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Mr Nick Styles  
Headteacher  
Riccall Community Primary School  
Coppergate  
Riccall  
York  
North Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Styles

### **Short inspection of Riccall Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 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 December 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher, you have worked tirelessly to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve and have instilled a shared ambition among the school community to be outstanding. You are thoughtful in your decision making and ensure that any changes you introduce are well thought through and based on extensive research and best practice.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics. Despite organising staff training, leaders' actions were not effective in accelerating pupils' progress and pupils' attitudes to mathematics were poor. You recognised the urgency with which you needed to make a difference and wasted no time in establishing a new approach to the teaching of mathematics. This is consistently applied across the school and is now accelerating pupils' progress effectively. Importantly, you embedded a can-do culture among your pupils. The Riccall 'PETS' serves as a kindly reminder to all pupils of your expectation for their perseverance, enthusiasm, teamwork and success. This resonates with all pupils, who talk confidently and positively about their learning and who are prepared for the next stage of their education successfully.

You have established a clear, regular and rigorous approach to the assessment of pupils' learning, which is consistent across the school and accurate. Assessment outcomes are analysed effectively to identify gaps in pupils' achievement and to inform

your priorities for improvement effectively. Your school development plan is a detailed working document, which you evaluate regularly. You set aspirational targets against which you measure your success, for pupils' achievement at the expected standard. However, they are not directly linked to pupils' outcomes at the higher standard or to outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, which you acknowledge.

Since the last inspection you have established a new senior leadership team. Although only recently formed, team members demonstrate good subject knowledge and are clear about what needs to improve. They are enthusiastic about their roles and welcome the opportunities you have given them. They are equally determined to support you in raising pupils' achievement further.

Several new appointments have strengthened governance in school. Governors know the school's priorities for improvement and welcome your honest and detailed reports. They share your vision for future success, with great resolve. Their responsibilities are completed with due diligence and they offer you increasing levels of challenge and support to raise pupils' achievement. This bodes well for the future.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Thorough checks are made on adults employed to work with children, to ensure they are fit to do so. All staff receive appropriate and regular training, so they are up to date with the most recent legislation. They are clear about the procedure they must follow if they have any concerns. While your record-keeping is detailed and chronologically accurate, some of the commentaries checked are more descriptive than factual.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and demonstrate a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They are confident that 'it doesn't happen at Riccall' and if it did, an adult would deal with it swiftly and sensitively. Parents endorse this view.

Pupils behave well and are respectful of others. On the rare occasion that a pupil falls short of your expectations, you use it as a learning point to strengthen pupils' awareness and tolerance of others effectively. Consequently, the school is orderly and purposeful and pupils demonstrate good manners.

### **Inspection findings**

- The school's published data indicates that pupils' outcomes in writing were in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally for 2016 and 2017 for pupils with middle prior attainment. Upon closer analysis, this applied particularly to boys' outcomes. I wanted to know what actions leaders were taking to improve this. You and your subject leaders have introduced a systematic approach to the teaching of writing for different purposes, including: handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar. It is clear pupils are demonstrating greater confidence in constructing their writing accurately and with greater complexity. Although pupils' progress is improving rapidly, there is less evidence of pupils, particularly boys, working at the higher standard consistently, especially in their writing in subjects beyond English.

- I also wanted to check how adults in the Reception class promote children's early writing skills. Adults use children's interests to plan activities indoors and outdoors that engage and excite effectively. This ensures that children are enthusiastic learners and curious about the world around them. In adult-led activities, such enthusiasm is harnessed and children are encouraged to apply their early phonics skills to spell simple words. Work in children's books shows they are making good progress from their starting points. However, there are times, when children are accessing free-choice activities, that adults do not extend children's learning and encourage children to apply their early literacy skills purposefully.
- Leaders used established good practice to inform their strategy for improving pupils' outcomes in mathematics. Pupils are now able to reason about mathematics and to solve problems confidently and successfully. Good-quality resources are a common feature of classroom practice and are used to support pupils' understanding effectively. Consequently, pupils' outcomes across the school are improving strongly. We discussed the importance of building upon recent improvements, so that more pupils achieve at the higher standard, consistently.
- Although there are very few pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, their outcomes are more variable and none of these pupils reached the higher standard in writing or mathematics in 2016 or 2017. You have changed your strategy for the deployment of teaching assistants and your approach to providing additional support and intervention for some of your most vulnerable pupils. Early signs indicate that pupils' progress is strengthening and the vast majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now working within their age-related expectations. While this is heartening, you acknowledge that disadvantaged pupils' outcomes at the higher standard remain inconsistent.
- Pupils' absence over time has been well below that found nationally. However, in 2017 there was a slight increase in the proportion of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, who were absent from school. You quickly put a series of measures in place and, together with governors, reviewed your attendance policy and procedures and shared your expectations with parents. As a result, absence rates for the current school year have reduced well.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics accelerate further, so that more pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, can achieve at the higher standard for their age
- adults in the early years maximise opportunities to extend children's early literacy skills, particularly in free-choice activities
- targets identified within the school development plan are linked sharply to the improvements in pupils' and disadvantaged pupils' achievement at the higher standard.

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 Yorkshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team to discuss the impact of your actions to improve the school. We observed learning together in the early years and key stages 1 and 2. While in classes, we looked at pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning. I took account of the views made by 86 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the written text comments made by 100 parents and those who spoke with me at the start of the school day. I also took account of 20 responses to the staff survey and 100 responses to the pupil survey. I held meetings with members from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body and the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I talked to a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2 and heard them read. I scrutinised a number of documents, including a range of safeguarding documents and the school's written evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan. I also reviewed minutes from recent governing body meetings.