

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Helen Redmond  
Executive Headteacher  
The Utterby Primary Academy  
Utterby  
Louth  
Lincolnshire  
LN11 0TN

Dear Mrs Redmond

### **Short inspection of The Utterby Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The organisation of the school is different from that of the previous inspection because the school converted to become an academy in July 2013, when it became a member of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). The school is federated with another local school and shares the same governing body, senior and subject leaders.

You and the assistant headteacher have been in post for approximately one year. You have quickly come to grips with the unique circumstances of the school, which serves a sparsely populated rural community. Although pupils attend from a number of towns and villages, there is a strong sense of community within the school and many parents told me that they chose the school for their children for this reason. Pupils I spoke to from Years 5 and 6 value the school's small size because they 'know everyone' and believe the school to be 'more friendly than big schools'. However, you and the school's governors have placed a high priority on increasing pupil numbers to ensure the long-term viability of the school.

The school has benefited from its membership of the AET because the trust has quickly developed an appreciation of the difficulties posed to the school by its size and location. The provision of a minibus has improved pupils' attendance, with around 20 per cent of pupils using it regularly. In addition, a number of new parents have cited the collection and drop-off service offered by the school minibus

as an important factor in the decision to send their children to the school. You and other school leaders have benefited from opportunities to work alongside, and assess the standard of pupils' work with, colleagues at other AET schools. Programmes of study provided by the AET are helping to improve pupils' outcomes in key stages 1 and 2, notably in mathematics.

Leaders and governors have evaluated the school's performance accurately and identified appropriate priorities for improvement. You provide governors with a range of information that allows them to hold you to account for the school's improvement. Governors ask you challenging questions and come into the school as often as they can to check the accuracy of what you tell them. Leaders have created a system for assessing and tracking the progress and attainment of each pupil. Staff and governors use this information to identify any pupil's underperformance and, particularly in mathematics, to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. However, leaders do not yet use it with sufficient precision.

This year has required you to recruit new teachers for each class to cover unforeseen and long-term absences. Despite this, pupils' outcomes have improved during this time because these teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve match your own. This was evident in the pupils' workbooks from different classes that you and I looked at. The majority of pupils across the school have made progress that is at least good this year. However, in the lessons you and I observed, most teachers and teaching assistants do not use sufficiently challenging questions often enough to deepen pupils' learning and understanding.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors give the highest priority to the safeguarding of pupils. They ensure that records are detailed, and pursue any concerns about the pupils' welfare tenaciously. Staff and governors' training in safeguarding is up to date and you ensure that any new staff receive this training as part of their induction. School policies on child protection are thorough, followed precisely, and there is no sense of complacency regarding any element of pupils' safety. You have ensured that risk assessments are in place to minimise the risk of particular aspects of the school, such as the collection of pupils by their parents at the end of the school day. The AET has provided very good support to you and the school's governors on safeguarding matters.

The pupils in Years 5 and 6 are very aware of the steps the school takes to ensure their safety, telling me about recent improvements to site security, as an example. Pupils are taught about the risks involved in using the internet and the importance of protecting their identity if using social media. Parents and pupils told me that there was no bullying or name-calling but that they would trust school staff to deal with any issues quickly and effectively.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders have correctly identified the priorities for school improvement because they understand the context of the school and performance of its pupils so well. The headteacher has not been deterred or side-tracked by the range and complexity of unexpected challenges she has faced during her first year at the school, particularly in relation to staffing.
- Governors are effective at holding the school's leaders to account. They test the accuracy of the school's performance information provided by school leaders by asking leaders challenging questions. Governors are ambitious for the future of the school and know that there is no room for complacency about pupils' outcomes.
- The Academies Enterprise Trust provides very effective practical support to the school's leaders and this is promoting the school's improvement. Trust officers visit the school regularly and hold leaders to account for the improvements made. School leaders benefit from the trust's expertise in areas such as human resources and finance when addressing, often complex, issues on staffing and premises.
- Leaders have taken effective steps to increase pupils' attendance and absence rates are falling as a result. The provision of a minibus by the AET has enabled more pupils to attend the school more often. However, the small pupil numbers on the school's roll means that attendance figures are often adversely affected by the absences of a very small minority of pupils.
- Children enter the early years at levels of development that are often below those typically seen in children of a similar age. In 2015, children made good progress over time and the proportion achieving a good level of development exceeded the national figure. As a result, they were well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children in the early years are taught in the same class as pupils in Year 1. The teacher plans tasks that are well matched to children's abilities and they make good progress as a result. The most able children can concentrate for prolonged periods. For example, I observed children writing an extended piece on owls, which included the use of some adventurous word choices.
- In 2015, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented a dip compared to previous years, when outcomes were typically broadly in line with national figures. No pupils achieved at the higher levels.
- Leaders acted swiftly to address this dip and pupils' progress and attainment have improved as a result of stronger teaching and learning. Pupils' attainment has risen, particularly in reading, where all pupils will leave key stage 1 having reached at least age-related expectations in the recent national tests. In reading, writing and mathematics, the proportion attaining at age-related expectations exceeds the school's figures for 2015.
- In 2015, a lower than average proportion of pupils leaving key stage 2 achieved expected levels of attainment in reading and writing. However, the proportion reaching the higher levels of attainment in reading and writing were in line with national averages.
- In mathematics, the proportion of pupils achieving the average level of

attainment for key stage 2 was broadly in line with national figure. The proportion reaching higher levels was below the national average.

- In 2015, the vast majority of pupils left key stage 2 having made at least the amount of progress expected of pupils their age. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress was lower than the national average, particularly in mathematics.
- Current assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils in key stage 2 are making at least the progress expected of them for their age, and often more, in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the vast majority are expected to achieve levels of attainment appropriate for their age, or better, by the end of the year.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group achieve well, with the majority making at least the progress expected of non-disadvantaged pupils their age. The same is true for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' outcomes in each year group have improved this year because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Typically, work is well matched to pupils' abilities and teaching assistants' support is well directed by leaders and teachers. Pupils make good progress in lessons as a result.
- However, pupils do not make as much progress in lessons as they could because teachers' and teaching assistants' questions are not consistently well directed to deepen and embed pupils' learning. Adults miss opportunities to extend pupils' thinking and reasoning skills through questions that link different areas of prior learning.
- Leaders hold teachers to account for pupils' outcomes during termly pupil progress meetings. Leaders expect teachers to provide evidence from assessments and pupils' workbooks to support their judgements on pupils' progress and attainment. They also expect teachers to provide evidence of the impact of teaching support provided to pupils, and the actions taken to accelerate the progress of any underachieving pupils.
- Leaders monitor and track pupils' performance through a commercial recording system they have customised to meet the needs of the school. While this system is capable of recording much information, it is not yet sharp or concise enough to support the leadership in its decision making as fully as it should. There is potential for conflicting or imprecise information that is not as effective as it could be in holding leaders and teachers to account for pupils' outcomes.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the content and presentation of pupils' assessment and tracking information is accurately and concisely presented so that it better supports leaders' decision making and the holding of staff to account for pupils' outcomes
- the quality and impact of teachers' and teaching assistants' questioning of pupils is improved so that pupils' learning and reasoning skills are deepened and embedded.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher, two governors, a representative from the Academies Enterprise Trust, parents, and pupils from Years 5 and 6. There were insufficient responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to provide any additional information on the views of parents and there were no responses to the online pupils' questionnaire. I considered the views of staff through the online survey that they completed. I undertook lesson observations, jointly with either you or the assistant headteacher, in all classes and we looked at a sample of pupils' work together. I looked at a range of documents, including an evaluation of the school's performance, information on how the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils currently, or previously, in receipt of free school meals) is spent, and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs.