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Julie Jenkin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Jenkin

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Mabe Community Primary School**

Following my visit with Jennifer Gibbs, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 9 and 10 June 2021, 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 to improve the school since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in June 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

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

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Kernow Learning multi-academy trust, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 June 2021**

### **Context**

All pupils have now returned to learning on site. You have considered the impact of the recent lockdowns on how well pupils are learning across different subjects, and you have made adaptations to curriculum plans. Disruption to staffing, seen at the previous monitoring inspection, remains.

We focused on the areas for improvement from the previous full inspection in June 2019. We considered safeguarding, in particular, as this was previously an area of concern. We looked carefully at early reading, mathematics, science and geography. We also considered how disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access your curriculum. We also focused on the impact of governors, and your work to improve pupils' attitudes to learning.

### **The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation**

You and other leaders are tackling areas for improvement effectively. You have rightly prioritised the most urgent and pressing areas, such as safeguarding, before others. While the pandemic has disrupted the pace of progress, the foundations to secure further improvements are in place. You work closely with trust leaders and colleagues from other schools within the trust effectively. Together, you continue to bring about improvements at a steady and sustained pace. Everyone supporting the school on its improvement journey is clear about what you are working on. This focus means they can support and challenge you to good effect.

At the time of the monitoring visit, you were experiencing significant staffing disruption that was beyond your control. Nonetheless, your actions have ensured that interruption to pupils' education has been minimised as much as possible. Staff and leaders are going the extra mile for pupils. This collective effort is paying off. While these staffing issues could have derailed the school's progress, this has not happened.

Safeguarding practice, processes and culture are becoming more and more embedded. Leaders ensure that all staff are subject to pre-employment checks before starting work at the school. This information is kept on the school's single central record, which leaders check and maintain regularly. Staff receive the training they need to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. They know they must pass concerns about pupils' welfare on to designated leaders without delay. Leaders take appropriate and measured action when these concerns arise. All staff who completed the staff survey were adamant that pupils are safe at school.

Phonics across the school continues to improve, including in the early years. You have ensured that a consistent phonics programme is followed by all. The structure

of the programme is helping adults know what to teach and when. Reading books contain sounds that pupils know. This helps pupils to read with increasing accuracy and fluency. For some pupils, reading books are too easy. Staff are not making sure they always provide reading books that keep up with pupils' progress.

The teaching of phonics is on the up, but inconsistencies remain. Where it is stronger, adults keep a watchful eye on pupils' progress and are well placed to respond to pupils' needs. Where it is weaker, adults do not notice how well pupils are getting on and pupils can 'opt out' of activities. You acknowledge that there needs to be greater consistency in phonics teaching by ensuring that more early reading experts are in place, so that all pupils receive an equally strong daily entitlement.

There is a consistent approach to teaching mathematics across the school, which starts in the early years. Pupils have opportunities to apply what they have learned when solving problems. Due to the disruption to pupils' education, you have rightly prioritised developing pupils' number and place value knowledge. To support this work, you have introduced daily 'rapid recall' sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to help pupils recall number facts quickly. However, this is not yet having the desired impact. Pupils struggle to recall facts without relying on prompts and 'working out' strategies.

Pupils' knowledge in science and geography is underdeveloped. The current curriculum plans are not fit for purpose. Pupils struggle to recall what they have previously learned. What they do remember is not helping to prepare them for future learning. Curriculum leaders have developed new curriculum plans, which will begin to be taught at the beginning of the next academic year. These plans consider the early years well, recognising that it provides a foundation for children's future learning. Curriculum plans are high quality and, if implemented effectively, will lead to much-needed improvements. You recognise that curriculum leaders and teachers will need support to bring these curriculum plans to life.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are stronger than before. Pupils want to learn, and their positive behaviour reflects this. Pupils are courteous and polite, and classrooms and communal areas are calm and orderly. In some classes, pupils focus well and engage with their learning fully. However, where the curriculum does not match pupils' needs, they lose focus and disengage from their learning. Pupils told us that there are times when they do not have to work as hard as they could in lessons.

The provision for pupils with SEND continues to improve. Pupils with SEND are involved in all aspects of school life, including before- and after-school clubs, representing the school council and participating in the wide range of off-site activities you offer. You and your leaders have been agile in your response to the changing level of need across the school. For example, you are benefiting from a trust-wide therapist to support pupils' speech and language development. You continue to review pupils' progress to ensure that the help they receive is up to date

and having the desired impact. You include parents in this process. You recognise that pockets of poor practice remain and are actively supporting staff to increase their knowledge and expectations of pupils with SEND.

The provision for disadvantaged pupils is moving forward. You recognise that until pupils can read accurately, many other actions in your plans will not be successful. As a result, you have rightly put phonics and high-quality teaching at the heart of your plans. You are also prioritising pupils' emotional well-being, recognising that pupils have returned to school with increased levels of anxiety. You are completing specialist training, which you will share with all staff so they can support pupils, moving forward. Your work to support pupils from service families is in its early stages. It is too soon to see the impact from the 'Little Trooper' group that has been set up.

Governors are increasing their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are supportive and challenging in equal measure. They know what actions need to be achieved, by when and to what effect. Governors work closely with centrally appointed trust representatives to bring about improvements. They benefit from training and value the network of support from other governors across the trust. This 'joined-up' approach has helped maintain the focus on school improvement in the midst of both a pandemic and disruption to staffing.

### **Additional support**

The school has benefited from intense and successful support. The trust's senior leaders have provided stability during a period of turbulence. These actions have enabled the school to continue moving forward on its trajectory of improvement. Improvements are evident in the areas where leaders have received extra help.

External curriculum experts have supported the school well. As a result, the school is now providing a more consistent approach to teaching mathematics and phonics. This is a significant step forward from the previous inspection. There are encouraging signs that support for the curriculum leaders, who have been developing new curriculum plans, has been effective. However, leaders at all levels now recognise that unless the quality of teaching and assessment are improved, future progress will be limited.

### **Evidence**

We observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, other senior leaders and curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer from the trust. We also spoke with staff, pupils and representatives from the interim advisory board.