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Mrs Holly Laurence
Head of School
Umberleigh Primary Academy
Dorrige Hill
Umberleigh
Devon
EX37 9AD

Dear Mrs Laurence

Short inspection of Umberleigh Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 your predecessor school of the same name was judged to be good in September 2011.

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 became part of the TEAM Multi-Academy Trust in April 2015. The trust is formed of five schools in the local area. Close work between the schools and a sharing of subject leadership expertise have led to a well-designed curriculum. English and mathematics leaders have supported improvements in your school and as an early years specialist, you have been able to share your expertise with other schools within the trust. Your school's close work with the Dartmoor Teaching Alliance further supports the school's leadership in keeping abreast of curriculum initiatives. This ensures that pupils gain a good education in your nurturing and forward-thinking two-class school. The trustees' decision to provide pre-school provision has been well received by parents. Numbers on roll are rising. Outcomes at the end of the early years foundation stage are improving. This is because you swiftly identify children's needs and put measures in place to overcome barriers to learning.

Parents and pupils strongly praise the curriculum provision in the school. Leaders make good use of specialists across the trust. For example, pupils receive high-quality teaching in music and physical education. In addition, 'big events' hook pupils' enthusiasm so that they become curious. For example, pupils engaged in a recent project with Exmoor Trust. They visited the first international dark sky reserve in Europe for a star gazing event to further their understanding of space. Similarly, local links help pupils to understand significant historical themes such as Barnstaple's part in the English Civil War.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding training are strong. Staff confidently described the process of sharing concerns with the designated person. Governors and trustees also attend staff training and so are equally knowledgeable about their statutory duties. They have a keen awareness of issues associated with the 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation and have considered the risks for pupils in the school. Consequently, staff are alert to warning signs and are vigilant. Your staff have a good knowledge of pupils and their families. This means that staff are sensitive to changes in pupils' circumstances and alert to signs of harm. In addition, your approachable nature has allowed parents who are experiencing challenges within the family to approach you for advice.

Designated leaders for safeguarding are relentless in engaging with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they require. School documentation shows that staff carry out rigorous risk assessments to ensure that the school environment is a safe place to be. Trustees ensure that they check leaders' work to keep pupils safe. They listen to pupils' views and act upon what they say.

Staff carefully plan to reduce risks on school trips and residential visits. This contributes to the strong culture of safeguarding at your school. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in saying that they felt their children were safe and well cared for in school. One parent's comment, typical of many, stated, 'Umberleigh is a kind, caring and warm school that my children feel happy and secure in.'

Leaders' diligent work has led to attendance improving from below national average, to be now in line with the national average for all pupil groups.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Trustees keep a close eye on how any additional funding is spent and provide regular challenge to leaders to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are well catered for. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils of all abilities receive the support and challenge they need. Leaders make close checks on pupils' progress and act swiftly to provide the support that pupils need whether it be in their academic or personal development. Consequently, these pupils thrive and achieve well.
- Your special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is the lead SENCo across the trust. She is well qualified and has a deep understanding of pupils' needs. She works closely with external agencies to ensure that every possible action is taken to support pupils' development. There is a seamless approach through the specific one-to-one support and the work that pupils do in the classroom. Consequently, pupils grow in confidence and build upon their knowledge, skills and understanding to make good progress.

- My next line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics. In the 2017 end of key stage 2 tests, pupils did not achieve as well in mathematics as they did in reading and writing. You have rightly identified this on your school improvement plan. The recently appointed mathematics leader has supported a new approach to the teaching of mathematics in your school. However, our look at pupils' mathematics books identified that teaching is not providing sufficient challenge for a few middle-ability pupils to reach higher standards.
- I also looked at the progress of the most able mathematicians in the school. Although pupils at the end of key stage 1 achieved a high standard in mathematics, too few of the most able mathematicians at key stage 2 made good progress. It is clear from our look at books that teachers' expectations have been further raised. The most able mathematicians receive the challenge they need to make good progress. You and your team are determined to increase the momentum in this aspect of the school's work. The mathematics leader's work is already making a difference in this respect.
- Finally, I focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of phonics and spelling. In 2017, all Year 1 pupils met the expected standard in phonics. This was an improvement on the previous year. You have identified that pupils' spelling was weaker at key stage 2 and provided effective support for pupils who have barriers to learning in spelling. The trust has adopted a new approach to teaching phonics and spelling and your English leader is ensuring that this leads to swift improvement. Our look at books confirmed that pupils' spelling is improving rapidly. In addition, the school's focus on higher standards of presentation is beginning to take hold.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more of the middle-ability pupils achieve higher standards in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the chief executive officer for the trust to agree the timetable and inspection activities for the day. I also worked extensively with you and your senior leaders across the day. I met with the mathematics leader to evaluate the

effectiveness of teaching in mathematics. I also met with the senior leader for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the leader of English across the trust.

I scrutinised safeguarding records and discussed a wide range of matters relating to safeguarding. This included staff recruitment, fire drill logs and reporting procedures where the school has concerns about pupils' well-being. I visited classes jointly with senior leaders. We scrutinised a range of books and talked to pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the trustees and the local governing body. I reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and school improvement plans.

I considered 21 free-text responses made by parents to Parent View.