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Mrs Andrea Curran
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Curran

Short inspection of Uphill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 2018, 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You were appointed in May 2015, following a period of unsettled leadership at the school. You have made significant improvements to many areas of the school's work since then. Strongly supported by your deputy headteacher, you have established a calm, positive atmosphere in the school. You model good relationships and a deep commitment to teachers' professional learning. Teachers have developed their skills quickly in this environment, and so their effectiveness has increased. Staff morale is high.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school. You have developed a curriculum which gives pupils real-life experiences. For example, pupils recently researched the history of soldiers from the village who fought in the First World War. Pupils subsequently hosted a tour of the village based on their research. Pupils are learning well. They talk enthusiastically about their work.

Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 make a positive start to school life as a result of well-organised and effective teaching. Key stage 2 pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. You have been particularly effective in improving the identification and support of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is helping these pupils overcome their individual difficulties.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to develop teaching assistants' skills. You have achieved this. Teaching assistants receive effective training. They feel valued and supported in their roles. You have high expectations of your staff. This ensures that they provide pupils with a sufficient level of challenge to make good progress. Nevertheless, you are ambitious for pupils to go further and deeper in their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. The school was asked to increase the engagement of parents and carers. You and your governors have worked tirelessly to build good relationships with parents. You have been largely successful. This has been a significant factor in raising pupils' rates of attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent.

Together with your senior leaders, you have reorganised the teaching of children and pupils in Reception Year and Years 1 and 2. Teaching now challenges children and pupils suitably, according to their stage of development. Having established these changes, you are now rightly working to broaden the curriculum. For example, you have introduced new science resources.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all leaders and governors pursue the work of safeguarding pupils with consistency and vigour. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your staff are well trained and alert to any signs of abuse or neglect. You have shown tenacity in escalating concerns when you have not been satisfied with the response of other agencies.

Pupils know who to go to if they are worried or upset. They feel safe and well cared for. You do not tolerate bullying, and the vast majority of pupils and their parents believe that incidents of bullying are rare. Teaching provides strong messages about how pupils can stay safe. For example, pupils are aware of potential risks when they use the internet.

The hallmark of this school is inclusion. Pupils are encouraged to respect and to look after each other no matter what their background. All staff understand their responsibility for promoting pupils' welfare, and so there is a healthy and open culture of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have developed innovative and effective approaches to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. They base their approaches on well-researched ideas. Teachers engage readily with coaching activities and they are well motivated as a result. Staff at all levels are clear about their roles because senior leaders' improvement plans are cohesive. Staff feel they are all working towards a common goal.
- The chair of the governing body ensures that governors have the necessary skills to challenge senior leaders effectively. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They actively seek parents' views.

Consequently, links between the school and the community are strong.

- To decide if the school remained good, the first key line of enquiry weighed up the quality of pupils' writing in Years 3 and 4. In 2016, pupils' progress in writing was below the national average. In 2017, pupils' progress in writing improved and reached the national average. Senior leaders' revisions to the curriculum mean that pupils are frequently writing for a real audience. Boys, in particular, are now more enthusiastic about writing than in the past.
- Senior leaders have provided training for teachers on grammatical accuracy. They ensure that teachers compare judgements about pupils' writing, and so assessments are reliable. Pupils write well in a variety of different formats. Pupils talk with relish about the letters they have recently written after reading 'The Firework Maker's Daughter'. Current Year 3 and Year 4 pupils' progress in writing is good. However, pupils' ability to judge the quality of their work can improve further.
- The second key line of enquiry concentrated on Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics. Last year, although their progress was around the national average, pupils did not achieve as well in mathematics as they did in reading and writing. Senior leaders have a clear strategy for improving mathematics teaching. They use local and national networks effectively to share good practice and develop the mathematics curriculum. Senior leaders have introduced regular activities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills more extensively. Pupils use these skills well. They have developed confidence and do not shy away when asked to solve problems and explain their reasoning. Nevertheless, some pupils are not yet adept at locating mistakes in their own mathematical explanations.
- A third key line of enquiry evaluated leaders' and managers' actions to improve the progress of children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1. In 2016, key stage 1 pupils' attainment was around the national average in reading and writing, but the proportion of pupils who attained at a greater depth was low. Leadership of this area of the school's work is strong. Teachers have received extra training in phonics teaching. Leaders have established a new system of assessing pupils' phonics knowledge. Teachers are now better able to identify and deal with gaps in pupils' knowledge. Senior leaders have changed the arrangement of teaching groups between the three year groups and introduced new project work into the curriculum. Teaching now engages pupils' imagination well and so motivates pupils to succeed. As a result, a much higher proportion of pupils attained at a greater depth in 2017. This improvement continues for current pupils. Year 2 pupils' handwriting is good. Senior leaders recognise, though, that pupils' cursive handwriting in Year 1 is not yet good enough.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The large majority of parents who replied to the Parent View survey expressed great confidence in senior leaders and would recommend the school to other parents. One parent summed up the sentiments of many with the comment: 'The staff are approachable, caring and supportive. It is a lovely, friendly school that responds well to the whole community ethos of Uphill Village.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers build on the work that has already started to help pupils in Years 3 and 4 assess the quality of their own writing more effectively
- teachers further develop Year 6 pupils' ability to identify their own mistakes in mathematics
- teachers improve pupils' handwriting skills in Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I held a formal meeting with pupils and spoke with many other pupils informally at breaktime and lunchtime. I made observations of learning across the school jointly with you and other leaders. I looked at several examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. I held a telephone conversation with an independent adviser who works with you. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including assessment information and records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. I considered 106 responses to the Parent View questionnaire, five responses from staff and two letters from parents.