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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs S Whitelaw
Headteacher
Upwood Primary School
Ramsey Road
Upwood
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE26 2QA

Dear Mrs Whitelaw

Short inspection of Upwood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You provide dynamic leadership that equips others to succeed and builds a 'can do' culture across the school, something that has been warmly embraced by all members of staff. As a consequence of this, pupils are excited about learning and you have developed a rich and inclusive curriculum that stirs them to scale new heights of knowledge and understanding.

All leaders share with you the passion to see the school improve rapidly and learn the lessons from past dips in performance. Working closely with the local authority, you have responded well to the disappointing reading results in last year's end of key stage 2 assessments. You have introduced new and exciting approaches to encourage pupils to read more frequently and widely. Pupils who read to me were full of enthusiasm about their endeavours. For example, one pupil said, 'Last year I read 100 times!'

You have also identified a need for pupils to apply their writing skills more widely in subjects other than English, such as science and history. This builds on the work you have been doing to improve spelling and to enable pupils to write more complex sentences. This is something that is increasingly evident in their English books, but not so prevalent in other subjects.

Teaching has improved since the last section 5 inspection and is now consistently strong across the school. 'Teacher profiles' have helped to build on strengths and identify the next steps for teaching staff. They have brought together a range of relevant information to help teachers understand the impact they are having on pupils' outcomes. Staff were overwhelmingly positive about working at the school in the Ofsted questionnaires they completed during the inspection. They all said they are proud to be members of the team and that you were very supportive of them. All of them are clear about what the school is aiming to achieve.

Through regular and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching, you and other leaders are holding teachers to account and providing training to support them in becoming even more effective. You are developing subject leaders in their roles and enabling them to make a real difference in the areas they oversee.

Most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are being challenged well. This was a point for development at the last inspection. In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was three times the national average. As we visited classes together, we noted how well the most able pupils were being questioned and made to think, for example in using negative numbers in Year 4.

Pupils develop a love of learning and are enthusiastic about coming to school. The school cares for pupils very well and promotes an inclusive ethos that celebrates difference. It enables the increasing number of pupils facing difficulties, who move into the school at different times, to settle quickly and to make good progress from the outset.

The impact of the varied curriculum is very strong. Pupils enjoy a wide range of high-quality experiences across different subjects. The school excels in music and the arts: for example pupils in Year 3 were studying Pointillism and producing artwork made up entirely of coloured dots in the style of Georges Seurat. One parent observed: 'The school is great at trying to make the work fun to appeal to the kids. Our children are always pushed and given extra work if needed.'

Governors have increased their effectiveness since the previous inspection and have been active in seeking answers to their probing questions. They request regular presentations to find out about the impact that subject leaders are having. They have also asked for data to be presented to them in a common format so it is easier for them to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

Parents are extremely positive about the school and feel their children are kept safe and happy. One, speaking for many, said, 'There are so many examples of the little things which show the children – and their parents – that they are loved and respected, and their best interest is the teachers' goal.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You rightly give paramount priority to keeping all the children in your care safe. The

leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Procedures are rigorous. All staff have had recent training in keeping pupils safe. This has included raising awareness of important issues such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and the 'Prevent' duty to combat radicalisation and extremism. All staff have also received transgender training, an area in which you demonstrate particular sensitivity. You have ensured that procedures are well established to identify and follow up concerns. You work very closely with families and other agencies to ensure that children are protected.

Staff recruitment procedures are thorough. Staff files are well organised and contain all relevant information. Governors make regular checks on safeguarding arrangements to ensure that they remain up to date and effective. Parents who responded to Ofsted's free text service expressed positive views about how well the school keeps their children safe. The pupils themselves also confirmed that they felt safe, found adults approachable and that any 'mishaps are sorted'.

A great strength of the school is its inclusive nature and respect for individual differences. All pupils are treated as unique and know they are highly valued. A parent commented, 'I feel blessed to have my children learn and grow in an environment that is safe and secure.'

Inspection findings

- At our initial meeting, we agreed together some key lines of enquiry to explore so that I could be satisfied that the school remained good. First of all, we considered the performance of boys, as they had not done as well as girls, in 2016, in the end of key stage 1 and 2 tests. This was particularly the case in reading and mathematics.
- You have taken swift action to diminish this difference in boys' performance. For example, you have reviewed the curriculum to make it more appealing to them and invested in books that boys enjoy. You have organised events such as a 'spelling bee' and online mathematics games that bring in an element of competition. A push on reading has motivated boys to read regularly. This includes imaginative incentives to reward their efforts, such as beads that they like to make into wristbands or 'air miles' to move them around a world map.
- As a result of these initiatives, and training for teachers in deepening pupils' learning in mathematics, standards in boys' reading and mathematics have increased considerably for current year groups. Differences with girls' outcomes are therefore diminishing quickly.
- The second line of enquiry we agreed I should consider was around pupils' attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In the 2016 tests standards were below average for all groups of pupils.
- Your staff carried out a careful analysis of last year's performance which led to changes. You have introduced a new spelling scheme this year which is making a positive difference to pupils' awareness of the need to spell accurately. Displays of spelling are given a high profile around the school and pupils often refer to

them to assist them in their writing. You have ensured that individuals and small groups of pupils receive additional support to plug specific gaps in their knowledge and understanding. You have also ensured that most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are challenged to reach the higher standards of which they are capable.

- As a result of the steps you have taken, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations in grammar, punctuation and spelling this year and in the proportion of most-able pupils working at a higher standard. This was not only evident in the classes I visited, but also in pupils' workbooks, demonstrating their good progress over time.
- We noted that there was a large difference last year between the overall performance of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally, even taking into account the small numbers of these pupils and some of their additional needs. This inspired our third line of enquiry, which focused on the effectiveness of the way the school spends its pupil premium funding.
- Leaders undertake a regular analysis of the impact of this spending to ensure that the school is providing the best value for money. As a result, some programmes have been stopped or changed because outcomes were not good enough. Your decision to use well-trained teaching assistants and teachers to provide support is helping to accelerate individual pupils' learning. You have drawn up pupil profiles that show what is being spent on each pupil and how it is influencing their progress and attainment. Consequently, you know exactly how each pupil is doing and the impact the pupil premium is having on learning.
- The school's most recent performance information shows that differences for disadvantaged pupils are diminishing this year. Where they remain, this is often linked to more complex needs pupils may have when they join the school.
- The final key line of enquiry we agreed related to the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has been below that of other groups of pupils.
- You showed me how you have made procedures more robust this year, for example by checking and following up absences systematically to make sure that the attendance of this group of pupils is improving. You are working closely with these pupils' families and other agencies to ensure that no stone is left unturned in enabling them to get to school each day. As a result of your efforts, while pupils' attendance is still not in line with the national average, it is much better than it was.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English
- they continue to narrow the differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally

- the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities reaches the same good levels as other groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other school leaders, the chair and vice-chair of governors, administration staff and pupils. I also met with two representatives from the local authority. Short visits were made to all classrooms, where books were scrutinised. A range of documents, policies and assessment information was examined. Questionnaire responses from parents and staff were also considered.