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25 November 2010

Mr G Lahive  
Headteacher  
Riverside Primary School  
Brighton Street  
Wallasey  
Merseyside  
CH44 6QW

Dear Mr Lahive

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Riverside Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also extend my thanks to the staff, pupils and governor with whom I spoke during the course of the inspection.

Since the time of the previous inspection one assistant headteacher has left due to promotion and four teaching assistants have left due to cuts in funding. In addition, the proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals has risen by 12 percentage points to 70%.

As a result of the inspection on 19 and 20 May 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

As at the previous inspection, children enter the Nursery with skills which are very low and below those expected for their age. These low skill levels remain as the children move through the Early Years Foundation Stage and transfer into Year 1. This slow progress is hindered by high levels of absence which in turn affects the level of skills acquired. At the time of the previous inspection the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was well below average. In 2010 the overall attainment improved and is now broadly in line with national averages. However, mathematics at Key Stage 1 remains below the national average. Overall there is a trend of improvement across Key Stage 1 and given their low levels on entry, pupils are

September 2010



making improved progress in most aspects of their learning. The overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly in line with national averages over the last three years up to 2010. At the previous inspection the Level 4+ attainment in English was well below average. In 2010 this improved and is now in line. The unvalidated data for the national assessments show that overall pupils are making significantly better progress by the end of Year 6 compared to rates of progress nationally. This rate of progress was confirmed through the lesson observations and the pupils' work seen during the inspection. Raising the achievement of more able pupils was one area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The scrutiny of lesson plans and observing pupils at work showed that generally the more able pupils are being challenged through appropriately levelled activities and are achieving higher standards of work.

Overall rates of attendance remain low. This is mainly down to the low attendance figures for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and up to the end of Key Stage 1. The school has to contend with a small core of persistent absentees whose parents are hard to reach. Nevertheless the school continues to work hard on this issue. It has introduced a range of strategies including: a walking bus, employment of a family support worker, attendance awards and rewards, an attendance plan and use of parental fines. These strategies have been effective in the case of some identified families.

In lessons observed the quality of teaching was strong. Teachers used a good range of teaching and learning styles. This was engaging pupils in their learning which impacted on the good progress they made. Teachers' planning is effective in ensuring that the range of pupils' abilities is catered for. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well through the effective use of teaching assistants and appropriately planned activities. As a result their achievement is improving.

Scrutiny of pupils' work showed that teachers are applying the school's marking policy in all year groups. Teachers are expected to give two positive comments and one comment for improvement. While all teachers are doing this the quality of the comments for improvement is not yet consistent across each year group. Similarly the quality of handwriting across the school is not yet consistently high. Handwriting is good in some year groups for some individuals but more work is needed on this aspect of writing.

All pupils have individual targets which they know well and which are reviewed regularly. The school uses an effective class tracking system for teachers to monitor pupils' levels of attainment on a termly basis. This tracking of individuals and whole year groups is linked closely into the whole school target setting process. The school sets challenging targets using a nationally recognised scheme. In 2010 each of the schools targets were surpassed.

The senior leadership of the school is showing improved capacity to move the school forward. This can be seen through: the raised standards of attainment at Key Stage 1, improved attainment in English at Key Stage 2 and the improving rates of progress made by the time pupils leave school. The school has produced a well structured improvement plan which identifies clearly all the key areas for moving the school forward. There is a clear vision for the school centred on improving the attainment for all pupils. This is shared by all staff. There are clear established systems in place for monitoring and evaluating progress against all areas for improvement within the plan. Members of the senior leadership regularly conduct lesson observations, learning walks and a scrutiny of pupils' work. These are followed up with constructive and effective written feedbacks to all staff which in turn promote improvement.

The local authority has continued to provide effective support for the school. The local authority's confidence in the school is seen through the way it uses the school as an example of good practice in areas such as: phonics teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the work on improving teaching and learning styles.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Sharples  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in (insert month and year)**

- Improve pupils' handwriting and spelling throughout the school.
- Provide consistently effective challenge for the more able pupils to raise achievement.
- Ensure that all teachers strike the right balance between whole-class teaching and in providing opportunities for pupils to practise, apply and consolidate existing and newly learned skills, so that all pupils make good progress.
- Persuade the parents of those pupils who are frequently absent from school of the importance of sending their children to school regularly.