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Mrs Carolyn Littlewood
Headteacher
Upperthong Junior and Infant School
Burnlee Road
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Dear Mrs Littlewood

Short inspection of Upperthong Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are a dedicated and committed headteacher and are uncompromising in your desire for the school to continually improve. You inspire others and have engaged effectively with the whole-school community. You have created a positive learning culture through your intent to share responsibilities, increase accountability and give staff ownership of systems and routines. As a result, staff morale is high, and together you take collective responsibility for pupils' outcomes. A team ethos and approach to subject leadership are helping individual staff to flourish by building on their strengths and expertise and allowing them to develop further. This is creating strong capacity for further improvement.

There is a strong sense of community and belonging, which parents value. Pupils are incredibly proud of their school and enjoy making a contribution. They take on responsibilities such as 'buddies' for the new Reception pupils and house captains. They do this with confidence and enthusiasm and are developing as responsible citizens as a result.

Governors know the school well and understand its strengths and weaknesses. They are clear how it is developing due to their visits which help them check how well school improvement priorities are being addressed. This allows them to challenge and support leaders from a well-informed position. Governors take care in the induction of new members to ensure that their skills are used to good effect and

that appropriate training is in place to support them in carrying out their duties. As a result, governors have become increasingly effective in their roles.

Leaders have effectively addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils are clear how to make improvements to their work. This has been particularly successful in supporting pupils' writing development. Pupils' attainment has been consistently strong overall at every key stage over time. Leaders responded promptly to a disappointing dip in writing standards at key stage 1 in 2016. The result of leaders' actions was clearly seen in the improved outcomes in 2017.

Progress over time by the end of key stage 2 has generally been only broadly in line with that seen nationally. Leaders are fully aware that pupils could make better progress by the end of key stage 2 and especially in mathematics. Leaders' actions to address weaker attainment in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in 2016 and 2017 have been slow to take effect but are now beginning to show improving outcomes for current pupils. Leaders are regularly checking the performance of pupils who need to catch up to reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is clearly present throughout the school. This is because leaders and governors take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Regular meetings take place between the governor responsible for safeguarding and senior leaders. The meetings help determine whether leaders' actions to support vulnerable pupils are making enough difference. You work closely with other professionals and services to ensure that pupils and families receive timely and effective support. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff receive regular training which makes sure they have the knowledge and skills to respond to any issues which may arise.

Pupils behave exceptionally well and staff demonstrate a consistent approach which celebrates success, rewards effort and helps pupils to understand how to be safe and get along with each other. Pupils say that there is no bullying, but that they are confident how to deal with it should it happen.

Attendance is well above the national average, and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent is well below the national average. Pupils are keen to be at school because they enjoy learning and value the education they receive.

Inspection findings

- There is a team approach to checking and improving the quality of teaching and learning. This allows a range of staff to develop as leaders and is encouraging a culture of sharing good practice and continual improvement. Staff are highly supportive of each other and are keen to take responsibility for their own

professional development. A thorough performance management process, which is suitably tailored to individual teachers and the specific needs of the pupils they teach, maintains high expectations and accountability for pupils' outcomes.

- In 2016 in writing at key stage 1, attainment dipped below the national average, having previously been consistently above national figures. In 2017, as a result of leaders' actions, attainment in writing improved at key stages 1 and 2. Careful tracking of pupils' progress has successfully identified any gaps in learning and this has supported teachers in planning work which is well matched to pupils' needs. The English team have effectively used their checks on the quality of teaching to accurately identify areas for improvement. This has led to a greater awareness of the curriculum expectations for writing as a result of the staff training provided. Current pupils are making good progress in writing. However, leaders are aware that a few pupils, especially in key stage 2, need to make even better progress to catch up and reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6.
- Children make a strong start to their education. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has been consistently above the national average over time. This strong attainment continues throughout school, with attainment at key stages 1 and 2 almost always above national figures in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' progress is usually only broadly in line with the national average by the end of key stage 2. Leaders are keen to challenge pupils to make better progress, particularly in mathematics, to ensure that more of them are able to exceed the expected standards.
- A school focus on developing pupils' independence and resilience is resulting in pupils approaching challenging problems and tasks with increasing positivity. Pupils say that they enjoy being challenged and puzzled by their learning. They confidently explain that this is how you learn. Teachers' questioning and subject knowledge are also supporting pupils in effectively extending their thinking.
- Following disappointing outcomes in mathematics in 2016 and 2017 at key stage 2, leaders accurately identified that pupils needed to be given more opportunities for reasoning and problem solving in their mathematics work. The mathematics team have supported staff in developing a consistent approach which is now used across the school. This is starting to result in pupils making more rapid gains in their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress is consistently strong so that an increasing proportion of pupils meet and exceed the expectations by the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders and the mathematics and English teams. I also met with six members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records and information about safeguarding. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils from a range of year groups and spoke with a group of teaching staff. You and I visited every classroom together to observe teaching and learning, listen to pupils read and scrutinise pupils' work in their books.