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Mr Craig Hayes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hayes

Short inspection of Goonhavern Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 March 2017, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have carefully managed staffing changes so that the continued focus on improving outcomes has been maintained. In September 2015, governors took over the running of the village pre-school. As a result of the investment made, standards in Nursery have risen and children are better prepared for school. Many children have developed reading and writing skills above those expected for their age.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' writing. You have developed a range of strategies and invested heavily in staff training so that all staff have the same high expectations of pupils' use of punctuation and handwriting. Consequently, pupils are writing with greater precision in their use of vocabulary and punctuation. Pupils now write well in a variety of styles.

During this inspection, I found Goonhavern Primary School to be an industrious hive of learning. Pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning and are very proud of their school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and almost all of those parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'The teachers work very hard at this school to ensure that the children feel happy and learn well.' Most parents added that their children are making good progress and throughout the inspection I found this to be the case in almost all areas of the school's work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The procedures for keeping pupils safe are strong. Good relationships with a wide range of external agencies, for pupils and parents, are supporting pupils when they face particular challenges in their lives. When you refer pupils for specialist support, you ensure that responses are timely and address pupils' specific needs. Your team is assiduous in its work to ensure that pupils and families are well supported. The team is swift to insist on the very best service for your families.

Adequate checks are in place for staff and volunteers who work at the school. Your regular briefings to all staff are informative and timely. Consequently, staff are well aware of the risks children can face and know the signs to look out for, including from extremism.

Pupils are well prepared to face a wide range of situations they may encounter in the future, including when using the internet. Pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire commented that there is an adult at school they can talk to if something worries them. They all feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- The first area I looked at during this short inspection was the quality of boys' writing in the early years. Over the last three years, the proportion of boys reaching a good level of development, the expected standard at the end of Reception, has been markedly lower than for girls. This is because boys have achieved consistently less well in writing. You had identified this as a 'high priority watch' in the school's development plan. Teaching staff have taken swift action to ensure that children have more opportunities to write and to raise standards. This builds on the good start they make in Nursery. In Nursery, the boys are keen to write. Staff plan a wide range of activities to stimulate children's interests. Consequently, most children are able to form their letters carefully and many can write simple words. In most of the activities that are planned, children practise their writing.
- In Reception, teaching staff have used a number of strategies to encourage the boys to develop their writing. Many of the boys have progressed from mark making at the start of the academic year to writing their name clearly. For some boys, they are able to write simple sentences. Leaders' coordinated response has ensured considerable improvement in writing across early years. As a result, the standard of boys' writing has improved and a greater proportion are on track to achieve the early learning goal in writing, with many exceeding the expected standard.

- My second line of enquiry focused on the progress that pupils in key stage 1 make in mathematics and in their writing. Mathematics has been high on your agenda for some time and your current focus on developing pupils' fluency, reasoning skills and ability to solve problems is well founded. Historically, the most able pupils have not always reached the highest standard. As a result of the work senior leaders have championed, standards are rising, especially in Year 1 where a high proportion of pupils are achieving beyond the expectations for their age.
- In writing, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils making the expected rate of progress is high. This is because staff are clear about their expectations and provide pupils with sufficient support. Almost all pupils in key stage 1 are making the expected level of progress and many are working at standards above and beyond those expected for their age. Those children who did not achieve the early learning goal in writing at the end of Reception Year are catching up quickly to meet the expected standards for their age. While the pupils who reached a good level of development are on track to reach the expected standard for their age, the proportion who are now on track to reach a higher standard at the end of Year 2 is low.
- The next area I reviewed was the quality of teaching of mathematics for the most able pupils and girls. In 2016, attainment overall was in line with the national average but few pupils achieved the high score at the end of Year 6. Furthermore, the girls did not make the same rate of progress as the boys. Senior leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching in mathematics to meet the new national expectations. Your work in this regard is highly effective. I found these strategies to be well embedded. In almost all year groups, the most able pupils are working at the higher standard and in Year 6 a much greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve the high score. Across key stage 2, there is now no discernible difference between boys and girls.
- I was also interested in the impact of the support provided to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your senior leader, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), has a very deep understanding of each pupil's needs. She takes a very systematic approach to assessing their specific needs. After the barriers to each pupil's learning have been identified, carefully crafted plans are in place which teachers implement wholeheartedly. Overall, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making strong progress. For some pupils, progress is rapid. Parents of children who have additional needs were overwhelmingly positive about the progress their child was making both in their studies and in their personal development.

- My final line of enquiry focused on pupils' attendance and punctuality. The proportion of pupils who have the highest rates of absence has increased year on year since 2015. Absence rates have been slightly higher than the national average for the last two years. In the current year, this pattern continues. Leaders are aware of this and explain that this is principally due to a large number of families taking their children on holiday in term time. In the current academic year, over a third of families have applied to take holidays during term. While leaders have overseen a range of measures to reduce absence, these have not had the desired effect of improving attendance. Governors have not given sufficient thought about other ways to tackle this matter.
- The number of pupils who are late to school is also high. Staff work with families either directly or in partnership with external agencies to provide support to help them. Punctuality rates are improving slowly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils attend school more regularly and are on time
- the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 reaching a high standard in writing increases.

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

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and your assistant headteachers joined me observing learning in classrooms and we looked at a number of pupils' books. I also reviewed the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with your SENCo. I spoke with pupils in lessons. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, your parent support adviser and five members of the governing body. I also met with some parents. I spoke with an officer of the local authority by telephone.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of 46 parents who responded to Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires of 65 pupils and 10 members of staff.