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10 November 2016

Mr William Marshall  
Headteacher  
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Cornwall  
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Dear Mr Marshall

### **Short inspection of Humphry Davy School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 2016 with Andrew Lovett HMI, 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 November 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school. Since the last inspection in 2011, you have seen a large number of staff come and go and many of the faculty leaders have changed. You have recently re-organised the senior leadership team to better match the skills of each individual to the jobs that need to be done.

Pupils' achievement is good as a result of good and improving teaching. Teachers take pupils' individual needs into account to provide well-focused support for them in lessons. Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress year on year. The difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally is diminishing rapidly. Pupils currently in the school are on track to continue this trend.

Without question, school staff work to ensure that each and every pupil achieves their best in a nurturing environment. As one parent, responding to Ofsted's questionnaire (Parent View), said, 'It's clear that he (the headteacher) loves what he does, is approachable and wants the best for every child in his care'. Other parents and inspectors agree.

Staff have continued to work on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Overall, teachers' marking is now more consistently showing pupils how to improve their work. Teachers use assessment information well to set challenging targets and to monitor pupils' progress towards them. Consequently, pupils are making strong progress across a wide range of subjects. You have

introduced a number of initiatives to improve pupils' literacy, such as a reading scheme. Pupils now read fluently and apply their literacy skills well in a range of subjects. As a result they are able to write much better and at length to express their knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, through a review of the curriculum, staff have made sure that pupils have a better appreciation of different cultures and religions within the United Kingdom.

The governing body is committed wholeheartedly to the school's work; its members hold senior and middle leaders to account for their work to make sure that the school continues to improve. They show the same determination as you do for each pupil to succeed. Both governors and leaders are reflective and evaluative of the school's work.

Across the school, we found that pupils were very keen to learn. Pupils we spoke with enjoy coming to school and feel that they are making good progress. School data and the work inspectors looked at confirmed this.

Throughout our visit, inspectors were clear that the inclusive nature of the school presents some real challenges for you. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (often complex) and/or disabilities is very high. You have employed specialist staff to best meet the needs of the vast majority of these pupils. In addition, the high number of pupils who join the school at times other than at the start of Year 7 generates several further challenges. Staff make considerable efforts to ease these pupils' integration and to help them meet the school's high behaviour expectations and catch up on work they have missed. For a small number of pupils in both these groups, despite leaders' best efforts, the school cannot meet their particular needs – which can lead to exclusion.

While the vast majority of pupils behave well, the number of exclusions for fixed periods of time rose last academic year for a small number of pupils. You are acutely aware that there is work to do to be sure that strategies to support pupils to improve their behaviour are more effective at an earlier stage. Equally, you are rightly concerned about pupils' attendance. It has improved, but too slowly. Recent changes to leaders' roles show that you are already taking the urgent action required to address both of these areas.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Members of the team overseeing this know each child and their particular situation very well and do all they can to keep pupils safe. Referrals to the local authority are made swiftly and followed up. Leaders are aware of the risk that children missing from education may face and are quick to work with other agencies to ensure that this does not happen.

Leaders are aware of the risks that pupils face when they are absent from school. They have implemented a range of measures and carry out risk assessments to make sure that pupils are safe.

The designated safeguarding lead provides regular, high-quality training and briefings for all staff and contractors to make sure that they are aware of their responsibilities and can identify pupils who may be at risk. The procedures for checking the suitability of staff are thorough. Leaders are well trained and apply this well so at an early stage they can identify pupils who may be at risk.

Governors are similarly well trained. They use their skills and knowledge from their professional work to test school systems and ensure that they are highly effective. The local authority rightly praises the school for its work in this important area.

As a result of all of these well-coordinated actions, pupils are safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have correctly and precisely identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. The recent changes to leaders' roles and the appointment of new middle leaders show a swift response to areas that concern you and governors.
- The clear expectations of teachers and other adults ensure that pupils know how to conduct themselves and work hard to achieve as well as they can.
- The standard that disadvantaged pupils achieve is better than levels seen for other pupils nationally and continues to improve for current pupils. The difference between the progress that disadvantaged pupils make compared to other pupils nationally is diminishing. This is set in the context that at Humphry Davy outcomes are improving for all pupils.
- The most able pupils are making good progress and, in almost all subjects, they achieve the high grades seen nationally. The most able disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress and achieve better than their peers. In science and mathematics, there is good evidence of pupils being challenged to think very deeply about their work.
- Pupils who read to inspectors did so with confidence. In Year 8, one pupil used his knowledge of phonics to decode an unfamiliar word in a religious studies lesson. The most able pupils were able to infer meaning as they read and show detailed understanding of what they had read and why the author had used particular literary devices. In Year 11, pupils skilfully substituted words in a newspaper article to suit specific audiences.
- Focused actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the humanities are starting to bear fruit. In history, in 2016 there was a significant improvement in Year 11 pupils' GCSE grades. The quality and level of pupils' work in books in geography and religious studies is much higher than in the past.
- Leaders' decisions have resulted in a curriculum that is carefully designed to put the needs of individual pupils first. As a result, pupils report that they feel they have made good decisions about the courses they follow in key stage 4 and are making good progress.
- The strong careers advice programme helps pupils to be ambitious in their future career choices. They know what they want to do and how to get there. School staff track pupils' destinations and the alumni scheme

allows former pupils to keep in touch and show current pupils the wide range of opportunities available to them. A representative from the local further education college commented to the lead inspector that he has noticed a rapid increase in the number of pupils who go on to have success in studying the sciences, engineering and technology subjects at higher levels.

- Despite improving over the last three years, pupils' attendance is still below the national average. The persistent absence, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, is too high. The large number of pupils who arrive other than the start of Year 7 affects these levels disproportionately because they take quite some time to adjust to the school's high expectations. Both governors and leaders agree with you that this is a priority which requires urgent attention to ensure that pupils attend more regularly.
- Similarly, the number of fixed-term exclusions is too high and the number of permanent exclusions is stubbornly high. In both cases, the numbers have been higher than national averages. So far this year though there has been a marked reduction in the number of exclusions. The involvement of your deputy headteacher with the local alternative education provider is helping to identify short-term intervention to avoid the need for exclusion. There is, however, much more work to do on the strategies that teachers and leaders use to change pupils' behaviour so it does not lead to exclusion. Inspectors noted that while exclusions are high, behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils are well mannered and keen to tell visitors how good the school is and how it keeps them safe.
- A few parents raised concerns about bullying but universally pupils said in the rare event that there is bullying or name-calling, school staff are very swift in their actions to ensure that it stops. It is clear that any homophobic or racist bullying is dealt with effectively.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Further work is undertaken to improve pupils' attendance and that strategies used are closely monitored and regularly evaluated to ensure they are effective
- Resources are deployed specifically to reduce the number of exclusions.

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**

- Inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders, representatives of the governing body, the designated safeguarding lead, and leaders overseeing attendance and behaviour. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone with an officer from the local authority.
- The inspection team made a series of visits to lessons, with you and other senior leaders. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktime.
- Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils from Year 9 and a group from Year 11 as well as speaking to pupils informally around the school.
- A number of pupils read to inspectors.
- Inspectors considered the views of 94 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the views of 163 pupils and 59 staff.
- In addition, inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, its improvement plan, records relating to pupils' attendance and exclusions and information on outcomes for pupils currently in the school and those who left in the summer of 2016.
- Safeguarding records, policies and practices were reviewed.
- Inspectors examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.
  
- This short inspection focused on
  - the school's work to increase pupils' attendance
  - the differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils
  - the quality of the curriculum and the impact that careers education, information, advice and guidance has on pupils' aspirations and destinations
  - the impact of the school's work with the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils
  - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the humanities (geography, history and religious studies)
  - pupil's behaviour, particularly the reasons for exclusions
  - whether safeguarding was still effective and pupils were safe.