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Mrs Julie Elvy
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Elvy

Short inspection of Gerrans School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since 2013, there have been changes in key staff. The school joined the Roseland Multi Academy Trust in March 2016. These developments, along with the effective actions of your staff, the executive headteacher and the trustees, have resulted in improvement in pupils' achievements. You have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's current performance. While you have high expectations of pupils' academic achievement, you do not lose sight of developing important life skills, such as team building, independence and resilience. An example of this is the award the school won recently for Curriculum Ambition in the Cornwall 'Time to Move' competition. You have successfully maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. These include continuing to promote a high standard of pupils' behaviour and maintaining their welfare and personal development. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and parents appreciate the friendly, welcoming ethos. One parent said that 'the duty of care to each and every pupil far exceeds standards'. Parents see the school as an important part of the local community. They are overwhelming in their recommendation of the school to other parents.

Working in partnership with parents, members of the community and trustees, you have developed a strong and positive atmosphere which benefits the progress of pupils. Staff ensure that classrooms, shared areas and outdoor facilities are areas that stimulate pupils' learning and curiosity. Displays of pupils' work celebrate their achievements effectively, particularly in writing, and help to raise their aspirations.

At the previous inspection, an area for development was to improve practical learning opportunities, particularly in mathematics. Outside learning resources at Gerrans have improved considerably and provide a wide range of challenges within the school curriculum. You use the locality well so that pupils can take part in water sports and outdoor educational visits. These enhance pupils' attitudes to learning, as well as increase opportunities for pupils' engagement in practical mathematical problem-solving activities and purposeful writing tasks.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that pupils are safe because of the strong culture of safeguarding. Your association with the multi-academy trust has strengthened this work. The trust supports you in ensuring that all safeguarding requirements are robust and effective, including staff training and safer recruitment of staff. The trustee responsible for safeguarding frequently checks that the school's single central record is accurate. Trustees check that their policies and procedures work effectively and consult staff about how they can make any improvements.

Records are of a good quality. Systems for recording concerns about pupils are stringent. They are shared electronically with external agencies and other schools to secure the safety of family members. Parents recognise the lengths to which you go to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for pupils. One parent confirmed this and spoke of support given 'in an understanding and pragmatic way'. In this small school, you know your families well and value members of the school community.

Pupils attend well and are seldom late for school. You check attendance patterns carefully and communicate effectively with parents about the importance of good attendance. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and say that incidents of bullying are very rare. This is because they have a good understanding of bullying and how to respond if they were to experience it. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. Additionally, you have tried to increase parents' awareness of how to support this at home. Trustees, leaders and staff check and ensure that the school's facilities and site are safe for pupils to learn and play in, and that the site is a positive environment in which to learn.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry evaluated what leaders have done to increase the proportion of pupils writing at greater depth, particularly in the early years and key stage 2. This is because, over time, the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in writing has been lower than in mathematics and reading. You and leaders have recognised this and made writing a focus for the school. You have ensured that children receive effective and systematic teaching of phonics from the time they start school, with a high level of challenge. A wide variety of mark-making and writing skills support strong pencil control. As a result, children develop the physical writing skills required in the writing process. In addition,

children are able to retell and sequence stories before writing sentences independently, using correct punctuation.

- As pupils move into key stage 1, there are further opportunities to write for different purposes, with a clear focus on spelling and punctuation. Teachers plan lessons carefully to incorporate small steps in learning. This results in pupils writing stories that are meaningful to them, using carefully composed language. Those pupils who did not achieve the expected standard at the end of the Reception class make good progress in Year 1. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is now generally in line with the national average.
- Pupils in key stage 2 take part in curriculum activities which enthuse and motivate them to write. Pupils say that they enjoy writing, and the school has a strong focus on celebrating their achievements. For example, older pupils entered a poetry competition for a village show. This featured war poetry, which some pupils are planning to read aloud during a community remembrance service in November. A scrutiny of pupils' books shows high-quality writing in literacy work as well as in other curriculum areas. Consistent moderation of writing sets out pupils' successes and ways forward, particularly when writing at higher standards.
- My second line of enquiry explored how well leaders supported the level of challenge for the most able pupils. This is because the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard is lower than the national average. However, comparisons are difficult because of the low and fluctuating numbers of pupils in each cohort.
- Staff know the pupils well and, mostly, tailor learning to pupils' individual needs. Pupils work in ability groups as well as within year groups in many lessons. This allows for a high level of challenge most of the time. Pupils transfer mathematics and literacy skills to other subjects across the curriculum. Knowledgeable and well-trained adults ask questions which develop thinking. Effective and timely interventions help pupils to apply what they have learned to their written work.
- However, sometimes the level of challenge is not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities, particularly in mathematics. Some pupils are unsure of which mathematical operation to use and how to solve problems efficiently. This results in pupils losing confidence in their ability to understand mathematical concepts, and slows progress.
- My third line of enquiry evaluated how leaders have ensured that children make a good start in their learning. Outcomes have been inconsistent for children at the end of the Reception Year, and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is sometimes well below the national average. Some children enter school with low speaking and listening skills. Well-trained adults deepen children's understanding by asking questions which help children to explain their thinking and develop language skills. Children have many opportunities to investigate their world, solve problems, write about their experiences and consolidate their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers target work, particularly in mathematics, more specifically so that it matches the individual needs of pupils, allowing them to reach the highest standards possible
- children are helped to catch up quickly so that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception consistently meets the national average and more go on to reach higher standards in writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees 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

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you and other leaders, observing learning in classrooms and work displayed on the walls around the school. Together, we scrutinised a range of pupils' books. I met with pupils to talk about their experiences of school life. I held meetings with middle leaders and two trustees, as well as the executive headteacher. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation summary, the school development plan and assessment documents written by the local authority representative. I took account of the written comments of 11 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.