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28 January 2019

Mrs Bethan McKenzie
Headteacher
Upland Primary School
Church Road
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Kent

Dear Mrs McKenzie

Short inspection of Upland Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Leaders use experience and research to continually adjust and improve teaching, learning and the wider curriculum. One pupil told me that the thing he valued most about the school was: 'the teachers – they are all really good and they all want to help you'. Pupils are offered a rich and varied curriculum, through careful planning of the wider curriculum subjects and the employment of teachers with subject specialist knowledge. We saw pupils enjoying their personal, social, health and economic education, music, gymnastics and Mandarin lessons. Parents commented in the Ofsted questionnaire that they appreciate the wide range of experiences and interesting trips on offer for their children.

Pupils respect their teachers and each other. They concentrate hard in lessons and are able to explain their learning in great detail. The school is a calm and highly organised place to learn. Routines and systems are very well established, and, as a result, pupils are able to concentrate on their learning and on enjoying their friendships. Behaviour in and outside lessons is exemplary. Pupils are well mannered and polite. Their ability to go about their work independently and

sensibly is particularly impressive. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute to their progress in the classroom.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leaders have created a culture of vigilance, underpinned by regular training for all staff and governors. Systematic record-keeping ensures that the management of safeguarding is extremely well organised and leaders can take swift action if necessary. Leaders meet regularly to review the impact of the school's work on safeguarding pupils. They develop appropriate training for staff and parents and carers, based on identified safeguarding risks. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey said their children were well looked after and that they felt safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- Governors have ensured the continuity of excellent leadership, through the recent appointment of a new leadership team which has enabled the school to sustain its ambitious improvement programme. Governors know the school well and make regular, focused visits to observe the impact of leaders' work for themselves.
- The inspection focused around four lines of enquiry. The first of these concerned opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in different curriculum subjects. This is because, in 2018, pupils made less progress in writing compared to reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6. We looked through a range of pupils' topic books and found examples of high-quality work in different subjects, using letters, reports, diary entries and poems to express pupils' opinions.
- We also saw evidence in pupils' books of teachers helping them to improve their writing in different subjects. As a result, pupils make strong progress in developing their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils told me they enjoyed their learning in lessons. We saw evidence of this in Year 6 pupils' history topic, where they wrote with great sensitivity about being an evacuee and living with strangers away from home.
- The second line of enquiry was to look at leaders' strategies to make sure even more pupils reach the higher standard in reading and writing. This was because many pupils start key stage 2 with above-average attainment in English and mathematics. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and a good understanding about what they need to learn. This is because progress is systematically tracked and areas for improvement identified with clarity.
- Teachers work closely with pupils on their writing in lessons. We consistently saw teachers discussing pupils' writing in lessons. Pupils were then able to make improvements immediately. We saw many examples of work in pupils' books throughout the school which demonstrated strong progress from all starting points. Pupils told me they like the way teachers work with them in lessons because they get the help they need to improve their writing right there and then, rather than getting it wrong and having to go back later to correct it.

- You and your leaders support disadvantaged pupils carefully through individual learning plans so that they progress as well as their peers.
- You have improved the way reading is taught, by introducing a more focused approach to teaching reading skills. During lessons, pupils are challenged on specific reading skills in detail, and, as a result, their reading results continued to improve in 2018 in both key stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils know their teachers are interested in what they are reading. We saw pupils' reading books out on their desks, so that teachers could check and encourage. Pupils are actively encouraged to read through competitions and opportunities to review new books. You and your leaders continually renew books in class reading areas so they are interesting and of the high quality needed for pupils to develop skills to the higher standards.
- The third line of enquiry was to see how well pupils new to the school were progressing in their first year. This is because you had identified that, in 2018, a higher proportion of pupils than usual entered reception class below the national standard for their age, particularly in the area of speech and language. We found that teachers and support staff know the children well and plan the curriculum around their interests and needs. They value children's work, and we saw many examples of children's speech and writing on display. Writing in children's books showed good progress through a variety of opportunities to write for a reason. For example, children had written party invitations and reviews of books, which were of a high standard.
- The early years environment is carefully planned so that opportunities for play match children's specific learning needs. Children were playing purposefully. They co-operate well together but also enjoy learning independently.
- Teaching assistants have been trained well, and we saw them working effectively to move children's learning forward.
- The final area we looked at was the impact middle leaders are having on school improvement. This is because it was identified as an area for ongoing focus by senior leaders and the governing body. You have provided middle leaders with ongoing, high-quality training, for instance on how to use self-evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This means they are confident about their role in raising and monitoring standards and challenge and support standards of teaching in pupils' best interests. They use their experience to innovate, test and refine new strategies, before introducing them more widely across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to develop the wider curriculum so that even more pupils attain at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Brinkley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your middle leaders. I held a meeting with governors. I scrutinised pupils' work in reading, writing and wider curriculum books. I visited lessons in Nursery, Reception and key stages 1 and 2. I talked to pupils about their learning throughout the day as I visited lessons. I analysed 144 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire. I scrutinised documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and pupils' attendance information.