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Mrs Angela Clay  
Headteacher  
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Cornwall  
TR20 8UH

Dear Ms Clay

### **Short inspection of Pensans Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2018, 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 the predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils begin their school life with significant gaps in their knowledge, including in communication and language. As a result, a large proportion of children start school working at levels well below what is typical for their age. Furthermore, the school community is highly mobile. Many pupils leave and join the school at various points of their school life. This is due to changes in social housing and a high volume of movement of families both into and out of the local community. The school serves a community with high deprivation. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is higher than in most schools nationally.

You lead a dedicated team whose members have high expectations for each pupil. The team is unrelenting in its pursuit of higher standards. Each member of the team brings enthusiasm to their role. Under your watch and approval, you encourage them to explore innovative methods to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Leaders have designed teaching and learning methods based on close monitoring of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Each member of your leadership team has overseen improvements in their area of responsibility and more widely across all aspects of the school. They each speak candidly and knowledgeably about every area of school improvement, supporting each other in their roles and working seamlessly as a team. As a result, your school improvement priorities interweave throughout the school, and you have created a culture in which it is 'everyone's business' to improve pupils' outcomes.

Pupils in your school benefit from a unique curriculum. They value the opportunities they have, as they are based on real-life experiences, from appealing for charitable aid to support children in Sudan, to pitching ideas to a local member of parliament through to inviting the mayor to discuss the current issue of plastics in the ocean. Pupils do not see this as 'just learning', but making a difference. They are great advocates for the school's curriculum approach and speak knowledgeably about the difference they are making in the local, national and wider community.

Pupils conduct themselves well across the school. Each member of staff maintains a watchful eye on behaviour. Across the school, pupils are courteous and welcoming to visitors, for example, holding doors open for each other and adults. Nevertheless, staff know that vulnerabilities in the local community can often find their way over the school threshold. Leaders are well prepared to react to live situations in a calm and professional manner. Consequently, actions taken are well informed. Children's welfare is at the heart of every decision.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to consider during the day. Firstly, I considered how leaders' actions have improved pupils' progress in mathematics across key stage 2, particularly for middle-attaining pupils. Secondly, I examined how the teaching of phonics supports pupils across Reception and key stage 1 to make progress in their phonics development. Finally, I checked how leaders' actions have improved pupils' outcomes in spelling, punctuation and grammar across key stages 1 and 2.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have placed the well-being, welfare and safety of pupils at the heart of all that you do. You have ensured that only those who are safe to work with children are appointed through thorough recruitment checks. Once employed, staff have access to detailed and bespoke induction, designed by leaders, to ensure that staff are fully equipped to carry out their responsibilities of maintaining high standards of safeguarding. As a result, concerns are passed on without delay to those responsible for safeguarding, are well recorded, organised and used to inform leaders' actions.

You make sure that safeguarding is a priority for all staff. In order to deal effectively with the high numbers of concerns that are raised about pupils' well-being, you have trained further members of staff to lead safeguarding, and appointed an additional safeguarding officer. Leaders act decisively and effectively when concerns about pupils arise. They pass on concerns to external agencies and follow up, where necessary, to ensure that appropriate support is put in place. You recognise the needs of the community and effectively deploy staff to support pupils who require nurture, emotional support, behavioural support and academic intervention. Furthermore, you acknowledge that staff well-being is paramount. As a result, you offer staff opportunities for supervision, which are gratefully received, and morale is good.

Your actions have kept pupils safe from harm. You can clearly demonstrate how your team's relentless focus has ensured that pupils who are most vulnerable to harm, remain high profile. You and your wider team are passionate about pupils whom you serve, and you act swiftly and with tenacity when any issues relating to safeguarding arise. In short, your vigilant actions keep all pupils safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- In the previous three years, pupils' progress in mathematics across key stage 2 has been significantly below national averages, including for middle-attaining pupils. Although improvements are evident in published outcomes, leaders acknowledge that further improvements to pupils' outcomes are necessary. Since September, leaders have implemented a new approach to the teaching of mathematics to bring about change, and this is bringing about rapid improvement.
- Pupils' mathematics books across key stage 2 demonstrate strong progress. Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills in equal measure. They have a balanced mathematical diet. Leaders have designed an effective, meaningful mathematics curriculum. Mindful of pupils who will benefit from its effective implementation, leaders make sure that pupils develop skills across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. Furthermore, staff make links with the pupils' project-based learning. For example, pupils explored how graphs could be used to represent the amount of plastics in the ocean. Pupils' books are extremely well presented. Pupils are proud of their learning and they work with care when showing their calculations and workings out.
- In lessons, teachers are highly skilled in drawing out pupils' knowledge and understanding. They adeptly challenge all pupils, carefully choosing the most effective line of questioning, depending on the needs of each pupil. Staff have high expectations of pupils. In particular, staff make sure that pupils are able to explain their mathematical understanding. Your mathematics leader maintains a strong overview of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and its impact on pupils' progress. Teachers make timely decisions to provide further support for pupils at risk of falling behind their peers. As a result, current assessment information shows that middle-attaining pupils make strong progress, and some move on to work at the higher standard.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check across Years 1 and 2 has fallen from above national averages to below. Many pupils begin their Reception Year with little or no phonic knowledge and/or awareness. Leaders ensure that children receive high-quality daily sessions. This has resulted in children successfully developing their skills over a short period of time. As a result, pupils are better prepared for key stage 1.
- Pupils confidently participate in phonics lessons and actively join in with the rhymes which accompany specific sounds they are learning. Sessions are snappy and focused, and teachers make accurate assessments of what pupils know, can do and understand. Leaders monitor this progress to ensure that pupils who are

at risk of falling behind receive effective support. Pupils have opportunities to apply sounds that they have been practising to well-chosen reading books. Due to the high quality of teaching sessions, in-depth checks and support, current cohorts make strong progress in phonics. A greater proportion of pupils are working within expectations for their age.

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards and higher standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar by the end of key stage 2 in 2015 and 2016 has been below national averages. Although improvements were evident in 2017, leaders acknowledge that the proportion of pupils reaching this standard must increase. Leaders have acted effectively. They have used thorough analysis to inform a shift in approach. Daily sessions have provided more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar. This has led to improved standards across the school, particularly in spelling.
- Leaders have successfully raised the profile of spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school. A bespoke, innovative approach is already improving outcomes in this area. Classroom environments support pupils' learning, and this has resulted in pupils feeling more confident to accurately apply their understanding and knowledge. Leaders have successfully introduced a series of 'non-negotiables' with pupils. This has sharpened the focus on 'getting the basics right', so teachers can more effectively teach spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. As a result, pupils successfully apply the skills that they have learned across a range of writing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the approach to teaching mathematics improves pupils' progress across key stage 2, reflecting the high quality of learning in pupils' current books so that a greater proportion of pupils reach expectations for their age and the higher standard by the end of key stage 2
- the efforts to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school result in an increased proportion reaching expectations for their age and the higher standard at both key stages 1 and 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body 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

Nathan Kemp  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I spoke to you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with your leaders for phonics, your mathematics leader and the literacy leader. Furthermore, I met with the leader responsible for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I also met with leaders who oversee safeguarding across the school. Finally, I spoke with representatives of the governing body and a representative from the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust.

Senior leaders and I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' mathematics and writing books.

I looked at a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation and the current school development plan, as well as progress and attendance information. I also scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children, staff training and the school's self-audit on the effectiveness of safeguarding across the school.

I took account of 18 responses to the Parent View online survey, 27 responses to the staff survey and 30 responses to the pupil survey.