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Ms Kate Littleddyke
Headteacher
Saltash.net community school
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Dear Ms Littleddyke

Short inspection of Saltash.net community school

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 2018 with Sarah McGinnis HMI and Ofsted inspector Carol Hannaford, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

When you took up your post as headteacher in January 2017, you recognised that GCSE results had not been good enough for some time and they were deteriorating further. You made it clear to staff and pupils that a change was needed. When I spoke to Year 11 pupils, they recognise and support the changes you have made, for instance, to improve behaviour.

You rightly focus on ensuring that teachers raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve across all year groups in the school. Initially, improvements have been slow. Provisional results for 2018 show no increase in the progress pupils make. However, gradually, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching, and hence the standards pupils achieve, across all year groups.

You have recently strengthened your senior leadership team. This has greatly increased your capacity to bring about the changes to teaching and learning that are necessary. Your most senior colleagues now share your clear understanding of the need to raise expectations and together you have set about leading improvements in teaching with energy and enthusiasm. Teachers and pupils report a palpable increase in momentum this year.

Governors are knowledgeable and committed to improving the school. They share your vision and are supportive of the steps you are taking. Like you, they are keen that leaders' and teachers' efforts begin to have the impact you need.

Governors have chosen to join with other local schools to create a multi-academy trust. The trust came into being in April 2017. The trust board includes experienced school leaders and chief executive officer (CEO). This additional capacity proved particularly important as you began to develop your ideas and map out plans for improvement. Teachers across the trust are now beginning to work together to raise standards. This is a promising development, but it is too early to see any significant impact.

You have raised your expectations of middle leaders and this is having an impact on the quality of teaching across the school. Middle leaders are now monitoring the quality of teaching in their departments on a regular basis and most are intervening when necessary. However, the quality of middle leadership is not yet consistently good. As a result, there is too much inconsistency in what is expected of pupils between departments and sometimes even within the same department. You and your senior colleagues have rightly made improving the quality of middle leadership, so that all middle leaders are as effective as the best, a priority.

You have also begun to improve the way leaders analyse and use information in all aspects of the school's work. In the past, leaders have not always analysed information in sufficient detail to be able to direct their efforts most effectively. This is improving, although there are still aspects of school life where analysis and record-keeping are little more than rudimentary. This is slowing the school's improvement.

Pupils' behaviour is good when they are enthused by good teaching. It is weaker when they are not. Conduct in corridors and around the school site is calm and orderly. Pupils are generally polite and friendly. They believe that behaviour has improved over the last two years. They also say that bullying is now usually dealt with well. This contrasts with some parents and carers, who still have concerns.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make the necessary statutory checks and follow government guidelines carefully to ensure that staff are safe to work with children. Relevant training for staff is in place. Leaders seek advice and work with external partners and parents to support pupils who are at risk. However, when referrals are made, leaders are not always persistent enough in following up concerns if they are not satisfied with the resolution.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and speak positively of the personal, social and health education they receive. They know how to keep themselves healthy and stay safe, including when online. Pupils say that the school is a 'friendly community' and are able to reflect on their understanding of the importance of diversity and

respect. Pupils know who to talk to if they have a concern and say that teachers deal with issues sensitively and effectively when they do occur.

Inspection findings

In this short inspection, we focused particularly on some key aspects of school life. We looked at how leaders are responding to previously poor GCSE outcomes, the quality of support for disadvantaged pupils, the quality of the curriculum, the sixth form and behaviour and attendance.

- Leaders did not achieve the improvements in GCSE outcomes they aimed for in 2017/18. However, with a strengthened team in 2018, they have increased the pace of change. There is now an increasing robustness and rigour to checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Some departments have risen to the challenge set by leaders well. The level of expectations and so the progress that pupils make is improving significantly in English, for example. Teachers are also asking more of pupils in history and science. This contrasts with some other subjects, where teachers are not building effectively on the knowledge that pupils bring from their primary schools. The challenge for senior leaders is to ensure that recent improvements are embedded right across all subjects in the school.
- The standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar is low in many pupils' books. The school does expect teachers to correct these aspects in pupils' work in all subjects but this is not done with sufficient consistency to make a difference to pupils' writing.
- There are good plans in place to support disadvantaged pupils. They reflect an awareness that this group of pupils need academic as well as pastoral support. Where these plans are implemented consistently, they are having an impact. However, not all teachers are rising to leaders' expectations of support for these pupils and so the impact is diluted. Leaders have not succeeded in improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This too, is preventing them from achieving as well as their peers.
- Leaders have made significant changes to the key stage 3 curriculum. This is providing a sharper focus on essential knowledge and key skills that will help pupils when they move on to their GCSE courses. Most, but not yet all, middle leaders are paying more attention to the abilities of pupils when they first join the school in Year 7. This is ensuring that pupils set off on the right foot as they begin key stage 3.
- Pupils and sixth-form students are grateful for the high quality of advice and support that they receive about their GCSE and A-level options and careers. This is encouraging them to set themselves more ambitious life and career goals.
- Currently pupils take GCSE English literature in Year 10 and English language in Year 11. While this arrangement allows pupils to focus on one GCSE at a time, it does make it more difficult for the most able to achieve the highest grades. This is depressing pupils' outcomes.

- The sixth form offers an appropriate programme of study for all students. The curriculum has breadth and relevance for students of all abilities. Outcomes are generally in line with national averages. Where students make less progress, leaders have intervened to address underachievement.
- Higher-ability students in the sixth form achieve well. The proportion achieving two As and a B at A level and going on to highly respected universities is broadly in line with the national average.
- Leaders are developing a more precise understanding of the patterns of behaviour across the school. This allows them to have a clearer oversight and so they are able to address issues more effectively. Leaders have raised expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and pupils understand the schools' values. Pupils recognise, however, that there are inconsistencies in the way in which teachers apply these approaches, which leads to variability in the quality of their learning experiences.
- Leaders have a shared awareness of the importance of improving attendance. They now have a detailed oversight of the patterns and rates of attendance across all year groups. They use this to target resources accordingly. Leaders are aware of pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should. Pastoral leaders have implemented successful strategies, involving pupils and their families, which are leading to improved attendance and fewer pupils who are persistently absent. Leaders are aware, however, that they need to do more, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, who are still absent too often.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to strengthen the leadership of teaching, particularly by building the skills of middle leaders so that they can lead high-quality teaching, learning and assessment in their departments
- all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils, whatever their starting points
- there is a culture of rigorous analysis and record-keeping of information.

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

Andrew Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, Sarah McGinnis HMI and Ofsted inspector Carol Hannaford and I met with you, senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils. I also spoke with the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO. We visited lessons with senior leaders to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, attendance and the use of the pupil premium funding. We took into account 170 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and responses to questionnaires completed by staff.