

11 May 2018

Mrs Teresa Clinick
Headteacher
Pensilva Primary School
School Road
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Cornwall
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Dear Mrs Clinick

Short inspection of Pensilva Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 school was judged to be good in March 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 other leaders, including governors, know the school well. During recent years, you have rightly placed great emphasis on securing as much consistency in teaching as possible in order to sustain pupils' good achievement. This is helping the school to emerge well following a period of unavoidable staff absence. Staff and governors are rightly proud of the school's community ethos. Parents and carers, too, value the school's commitment to inclusion that helps all pupils, including some who have emotional and behavioural needs, become well-rounded, polite individuals.

You identify and target the right areas for improvement in your self-evaluation and school development plans to sustain a good quality of education for the pupils. Governors fulfil their duties diligently and play a key role alongside you in developing the school. Strengths in early years, outdoor learning and sports, and more recently in the development of pupils' reading skills, reflect leaders' ability to bring about improvement.

The previous inspection report asked teachers to provide more opportunities for pupils to solve problems and attain higher standards in mathematics. Work in pupils' books and an analysis of the school's introduction of a new mathematics curriculum show that teachers are now increasingly developing pupils' practical problem-solving skills. This reflects the school's positive response to the higher expectations of the new national curriculum introduced since the previous inspection. Leaders recognise

that there is now further work to do in ensuring that the pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills are fully developed.

The previous inspection report also identified the need to develop pupils' ability to make improvements to their work. Teachers have worked diligently in recent years to boost pupils' interest, confidence and commitment to learning. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of what is expected of them, both academically and personally, and strive to help each other to learn well.

The large majority of parents who submitted responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, highly value the work of the school and would recommend it to other parents. A typical comment included, 'My children love going to school and say that although sometimes it is hard work, they also have a lot of fun learning.' A small minority expressed concerns, for example about the staff absence mentioned above.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff and governors have a secure grasp of their safeguarding responsibilities, and implement effective child protection and health and safety procedures. For example, leaders make the necessary checks to ensure that all staff joining the school are suitable to work with children. Leaders ensure that all staff have been appropriately trained to recognise the signs and know what to do should they have concerns about a child. The school's documented procedures and actions taken, such as referrals to specialist agencies, show that staff take effective action to keep pupils safe. Staff meet regularly to examine safeguarding procedures and to keep them up to date.

The very large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire expressed the view that children are well looked after and feel safe at this school. Pupils who spoke with me wholeheartedly expressed this same view. They said, 'We feel safe in school because there is always an adult to go to who will listen to us.' Pupils also said, 'We know how to stay safe when using computers and feel safe because we have lots of friends.'

Inspection findings

- First, I considered how well the pupils' phonics and reading skills are developed through Reception and Years 1 and 2 classes. This is because the standard of pupils' reading by the end of Year 2 has varied in recent years. Senior leaders and teachers in Reception and key stage 1 classes took effective action last year to improve the teaching of phonics. This re-established an above-average proportion of pupils achieving expectations in the phonics screening check in Year 1. Checks on the quality of teaching of phonics and on pupils' reading skills show sustained improvement. Pupils who read to me used their phonic understanding to read new words with increasing confidence and accuracy. Leaders provide effective additional support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As a result, the

vast majority are on track to reach the expected level when they re-take the screening check at the end of Year 2.

- The leader and staff in Reception Year liaise well with staff in the on-site pre-school. They have shared their expertise to assist the pre-school in introducing children to phonics. This is raising children's readiness to learn and ability to progress more quickly when they begin full-time schooling. Teachers in Reception and key stage 1 classes work closely with parents to enlist their support in helping their children develop a love of reading. When questioned, pupils clearly recall the frequent times they read at home and at school. This strong emphasis on reading is also noted in the pupils' reading records and contributes to their good progress. Consequently, current assessments show a significantly raised proportion of pupils in Years 1 and 2 demonstrating reading skills at or beyond those expected for their age.
- Second, I explored how the school's approach to the teaching of mastery in mathematics supports pupils, especially the most able pupils across key stage 2, to achieve a greater depth in their understanding. This is because the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining at a greater depth has been below average over the past two years. I observed mathematics lessons, sampled pupils' work in books from Years 5 and 6 and considered how closely the activities met pupils' needs, especially for the most able. Teachers are placing more emphasis on developing pupils' ability to think about their work and tackle mathematical problems. Teachers in all classes now present work that matches pupils' abilities and include a raised level of challenge, especially for the most able. This approach is having a positive effect. For example, the school's recent assessments of pupils' progress show an increased proportion of pupils working at greater depth. You acknowledge that the school's new emphasis on teaching mastery in mathematics has not been sustained long enough to fully deepen pupils' understanding.
- Finally, I examined what leaders and teachers have been doing to improve pupils' writing, especially that of boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, across key stage 2. You make sure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively. Teachers assess the individual needs of each pupil carefully. Teachers make sure that additional support from adults and extra activities, such as the lunchtime club, boost pupils' confidence and promote their progress effectively.
- Typically, teachers in all classes stimulate pupils' interest through a range of thought-provoking texts and topics. Consequently, the writing of pupils across the range of ability indicates good progress in writing descriptively and imaginatively. For example, pupils in Year 6 used expanded noun phrases skilfully when writing about fairytale castles. At times, however, the quality of pupils' writing across the range of needs and starting points is restricted by poor handwriting, and inaccurate spelling and punctuation skills. You have identified improving pupils' writing in your school development plan. These aspects of writing are now being emphasised more purposefully in Reception and key stage 1 classes. You rightly acknowledge that handwriting, in particular, still lacks consistent development across key stage 2 and have plans to rectify this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers:

- improve the quality of pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation as they move through the school
- maintain the focus on developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics so that all pupils, including the most able, make the progress of which they are capable by the time they leave the school.

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

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities, and with governors of the school. I visited classrooms with you and we collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and during a meeting with a group of Year 6 pupils. I listened to selected Year 2 pupils reading and talked to them about their reading. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and support staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 34 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 35 additional written comments from parents. I also took account of nine responses to the staff survey and 23 responses from pupils.