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Miss Tina Yardley
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Yardley

Short inspection of Wadebridge School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018 with Ofsted Inspectors, Bill Houldsworth and 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 December 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.**

After the last inspection, leaders were asked to prioritise improvements to help disadvantaged pupils to make better progress and to address issues about some use of inappropriate comments by a small proportion of pupils. Schools leaders were also asked to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and supported, in order to make as much progress as possible.

You have identified that progress of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, across all subjects has been too variable. You were disappointed in the school's 2017 examination results for Year 11 pupils. At times, teachers do not display secure understanding about the progress pupils are making. This weakens your ability, and that of other leaders, to track and monitor how well pupils are doing, and to make interventions where necessary to secure good progress. While the board of trustees has a good understanding about the work of the school, greater precision in reporting will help trustees to judge better the impact of actions taken by you and your team.

You and other leaders have been effective in addressing behaviours which are perceived as disrespectful to others. Using formal lessons, alongside other learning opportunities such as assemblies, leaders have successfully broadened pupils' understanding about the wider impact of unkind and derogatory comments.

Pupils have been actively involved in sharing and promoting positive behaviours, for example the 'EmPower' team of pupils who trained as counsellors in order to help their peers.

The sixth form remains a strength of the school, offering a range of courses and good success rates in examinations. We talked with some learners about their experiences and it is clear that they are very satisfied with the support and help given to them to reach their goals and progress to their chosen careers.

The majority of responses to surveys carried out during this inspection were positive. Most pupils stated that they enjoy their school experiences, and the majority of parents agree with this view. Staff responses indicate that morale is good, and that the whole staff body works as a united team.

Since the school was last inspected a new integrated health centre has been located on the school site. Pupils know this provision as the 'Hub'. This facility is proving to be an asset in helping to look after the physical and mental health needs of members of the school community. It is appreciated by those who are using its services.

Safeguarding is effective.

Throughout the school, staff and pupils are well informed about the need to be vigilant. The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose. You make thorough checks on staff before they begin their employment, and verify the suitability of all visitors to the school. Record-keeping of all vetting is thorough. Staff and trustees are trained to appropriate levels, and records show that training is kept up to date. A committee of trustees with responsibility for safeguarding monitors the work of the school's leaders and checks that correct actions are taken when necessary. Members of staff and pupils are well informed about the steps they should take to report any concerns.

The responsibilities of designated safeguarding leaders are clear, which helps to ensure that there is effective working alongside other agencies. School records show that concerns about the welfare of pupils are referred to other agencies quickly. Leaders then follow up these referrals to check that actions are taken. Leaders' work with children who are looked after by the local authority demonstrated the positive effectiveness of these arrangements.

We talked with pupils who confirmed a good understanding about how they can minimise risks to themselves, for example when using electronic communications. Pupils were also aware of how to avoid dangers like extremism and sexual exploitation.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed the areas for our key lines of enquiry. This was based on information about the school's work since the last

inspection, alongside your own evaluation of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has been a focus of your improvement work. In 2016 their examination results showed improvement, but in 2017 disadvantaged pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally. Monitoring records indicate that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are not yet catching up as quickly as they should.
- Senior leaders have identified the need to act swiftly to secure better rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils. However, as yet the school's plans are not clear and precise enough about what should be done. This makes it difficult for governors to hold leaders to account fully.
- Sometimes teachers do not set tasks at an appropriate level to challenge pupils and enable them to achieve at least good progress against their starting points. When this happens pupils are not challenged to think deeply about their learning, and they settle for standards below their capabilities. Boys have consistently made less progress than girls over time. Few boys opt to study a foreign language, and younger boys told us that at times the topics studied in lessons do not interest and engage them.
- Leaders have adapted the school's curriculum so that it now offers pupils an opportunity to study four courses in key stage 4, alongside compulsory subjects. Leaders check that each pupil has a balanced and suitably broad curriculum. Developments have included expanding the offer of foreign languages to include GCSE Spanish, alongside GCSE French. Arrangements have been made to allow pupils to study three GCSEs in science, if they wish.
- Leaders have made improving attendance a high priority, especially for pupils who are disadvantaged. It is clear that there have been some improvements in attendance rates since 2015, but overall attendance remains below national average. In September 2017 you appointed your own officer with responsibility for attendance. There is evidence of significant improvement in attendance rates in autumn 2017, as a result of the work now being done.
- Particular emphasis has been given to supporting disadvantaged pupils with poor attendance records. The school has worked closely with these pupils and their families to bring about some improvements. The school has identified further needs and plans to expand support for families, including younger siblings, with the aim of further improving attendance rates.
- We saw that around the school, during lessons and breaktimes, pupils get on well with each other, and with their teachers. Relationships throughout the school are constructive. The responses to surveys confirmed that positive views of behaviour are shared by a high proportion of parents and pupils. However, a small proportion of parents and pupils expressed concerns about incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. The school's records show that the number of reported incidents of bullying, in all forms, has decreased steadily over the last three years. A random selection of pupils who were asked by inspectors about their experiences confirmed that if bullying happens and is reported, the school deals with it effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strategies used to support disadvantaged pupils and boys are more precise in addressing the needs of individuals so that their progress improves to be at least in line with all others nationally
- teachers are provided with appropriate training and opportunities to check the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' progress and implement intervention strategies when this is too slow
- there is greater rigour in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's work, including by the trustees
- the attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, improves to at least the national average.

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

Ann Cox
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors spoke with you and other senior teachers, including those with lead responsibility for safeguarding. I had a conversation with the chair of trustees. We visited lessons across all year groups to observe learning in a broad range of subjects. We took opportunities to look at the quality of work in samples of pupils' books, and talked with them about their progress. We talked informally with pupils around the school and also held a meeting with a small group of pupils from Years 10 and 11 to discuss their learning experiences. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding and attendance. I scrutinised the school's evaluation documents and the improvement plans which are already in place. We looked at examples of the school's tracking and monitoring systems. We took into account 256 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. A small number of additional communications were received from parents, and the wider matters raised were explored. One hundred pupils responded to the pupil survey and the views of 70 members of staff were gathered through the staff survey.