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26 June 2017

Steven Badcott
Executive headteacher
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Dear Mr Badcott

Short inspection of Uplowman Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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. This is because you work in an open, collegiate way with other staff to ensure that teaching and wider provision are fit for purpose. As you put it, you aim to be 'the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage'. You work successfully with staff, supported well by the senior teacher, to develop teaching practice that is informed by proven research. As a result, teachers take a measured, reflective approach to discovering what does and does not work in the classroom. They feel able to innovate and take risks because they know that sometimes it is necessary to fail in order to succeed. This approach means that teaching continues to be good, despite changes in staffing that could have had a significant impact in a small school. Your willingness to confront less than good teaching, allied to the approach you take to developing teaching practice, has bolstered the quality of teaching.

You are well supported by governors who have a good understanding of the school. The governing board is made up of both experienced and relatively new governors who provide a range of skills and expertise. As a result, governors are confident, committed and enthusiastic in their work. They are knowledgeable about this year's improvement priorities and keenly aware of where the school is heading next. Governors provide you with a good balance of support and challenge. This is because you have developed a relationship based on transparency and trust; you do not shield the governors from bad news. Consequently, they feel able to ask the questions that clarify issues and provide them with accurate information about the

school's work. They use other sources of information, such as performance data, and their own visits to school to verify what they are told.

You welcome external support because you rightly believe it is important to 'look outwards' rather than be insular. As such, you have made good use of your school improvement partner and other external support to improve the work of the school.

The culture and ethos of the school is informed by your leadership and the way you work with staff, governors and parents. You take seriously your responsibility to nurture the 'whole child'. To this end, you and other staff foster a culture which is open, warm and welcoming. The school is a happy place. Classrooms and corridors are full of pupils' work, making the school environment colourful, vibrant and dynamic. The high-quality work 'shouts' that learning is fun and should be celebrated. Pupils around the school are cheerful, polite and well behaved. Pupils who spoke with me told me how much they enjoyed their school experience. One pupil said 'I love school', while another said 'The teachers are amazing.' This is because pupils feel well cared for and valued. They appreciate the efforts of staff to look after them and teach them in fun, stimulating ways.

Pupils' achievement has been strong over time as a result of the good quality of teaching and pastoral provision. Pupils have consistently attained highly and made progress at least in line with, and often better than, the national average in their various subjects. Staff have high expectations of pupils and provide tailored support to those who need it.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to ensure that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make the progress of which they are capable. We also considered to what extent attendance is improving for different groups of pupils and whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other staff and governors take your safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Child protection has prominence on the school website, alerting parents and other stakeholders to its importance. The school culture and practice of staff also reinforce the important high-profile nature of safeguarding. All staff and governors have received appropriate child protection training, including on the government's 'Prevent' duty. Staff know the procedures to follow and who to speak to should they have concerns about a child. The online referral system is well organised and records information comprehensively. This enables designated safeguarding staff to take appropriate, timely action to support pupils.

Leaders and governors have done all that is reasonably practical to ensure that the school site is secure. As a result, there is a high level of staff vigilance to ensure that pupils are safe when using outside areas. For example, a member of the office

staff checks that the outside area is safe every day before the children go out at breaktime. Pupils are kept safe inside by locked doors that are operated by electronic key code. All visitors are made aware of the school's safeguarding expectations when they sign in.

All the pupils who spoke with the lead inspector reported that they feel safe in school. This is because they are well supported by the staff, many of whom they would happily speak to if they were worried. One pupil agreed that there was a high level of supervision: 'Teachers are everywhere.' Another pupil commented, 'If you have a problem, the teachers will listen to you.' Pupils said there is very little bullying in school and that when it does occur it is swiftly and effectively dealt with.

Inspection findings

- You have taken quick and effective action to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are being challenged to think more deeply. For example, tasks are being designed to meet 'low threshold, high ceiling' requirements. These tasks enable pupils of different abilities to access them, but encourage the most able to aim high and deepen their thinking. Consequently, they are making more rapid progress. One parent told me that her high-achieving daughter 'is flying'.
- Pupils of different abilities in key stage 2 who spoke with the lead inspector all reported that they are made to think and work hard in lessons. They said they enjoy this level of challenge because the teachers make the activities fun and investigative. Pupils also said that work is challenging because they often get stuck, which is a good thing. One pupil said, 'It's good to be stuck because we can always find a way out of it.' Another pupil said, 'There's always a method to help you if you get stuck.'
- Work in pupils' books shows that they are provided with numerous opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills. Rigorous teaching ensures that pupils practise and improve their writing for different audiences and purposes, while honing technical skills. In mathematics, pupils have numerous opportunities to solve problems and demonstrate their reasoning. Regular, helpful advice from teachers enables pupils to identify and confront their mistakes. They make great strides forward in their learning as a result.
- Teachers across the school have high expectations of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is particularly evident in key stage 2. The presentation of work in pupils' books is of a high standard; all pupils, regardless of ability or background, use neat cursive handwriting and arrange their work neatly.
- Teaching in key stage 1 has improved since Christmas. Prior to this pupils were not making sufficiently good progress. However, since this time expectations have been raised and pupils are producing better-quality work. Nevertheless, pupils' reasoning skills and ability to think at a deeper level are not as well developed currently as they should be.
- Teachers and teaching assistants improve pupils' understanding effectively through the use of higher-order questioning. Staff skilfully establish what pupils

know and help them to discover answers for themselves through careful questioning. This approach successfully engages pupils with their learning and helps them make progress.

- The attendance of pupils overall is above average, and has been so over time. Attendance is also above average for most groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, although improved on last year, is not yet in line with that of their peers. The figures are disproportionately affected in this small school by a very small number of pupils. Staff are working proactively to tackle this issue, taking full advantage of rewards, such as certificates in assembly, meetings with parents and letters home. Furthermore, staff work closely with the education welfare officer to improve the attendance of some pupils.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online survey Parent View agree that the school is well led and would recommend it. All respondents agreed that their child is safe in school, well looked after and well taught. As one parent stated, 'I cannot speak highly enough of Uplowman Primary School.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 1 are provided with further learning experiences that develop their reasoning skills and deepen their thinking.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and representatives of the governing body. I also spoke with pupils, the school improvement adviser and another external adviser.

You and I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, as well as records of behaviour and

attendance. I also considered governing body minutes and notes of visit from external advisers. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of 26 responses to the Parent View online survey.