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Mr James Davidson
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Dear Mr Davidson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Penair School

Following my visit to your school on 25 May 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- maintain its drive to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in science, by focusing closely on its impact on pupils' progress
- undertake the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium that was recommended at the last inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. In addition, observations of learning in lessons were undertaken. During these observations, I took the opportunity to speak to pupils and examine their work. In addition, documents containing information about pupils' attendance and academic performance were inspected. I also examined records of faculty reviews.

Context

You took up your post in September 2015, after the last inspection. The school is currently experiencing a period of falling rolls, and this has led to a large reduction in the funding available to the school.

Main findings

Since taking up your post in September 2015, you have acted quickly to tackle the issues raised by the previous inspection. You have restructured the senior leadership team and ensured that the lines of accountability for middle leaders are clearer, particularly in science. This is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided by Penair School. Your leadership of the school is being well supported by governors. They have a clear understanding of the areas that the school needs to improve and the impact of the actions being taken to improve teaching and to raise standards.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now more rigorously monitored. The new system of faculty reviews, introduced by the deputy headteacher in charge of teaching and learning, places a much sharper focus on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Staff now give pupils better feedback on what they do well and how they can improve their work.

The school uses well the information that it collects on pupils' academic performance. The recently introduced progress grids, on which the school tracks the attainment and progress of all pupils, are proving particularly effective in focusing teachers' attention on what needs to be done to help pupils succeed.

Standards in science were a concern at the last inspection, but the picture is now better. The recent changes made to the key stage 3 science curriculum are improving pupils' knowledge of fundamental scientific principles. Pupils are thus better prepared to study GCSE courses in key stage 4. Pupils are making faster progress, and their attainment in science is improving. The teaching of the new science curriculum, however, is not consistently strong across all classes.

The school's work to improve pupils' attendance is proving very successful. Overall, attendance is now above the national average, and persistent absence is falling. In

particular, the attendance of pupils supported through the pupil premium (extra government funding for disadvantaged pupils) is improving more rapidly than that of other pupils. The number of pupils with 100% attendance has also increased dramatically.

The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is improving as a consequence of a more focused approach to identifying and catering for their particular needs. Gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are closing, although further work is still required here. The school had an external review of the use of the pupil premium in April 2015, immediately prior to the last inspection in June 2015, which recommended a further review. Reasonably, school leaders and governors wished to give some time for the impact of this initial review to be felt before undertaking another. The actions taken since this review have not reduced sufficiently the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others. It is, therefore, timely for the external review recommended by the last inspection to take place.

The single central record of checks on the backgrounds of teachers and other staff contained a few minor clerical omissions, which were immediately put right by the school when they were pointed out. The school needs to ensure that its regular checks on the completeness of the single central record are more thorough.

External support

Penair School is part of the South West Teaching Schools' Alliance and this has allowed it to draw on effective support in the drive to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You also work closely with the academy that your school sponsors, Tregolls School. In addition, you have drawn on expertise in science from Roseland Academy and from Wadebridge School, in respect of the use of the pupil premium.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee

Her Majesty's Inspector