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Mrs Joanna Dentith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dentith

Short inspection of Uffculme Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 on 19 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In close partnership with the executive headteacher of the academy, you provide inspirational leadership which strongly drives school improvement. You are well supported by local governors and other leaders in the school and across the trust, and have strengthened leadership and the quality of teaching in recent years. You have widened the range of learning experiences provided for the pupils. These now include, for example, high-quality physical education and other outdoor learning opportunities. As a result, pupils achieve well both academically and personally. The very supportive relationships that exist between staff and pupils help to promote the quickening rates of pupils' progress now evident across the school.

You, governors and other school leaders monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' learning effectively. Your well-established and detailed self-evaluation and planning systems include close analysis of the influence that additional teaching and support have on pupils' progress. You use the information gathered very effectively to target pupils at risk of underachieving, and make swift adjustments to tackle their needs and deepen their understanding.

You and your leadership team have diligently addressed issues raised at the last inspection. Pupils' reading and mathematical skills have improved significantly. You have made mathematics a key priority in recent years. This has sustained pupils'

strong progress, and has secured above-average standards. Although improving, you acknowledge that pupils' progress and attainment in writing are still not as strong as those found in reading and mathematics.

Almost all the parents who made their views known in the online questionnaire would recommend the school to others. Parents particularly value the school's caring ethos and feel that their views are respected. One parent, reflecting the opinions of others, wrote, 'My daughter really enjoys going to school and is flourishing as a person and in her academic ability.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and staff sustain a strong and effective culture of safeguarding in the school. All those who work in the school maintain a high regard for the safety of pupils across the range of abilities and needs. Leaders are especially diligent in liaising with parents and outside agencies and, when necessary, making referrals to protect vulnerable pupils. Leaders strongly promote good attendance and monitor attendance patterns, not only to rigorously discourage persistent absence, but also to check on pupils' well-being. One of the reasons that attendance is particularly good is because pupils feel safe.

Policies and procedures are of high quality. Staff training is also thorough and up to date. As a result, staff have a very secure understanding of their responsibility for safeguarding pupils, including in respect of the government's 'Prevent' duty to keep them safe from the risk of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders have responded diligently to a recent safeguarding check to ensure that systems to vet staff meet current requirements. Staff know pupils well and are swift to recognise and deal with concerns about their safety and welfare. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident about seeking help if they have any problems. Pupils are taught and know how to stay safe, including when using computers. As one pupil said, reflecting the views of others, 'I enjoy school because it is a colourful place where teachers are really kind and helpful and everyone's happy.' Almost all the parents who responded to the Parent View online survey also support this view and agree that their children feel safe and are well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- First, I examined what leaders are doing to improve boys' attitudes and behaviour for learning across key stage 2.
- Your analysis of pupils' academic and personal qualities rightly identifies that a significant proportion of pupils, especially boys, have particular emotional needs. The school's strong pastoral support and teaching ensure that all pupils progress well in relation to their starting points. Your strong development of teaching and learning in mathematics reflects the positive way in which learning activities have been adapted to challenge and interest pupils, particularly boys. You are now using the same approach across the curriculum, motivating pupils to learn through stimulating topics such as investigating mummification in ancient Egypt. The school's lively and exciting curriculum also provides opportunities both

indoors and outside which make learning fun for the pupils. For example, during the inspection, pupils experienced a confidence-boosting lunch break, participating in a wide range of well-organised activities, especially sports. As a result, boys are now as productively engrossed in learning as girls.

- Second, I more specifically considered what leaders and teachers are doing to improve the progress made by boys in writing across key stage 2. You have rightly identified that some boys have not made the progress of which they are capable in writing. To tackle this, you have already taken decisive action to stimulate boys' interest in writing. Children in Reception now take advantage of the many opportunities to develop their early writing skills during their imaginative, self-chosen learning experiences both indoors and out of doors. The current focus on topics such as 'Overcoming Monsters' enthuses pupils, especially boys, and captures their interest. This is encouraging them to write more imaginatively.
- You are taking increasingly effective action to improve pupils' writing by placing a stronger emphasis on developing their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. For example, pupils in all classes are encouraged to review their work, and not only to make suggestions as to how it might be improved, but increasingly to edit their own work. This self-reflection raises pupils' awareness and encourages them to challenge themselves and produce higher-quality written work. These initiatives are having a positive effect. However, you recognise that this is still work in progress, and that the handwriting and spelling skills of some pupils are not yet developed well enough.
- Finally, I explored the efforts of leaders and teachers to quicken the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, especially in reading and writing, during their time in Reception and key stage 1 classes. This is because, although a very small group, recent assessments have shown that some of these pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils in these subjects.
- My checks show that you have identified correctly that this difference was largely due to circumstances that were unique to this group of pupils. Nevertheless, your enduring commitment to helping all pupils, especially those considered vulnerable, has led to continued development of the learning activities and support you provide for them.
- You make sure that accurate checks of children's needs are made when they enter the school. Teachers are rigorous in checking progress and adjusting learning activities to meet their needs. No child is allowed to fall behind. Additional training for teaching assistants enables them to provide effective assistance, on a one-to-one basis or in small-group activities, for these pupils. The strengthened subject knowledge of teaching assistants is also enabling them to provide more precise support for individual pupils in reading, writing or mathematics. As a result, differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally are diminishing in all subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress and attainment in writing of pupils, especially boys, continue to improve so that they are as good as those in reading and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I also met with the chief executive officer of the Uffculme Academy Trust and members of the school's local governing body. I visited classrooms with you and we collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and during a meeting with a group of Year 6 pupils. I observed selected Year 6 pupils reading, and talked to the assistant headteacher about their reading. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and support staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 55 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 55 additional written comments from parents. I also took account of 19 responses to the staff survey.