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10 February 2011
Mr J McBurney
Headteacher
Upwell Community Primary School
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Dear Mr McBurney

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Upwell Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils and governors for their help during the inspection.

A new headteacher joined the school in January 2011, following a term of temporary leadership from the deputy headteacher. One teacher left the school in the autumn term and a newly qualified teacher was appointed to teach Year 3. The deployment of teaching assistants has changed with a smaller number working with pupils who require support, rather than being attached to class groups. Improvements have been made to the area children in the Reception class use for outdoor learning.

As a result of the inspection on 23 November 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' achievement was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and it remains so. Pupils' progress and the quality of their learning in the lessons observed during the monitoring inspection were also satisfactory. Attainment in Year 2 improved well last year. Pupils' attainment in reading and writing was slightly above average and in mathematics just below, reflecting good progress. In contrast, too few pupils in Year 6 managed to make the expected amount of progress from their starting points in Year 2 and less than half achieved a Level 4 in English and mathematics. However, the school's target setting and tracking data indicate that pupils currently in Year 6



will do better this year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making similar progress to other pupils.

A number of changes have been introduced by the subject leader for English to help improve outcomes in writing. New assessment procedures have been set up and teachers discuss and moderate the accuracy of these assessments in staff meetings. The introduction of 'Big Write' sessions has focused pupils on improving the quality of their written work. A more standardised approach to marking is providing guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. Teachers are also using their assessments and progress tracking data to identify those pupils who may require additional support. There remain, however, some inconsistencies in the way teachers plan their lessons, particularly in the way they use success criteria and organise guided writing opportunities. Also, pupils are not yet involved enough in evaluating their own learning.

In the lessons visited during the monitoring inspection, teaching was satisfactory and occasionally good. Pupils' involvement was positive in almost all classes and there were good examples of teachers organising practical resources and group discussions to stimulate learning. In all lessons, teachers used the interactive whiteboard to illustrate teaching points and support pupils' learning, in some cases with well-selected pictures and interactive software.

Provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved. A canopy has been constructed outside the classroom and more equipment is available for children to develop their skills outdoors. Provision for children's mathematical development has also improved, with more resources introduced for independent learning to enable children to consolidate their understanding. Outcomes for children at the end of Reception in 2010 improved markedly on the previous two years in all areas of learning. The latest mid-year assessments for the current Reception class indicate that the improvement will continue.

Attendance is better now than at the time of the last inspection. The overall absence level fell from 10% in 2009 to 8% in 2010, and was 6.3% for the first part of this academic year. The school has used local authority support services to help tackle persistent absence, and in some cases this has been successful. Leaders acknowledge that they need to adopt a more systematic approach in order to keep a closer check on the higher levels of absence of groups and individual pupils.

The newly appointed headteacher appreciates that the improvements made since the last inspection are not yet embedded. He has drawn up an action plan listing priorities to be included in this year's school development plan. Positive links between governors and members of staff have helped keep the governing body informed about the progress made on improvements, particularly in literacy. Overall, the school's capacity to bring about further improvements remains satisfactory.

The school has received satisfactory support in tackling the key issues. The school's improvement partner provided advice and guidance during the period of acting headship. The literacy leader has attended leadership training and local authority assessment training. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have visited other settings to observe practice and have received guidance from early years advisers. Local authority staff have supported the school's work on reducing absence and boosting the achievement of pupils from the Traveller community.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob McKeown
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Improve pupils' progress, especially in writing, by increasing the quality and consistency of teaching. In particular, teachers should:
 - improve the accuracy of assessments and make more consistent use of the improved data to match work to pupils' needs
 - make sure that pupils are consistently involved in lessons, and do not spend too long watching and listening
 - ensure that marking more often gives pupils clear pointers about how they can improve their work
 - make more use of the interactive whiteboards to enthuse pupils and clarify explanations.
- Improve provision in the Reception class by:
 - providing better equipment in the outside area, and ensuring that it can be used, regardless of weather, to support children's development in all areas of learning
 - planning better opportunities for children to develop their early mathematical understanding, and making better use of incidental opportunities that arise for them to consolidate their understanding.
- Raise the attendance of those pupils whose absence is particularly high.