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Mark Pratt  
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Dear Mr Pratt

### **Short inspection of Ulverley School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 the school was judged to be good in May 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your arrival at the school in September 2014, you have established an ambitious culture that aims to develop pupils into enthusiastic and independent learners. Governors, staff and parents share your vision. One parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, wrote, 'My two children love going to school. It is well run and the teachers are lovely and enthusiastic.'

Pupils of all ages understand and speak about the school's ethos in terms of its 10 'teamship rules', which run through everything that happens at Ulverley. One pupil was keen to tell me how he had avoided confrontation by 'being willing to compromise', while several pupils were clear that they were expected to 'be a good role model'.

Pupils behave well in lessons, at break and lunchtime, and as they move around the school. They are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. In lessons, pupils are inquisitive, articulate and confident. They are used to discussing their work with their peers; they listen respectfully to each other and express their views maturely. For example, I observed children in Reception tidying away sensibly and independently and pupils in Year 6 maturely exchanging views about an incorrect solution to a mathematical problem.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers' planning provided challenge for the most able pupils and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially in mathematics. They were also asked to improve attendance and make self-evaluation more rigorous.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and all groups of pupils who need it receive effective support. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress in the early years and key stage 1 and reasonable progress in key stage 2. Pupils join the school with starting points below those typical for their age and, over recent years, have left the school with broadly average standards of attainment.

Leaders and governors were rightly disappointed with the results of key stage 2 tests in 2016 in reading and mathematics. Results in writing were more positive. Leaders acknowledge that, in some respects, teachers did not prepare pupils well enough for these new assessments. Robust challenge from governors and speedy action from leaders have already begun to yield improvement in Year 6 pupils' ability to succeed in reading assessments. Improvement in mathematics is also apparent, but it is slower and less secure. Leaders know that this is a focus for improvement for the coming year.

Leaders have employed a wide range of strategies to improve attendance since the previous inspection and attendance has improved. However, attendance across the country has also improved and so the school's attendance remains below the national average. In 2015, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was particularly low, but targeted support has seen improvement this year.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have made pupils' safety your top priority and all staff understand the part they play in ensuring that pupils are safe and feel safe. Safeguarding policies and other arrangements are robust and you meticulously keep high-quality records. You train and update all members of staff regularly and they are alert to potential dangers as a result.

An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View confirmed that their children feel safe in school, as did all parents with whom I spoke with at the start of the day. All members of staff who responded to the online inspection questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school. All pupils with whom I talked confirmed that they feel safe in school. They told me that bullying is rare and that they trust adults to deal with any that does happen. Pupils understand the dangers that can occur when using the internet, and they know how to avoid them.

## Inspection findings

- Governors and leaders have successfully established a shared ethos and vision throughout the school. The great majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that the school is well led and managed, as do almost all members of staff who responded to the online inspection survey.
- Leaders and governors know the school well. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and are quick to put detailed plans into place to tackle those areas in need of improvement.
- Provision in the early years is very strong. Many children join the school with starting points below those typical for their age. They make rapid progress so that the proportion achieving a good level of development is above average. The early years setting is well organised and stimulating. Children are independent, confident and articulate. They are well prepared to start Year 1 when they leave Reception.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 1 is strong in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of phonics is expert and precise and this contributes well to the development of pupils' early reading and writing.
- Pupils' progress slows in key stage 2. Over recent years, pupils have made reasonable progress in key stage 2 and left the school with broadly average attainment. The school's provisional unvalidated results for key stage 2 tests in 2016 are below average in reading and mathematics. Results in writing are broadly average. Leaders believe that they did not prepare pupils well enough for the changed style of assessments in 2016 and that this was responsible for the disappointing results.
- Leaders and teachers have responded quickly and energetically to the 2016 key stage 2 results. Leaders have drawn up a detailed action plan, focusing on preparing pupils for this year's tests. Year 6 pupils have already taken practice tests and a much-improved picture is emerging, especially in reading. Improvement in mathematics is less secure, but teachers know where pupils' gaps are and have appropriate plans in place to address these.
- Teachers in all years have good subject knowledge that they use well to question pupils, thereby deepening their understanding of their work. Relationships are strong and pupils have great confidence in their teachers. Teachers ensure that pupils discuss their work regularly in class and this helps to reinforce their learning. However, pupils do not spend enough time consolidating their learning in mathematics by practicing mathematical problems, especially in key stage 2.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress and leaders use this information to identify pupils who are falling behind with their work. At regular 'pupil progress meetings', leaders and teachers plan extra help for these pupils. This extra support helps pupils to catch up with their peers.

- Despite tenacious leadership and a wide range of strategies, attendance remains below the national average. It has improved since the previous inspection, but only at the same rate as attendance nationally. However, there are early signs that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, previously very low, has begun to improve.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils spend more time consolidating their learning in lessons, especially in mathematics in key stage 2
- teachers prepare pupils thoroughly for end-of-key-stage assessments
- attendance improves, to the national average, by impressing on parents the importance of attending school regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and your senior leadership team. You and I visited most classes during the day where we observed teaching and learning and we spoke with pupils about their work. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with many pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtime. I listened to some pupils read and talked to them about reading and the books they enjoy. I met with the chair of the governing body and spoke over the telephone with a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised several documents including your self-evaluation, school development plan, intervention plans and safeguarding and child-protection records. I considered 89 responses to Parent View and 28 responses from members of staff to the online inspection questionnaire.

At our initial meeting we agreed the five focus areas for the inspection. These were standards in key stage 2, teaching of mathematics, strengths in the early years and key stage 1, supporting vulnerable pupils and safeguarding.