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27 June 2019

Mrs Anthea Hillman  
Head of School  
Polperro Primary Academy  
Brentfields  
Looe  
Cornwall  
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Dear Mrs Hillman

### **Short inspection of Polperro Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2019, 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 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your governors know your school very well and have an accurate and thorough understanding of the quality of education that you provide. Leaders closely analyse information about all aspects of the school's work then take appropriate action to make further improvements. Your effective liaison with the area executive headteacher and other leaders from the Bridge multi-academy trust ensures that plans are clear and precise.

Your efforts to create a bright and vibrant learning environment ensure that all pupils are warmly welcomed, feel safe and secure and can excel. Leaders have high expectations for pupils, aiming for them to be the best they can be. Effective support is provided to all staff to help them to try new ideas. Many such ideas, your 'visible learning project' for example, have been embraced by the trust and are being shared with other schools. This work has helped to improve and refine the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Your support for teachers to review the curriculum, including developing how reading, writing and mathematics are taught, has proved successful. The quality of teaching across the school in these areas has improved. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to achieve and structure tasks to match the intention. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning. They intervene when required to ensure that pupils know what they need to do. This enables the pupils to remain focused on tasks and ensures that the work is suitably challenging. However, some lower-attaining pupils do not receive enough guidance to enable them to

understand what they need to do next. As a result, they are not all making the same progress that most other pupils are making.

A supportive community ethos is highly valued by parents and pupils. Parents who spoke to the inspector and those who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were full of praise for the school. One parental comment, which is typical of many, stated that the school is 'a welcoming school and really does care about their children and staff'. Many parents and pupils recognise the wider work of the school within and around the community. Current work about healthy living has been recognised with a new 'Sugar smart' award, of which staff and pupils are proud.

The local governing body and the board of trustees are highly committed and very supportive of the school. They have a range of skills and experience that they use to offer leaders appropriate support and challenge. Governors work closely with you and your leaders to understand a range of issues. As a result, the school has securely strengthened its position from the last inspection and leaders are determined to lead the school forward with drive and ambition.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' well-being is given priority and safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Regular training ensures that staff know how to spot and respond to worries about pupils. Staff value this regular support, training and advice. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks on staff and governors are undertaken prior to them starting work in the school. You are well supported by the trust and its safeguarding team to ensure that your safeguarding systems are effective.

Parents, carers and staff are confident that children are kept safe. One parent commented that the school has a 'very safe and nurturing environment'. Pupils agree with this view and were able to explain, with confidence, to the inspector that they know who to talk to when they are worried and that the staff will listen and respond.

Governors are very knowledgeable about their safeguarding responsibilities and they conduct their delegated tasks with diligence. Governors are working with leaders to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Together, they have recognised that too many pupils do not attend regularly enough. They have introduced many initiatives to encourage good attendance. Where these are not successful, they work with external agencies to support families to try and identify barriers to good attendance and find solutions. This is beginning to have some impact and levels of attendance are starting to improve. However, overall attendance rates are still low and the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent remains too high.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I considered the quality of learning in lessons and the work in books of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Together, we agreed that leaders have a clear view of what these pupils are achieving and what they need to do to improve. Effective systems identify the needs of the individual pupils and interventions are carefully planned and monitored. The trust leader responsible for pupils with SEND ensures that training is made available to support all staff in their efforts to meet the needs of these pupils.

- Although inspection evidence shows that pupils with SEND are well catered for, some pupils with low starting points have made enough progress to catch up with their peers. Plans are in place to support these pupils. However, they are not always precise enough. As a result, some lower-attaining pupils are not clear what is required of them to achieve their targets.
- In 2018, disadvantaged pupils were not attaining as well as other pupils. I wanted to find out if leaders' plans to use the additional government funding for these pupils were effective. Leaders have an accurate view of what these pupils need to do and what the potential barriers are that can hinder learning. The trust is providing effective support for leaders to sharpen the strategy for disadvantaged pupils, resulting in more focused plans this year. Leaders regularly check on the progress disadvantaged pupils are making and provide extra support when pupils need it. The work in pupils' books, observations in lessons and discussions with pupils show that these pupils are making the progress they should.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how to improve writing in the early years and at key stage 1. The new school nursery has strengthened early years provision. All pupils in the early years have a wide range of stimulating activities available to them. This is resulting in strong development of language. Throughout key stage 1, pupils use ambitious vocabulary to enrich their writing. Most pupils are making good progress with their writing because teachers provide them with a wide range of writing opportunities. Teachers' use of a wide range of strategies in lessons ensures that pupils are suitably challenged and are successful.
- When considering pupils' current standards in writing, we looked in detail at spelling. The teaching of phonics is of high quality. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and pupils respond enthusiastically to the tasks that teachers provide them. Pupils can recognise a wide range of letter sounds. Teachers encourage pupils to use their phonics strategies in reading and writing activities. Consequently, pupils are making better attempts at spelling common and more tricky words. However, when looking in pupils' work across the school, we agreed that pupils are not applying these strategies in their independent writing. As a result, standards in spelling are too inconsistent.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue the efforts to improve rates of attendance, especially for those pupils who have higher rates of absence

- teachers provide more support to pupils, so they can improve accuracy of their spelling when writing independently
- teachers sharpen their support and guidance for lower-attaining pupils, so they know exactly what to do to make the same progress that other pupils are making.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Walker  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, your middle leaders, governors, trustees and the Area Executive Headteacher and Chief Executive of the Bridge multi-academy trust. Together with you, I visited all classrooms to assess progress being made by pupils. We also reviewed a range of pupils' workbooks together. I made a short visit to the playground during lunchtime. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records. I heard children from Years 1 and 6 read and met with a group of Year 6 pupils. We considered a range of documentation, including assessment information, pupil premium information, your own self-evaluation and improvement plans. I looked at the current rates of attendance. I met with various parents at the beginning of the school day and took account of the 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also reviewed the 12 responses to the staff survey and 27 responses to the pupil survey.