

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 June 2022

Matt Oakley
Interim Headteacher
Wendron Church of England Primary School
Wendron
Helston
Cornwall
TR13 0PX

Dear Mr Oakley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wendron Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 May 2022, 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 most 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 October 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Southerly Point Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Truro, 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

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 May 2022

Context

Since the previous inspection in October 2021 there have been changes in the school's leadership. An interim executive board (IEB) took over the governance of the school in February 2022. An interim headteacher was appointed to lead the school while the headteacher was absent. The headteacher has now resigned. Across the school, leadership roles, including that of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), have been clarified. Three teachers have left the school since the inspection.

There are ongoing discussions with the regional schools commissioner about the future of the school. Leaders anticipate that the school will join Kernow Learning Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) from September 2022. Southerly Point Co-operative MAT have commissioned support for the school from Kernow Learning MAT since the inspection. Kernow Learning MAT has provided the interim headteacher, members of the IEB and school improvement support.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

The previous inspection report in October 2021 highlighted the significant weaknesses across the school. There was a great deal to do to ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education at Wendron. The interim headteacher, working with Kernow Learning MAT, has had significant impact. Leaders have worked hard to ensure the least disruption to pupils' learning due to staff resignations. This has been difficult and learning has been interrupted by staff absence due to COVID-19. Staff morale is now high. They say they feel 'refreshed' and are ambitious for the school going forward. Pupils are excited about all the new initiatives that are helping them to learn. Most parents and carers are very positive about the recent improvement in the school. Some feel they are still waiting for the impact of the changes on the learning of their children.

Leaders immediately changed the composition of the classes. Children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) are now taught separately in a Reception class. They are no longer in a mixed-aged class. Other classes were reorganised. This has meant that teachers can focus better on the key knowledge and skills to be covered. Pupils say that they are now learning alongside their friends.

Leaders have introduced a new curriculum. They have immediately assured what pupils should be taught. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It highlights subject-specific knowledge and skills. It is sequenced so that pupils will revisit key knowledge in different years so that they can deepen their understanding. Pupils are enjoying the new topics. They say they help them understand things better. Pupils talk excitedly about what they have learned recently. They enjoy making the links between subjects. It is still early days. Teachers do not yet tailor the curriculum sufficiently to the needs of the pupils consistently well. Assessment is at a very early stage. There is insufficient checking of

what pupils already know and the gaps in their knowledge. This is particularly important, given the weaknesses in the previous curriculum. Some pupils are not challenged enough. Before the previous inspection the school had adopted a new approach to teaching mathematics. This has been developed further. The content to be covered in year groups has been assured. There are opportunities to develop fluency, problem-solving and reasoning. Where it is working well, pupils talk about becoming confident mathematicians. They feel they are ready for the challenge of national assessments and secondary school. Pupils talk about their new learning, using mathematical vocabulary and concepts with increasing confidence. Leaders have strengthened the assessment of pupils by introducing new tests. These have highlighted pupils and groups of pupils at risk of underachievement. However, teachers do not consistently use their knowledge of pupils to understand their different starting points and gaps in learning. This means that the curriculum is not always tailored to pupils' needs, nor is it demanding enough.

Leaders have quickly strengthened the teaching of early reading. They have ensured that the systematic teaching of synthetic phonics is in place from Reception. Staff have been trained in the approach. Pupils learn in small groups that are based on recent assessments. There are clear routines that link early reading to early writing. Pupils read books that are well matched to their knowledge. They practise at home and at school and are developing their fluency and confidence. There is some variation between groups, for example the confidence of staff and the degree to which they adhere to the expected routines and ensure that pupils practise basic skills well. Consequently, when expectations are clear, pupils are developing confidence and becoming very efficient in the way they tackle their work. Where expectations are less clear, pupils become muddled and learn less well.

Re-organising the class groups has meant that the youngest children are now taught in a smaller group. Staff have more opportunities to focus on the early years curriculum. Leaders have ensured that the approaches in Reception to early reading and mathematics are consistent with the rest of the school. They have also planned that the topics covered in the early years curriculum will be revisited so pupils can deepen their knowledge as they go through the school. It is not yet clear, however, how different activities in the early years across the wider curriculum ensure that children develop the knowledge and skills they need.

The SENCo has quickly re-established processes to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Communication with staff and parents is clearer. There is now a clear process of identification, target-setting and review in place. There are appropriate contacts with outside professionals. Interventions for some pupils are now in place.

Leaders have tackled the issues raised in the previous inspection report related to personal development in several ways. Leaders have strengthened the content of the personal, social and health education curriculum. The interim headteacher has strengthened expectations of behaviour so that behaviour is managed consistently. Pupils are motivated to do well and follow the values of the school so that they receive house

points and potentially become 'citizen of the week'. Leaders have also revisited and strengthened the school's Christian values. They have articulated these more clearly, using prayers and parables. They have linked the values with assemblies and special days so that pupils have a deeper understanding of the underpinning Christian distinctiveness of Wendron. Again, work on personal development needs further refinement to ensure that it is tailored to the needs of pupils, and pupils develop their knowledge and understanding effectively.

Staff welcome the opportunities for training and development. They recognise that there have been difficult times since the previous inspection and there has been a lot to do. Leaders have supported them to manage their workload and well-being.

The IEB is becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school. Members have high expectations, are confident and are experienced. However, there is some confusion about decision-making, responsibilities and accountabilities. Southerly Point Co-operative MAT remains responsible, but much of the support, including the IEB, comes from Kernow Learning MAT. This means that the coordination and intended impact of the improvement work are not always clear enough. It also means that there are many priorities at the same time that the interim headteacher and staff have to deal with. Leaders recognise this and the need to articulate more-refined outcomes with clearly defined accountabilities to ensure the removal of special measures is assured in the expected timescale.

Additional support

The school has benefited from the support provided by Kernow Learning MAT. Staff value this support, describing it as 'phenomenal'. Staff from Kernow Learning MAT have worked effectively with Wendron staff so that they understand and can implement the new initiatives. Kernow staff support the interim headteacher with ongoing monitoring and implementation. Leaders recognise that the school needs to further develop its own capacity for leadership, including subject leadership and monitoring.

Evidence

The inspector scrutinised plans and documents and met with the acting headteacher, other leaders, staff, members of the IEB and representatives of Southerly Point Co-operative MAT and Kernow Learning MAT. Across both days, the inspector spoke to a range of pupils. The inspector visited lessons across a range of subjects. The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online parent survey, including the free-text responses.