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Mr Duncan Churchill
Headteacher
Upton Infant School
Guest Road
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Dear Mr Churchill

Short inspection of Upton Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 2017 with Heather Barraclough, Ofsted Inspector, 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 June 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 school has had a period of instability in leadership over recent months because governors were not initially able to recruit a new headteacher following the departure of the previous headteacher. The deputy headteacher, supported by other senior leaders in the school, stepped in to provide interim leadership during this time.

You arrived as headteacher very recently. You have taken the time to evaluate the strengths and areas to improve. Together with the leadership team and governors, you have developed a robust plan for improvement which builds on the strengths already in place and accurately outlines what needs to happen next. For example, you recognise that pupils' outcomes need to improve further. You intend to work on improving outcomes, particularly in writing across the school and for disadvantaged pupils.

Your early encouragement and your willingness to listen as well as to initiate change has evoked a keen sense of purpose among the staff and a drive to work with you to continue to improve the school. There is a strong sense of collaboration and teamwork which helps to create the positive, happy atmosphere.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how well you and your staff support their children. They praise the quality of the teaching and the progress that their children make. Parents also praise the level of care and attention that staff provide each day that helps to ensure that their children are happy and secure.

At the previous inspection, an area for improvement was to enhance the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers have high expectations. As we walked around the school looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils, we could see that staff do indeed have high expectations both of behaviour and of work. Reminders of these expectations and examples of what this looks like are all around the classroom walls and corridors. The school is full of fun and celebrations of pupils' achievements and successes. Pupils are happy, polite and respectful. They were also extremely enthusiastic to show us their learning and talk in detail and with real clarity about their next steps for improvement.

We looked at a range of pupils' books. We could see that pupils have many opportunities to write but sometimes they do not successfully improve their writing skills over time. For example, sometimes pupils do not spell words accurately and this does not show improvement over time. You have identified that the standards of writing across the school, particularly for phonics and spelling, is a key area to improve.

Another aspect described for improvement in the previous inspection was to improve the organisation of learning in early years. Much work has taken place across these classes over recent years. The leader for early years is determined to provide the very best for children and to continue the improvements made. Children make good progress throughout their first year, developing solid attitudes towards their learning. This prepares them well for learning in Year 1.

Parents are extremely positive about the good start that their children receive and are very appreciative of the care and guidance that staff provide. The learning environment provides a wealth of relevant and interesting experiences. Learning is well organised and carefully planned so that each child is able to build on what they already understand, know and can do. The outside space is inviting and children enjoy activities such as gardening and water play here.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Recruitment checks are thorough.

The designated lead for safeguarding ensures that she keeps up to date and attends a full range of training and update meetings including information about keeping children safe from radicalisation and exploitation.

Leaders ensure that the school is highly inclusive and nurturing. For example, pupils who are not able to attend due to long-term illnesses have good support while away

from school. Leaders do all they can to keep up good communication, regularly review the situation and provide families with the support they need from a wide range of agencies.

Staff also have appropriate training about safeguarding. They understand their responsibilities to keep informed about any updates. For example, staff read and discuss lessons learned from safeguarding serious case reviews.

Staff are vigilant. They know how to notice signs of abuse and how to report such concerns. They are also clear about other related policies such as whistleblowing. The governor who leads on safeguarding regularly comes to school and checks that staff know and understand safeguarding policies and procedures.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed on some particular areas to explore during the day. The first was to look at how well leaders, including governors, check the quality of teaching and learning across the school and the impact teaching has on pupils' outcomes.
- You have completed a thorough audit of teaching and pupils' outcomes and you have used this detailed information to create the development plan that you, your leadership team and governors have already started to use as a focus for improvement activities.
- Senior leaders in the school are clear about the strengths and areas for development. These leaders frequently make checks on the quality of teaching, including looking at books and observing learning across the school. You have rightly identified that less experienced leaders also need to be able to check on the progress pupils make in order to identify any weaknesses.
- Another area that we agreed to look at was to explore how well pupils achieve at the school, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in 2016 were below national averages, including in early years, phonics and reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. This year, leaders have ensured that pupils who need it receive extra teaching and support. Targeted pupils have an individual plan that includes specific, achievable learning goals. Frequent reviews and discussions with parents help to keep everyone focused on ensuring that these pupils have the precise help they need to succeed.
- The school's own information on outcomes for 2017 shows that these improvements have made a difference to the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for the most able disadvantaged pupils. You agree that a priority for the school is to ensure that disadvantaged pupils continue to receive the additional help they need so that any remaining differences in outcomes are diminished.
- Outcomes in 2016 for phonics in Year 1 were also below national levels. When you arrived in school a few months ago, you quickly realised that there were some changes needed to improve the frequency of assessment and the organisation for phonics teaching in Year 1. You intervened and supported staff

to improve assessment and organisation of phonics groups. As a result, pupils' progress in phonics rapidly improved in a short space of time. You have identified this as a continued area to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders across the school develop their skills so that they are effective in checking the impact of their work, particularly on the progress that disadvantaged pupils make
- the teaching and learning of writing skills improve, particularly phonics and spelling skills, so that pupils achieve higher standards in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and other senior leaders. Together, we visited classes where we talked to pupils and saw examples of learning across the school. We also looked together at a range of pupils' books. You shared your evaluation of the school, information about the progress pupils are making and your school development plan. We also looked at a range of school documents relating to attendance, safeguarding and behaviour. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority. Parents' views were gathered at the start of the day and from the 118 responses on the online survey, Parent View. Responses to the staff survey were also taken into consideration.