. Leaders have made sure that staff know and understand policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Leaders make sure that concerns are actioned appropriately. An internet filter system has recently been implemented. Leaders now need to ensure that these systems embed and are systematically followed.

The quality of governance is strengthening. Trust leaders have kept a close focus on priorities. The IAB continues to raise the bar with its expectations. Governors are now clearer on how to align their work better to leaders' school improvement priorities. They hold leaders to account and work alongside school leaders, so they are well informed. Nevertheless, there has been a delay in implementing the governance review, which is still to take place. The trust recognises that further expertise is needed on the governing body. As a result, leaders are working hard to recruit more governors with the right skillset.

Leaders are strengthening the systems in place to assure themselves that the deployment of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is effective. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work. The pupil premium review is planned to take place next term.

The new headteacher has started to form greater links with the school's wider community. She has developed a strong team ethic. Staff are fully supportive. They are enthusiastic about playing their part in helping the school to improve. Staff feel valued, and their morale is good. They say leaders consider their workload.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The trust's school improvement advisers have played a critical role in supporting the school through a period of change. Trust leaders provide regular, astute advice and challenge to school leaders. Consequently, leaders and staff are united in their efforts to improve the school.
- Leaders' intensive focus on early reading since the previous inspection has reinvigorated the staff team and has driven up standards in pupils' early reading skills.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The school's curriculum beyond English and mathematics has been neglected. Leaders have taken limited action to develop the wider curriculum, including science, history and creative subjects.

External support

The trust provides the great majority of the support for school improvement. Trust leaders have been effective in raising standards. Some additional support is

provided in English and mathematics through local networks sponsored by the Department for Education. The Kernow English hub and the Cornwall mathematics hub have been instrumental in training mathematics and reading leaders to implement effective change in their areas of specialism.