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Friday 29 October 2010

Mr Hayman
Headteacher
Riverside Community Primary School
Wanlip Lane
Birstall
Leicester
LE4 4JU

Dear Mr Hayman

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 27 October 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Can you thank the Chair of the Governing Body and subject leaders who found time to meet with me.

As a result of the inspection on 14 January 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection a new deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed. A number of staffing changes have been made to improve the quality of teaching. Staff training and increased accountability has strengthened the overall quality of subject leadership. These changes have added momentum to the school's drive to raise overall achievement. Results in 2010 show a significant improvement, exceeding the targets the school set for itself. The proportions of pupils in Year 6 attaining the expected levels in English, mathematics and science are above national averages.

Observations of lessons by HMI and senior leaders confirmed that the large majority of classes make satisfactory and at times better progress. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children experience an improved range of opportunities to develop their basic skills of writing and number. A suitable blend of teacher-led and pupil-directed learning, based on the theme of pirates, captured their imagination and attention. Children enjoyed using the interactive whiteboard to learn to count

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together and then apply this knowledge by sticking different amounts of treasure onto pirate ships. Outside, they enjoyed searching for numbers buried in the sand and scrubbing the decks with brushes and water. In Key Stage 1, effective teaching of phonics is helping younger pupils to secure a good understanding of letter sounds and new words. Pupils are grouped by ability to complete suitably challenging tasks which aids their progress. Teachers provide regular feedback on how well pupils are doing through their marking.

In Key Stage 2, pupils' appreciation of poetry is enhanced through different writing tasks matched to their different abilities. A newly introduced, thematic curriculum is stimulating pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning, enabling them to access a wider range of sources to develop their reading and writing skills. Pupils are given extended periods of time to learn independently in pairs and small groups. Teachers plan collaboratively, using the assessment information they have to prepare different tasks and resources. However, this is relatively new and at times more able students are not sufficiently challenged. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' books in Year 6 showed that they often do the same tasks, so the most able are not stretched to tackle really challenging work. Some activities are often too open-ended and lack clear timescales for pupils to complete and review their work.

Senior leaders have enlisted effective support from the local authority and the school improvement partner to help them to address most of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Safeguarding arrangements remain secure. Discussions with a sample of subject leaders confirmed the higher expectations senior leaders have of them and the training and support provided to develop their roles. For example, the numeracy leader has led training for all staff on using and applying mathematics, and followed this up with enhanced monitoring of lessons and checking of pupils' work to gauge its impact. They talked positively about the time given to them to develop their own roles and to support their colleagues. All subject leaders are expected to complete departmental plans to raise achievement in their subjects, which help to inform overall school improvement planning.

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

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2009

- Raise standards in writing, using and applying mathematics, and in experimental and investigative science throughout the school, and especially for more able pupils.
- Improve opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their basic skills of writing and number both in indoor and outdoor provision.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that staff know how to use information from assessment to provide all pupils with the right level of challenge.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they can raise standards in their subjects quickly and effectively.