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Mrs Ann Politowski
Headteacher
Riddings Infant and Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Politowski

Short inspection of Riddings Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016, 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The pupils are lively, exhibit curiosity about the world around them and are keen to talk about things. They achieve well.

The school is very popular in the area and, justifiably, is held in high regard by parents. One parent picked out a particular feature, in a comment typical of the views that I received, saying of the school that 'They genuinely care for the children.'

You have ensured that the school is outward looking and seeking continuously to improve. You have passed on to the rest of the staff very effectively your commitment to improving the school and the staff reflect your approach. You summed up that approach, when you said to me, 'We wouldn't be doing our job properly, if we were standing still.' Accordingly, you have tackled each of the areas for improvement from the last inspection methodically. As a result, improvements are evident in boys' attainment, in the early years, and in the curriculum.

You have a well-tuned understanding of what the school needs to improve now. You identified accurately two things in particular. Firstly, you are aware that in the early years, the children's speech, listening, language and communication skills are often

at a low level. In particular, they have difficulty recognising initial letter sounds accurately.

Secondly, you are also very aware that the pupils' results in the Year 1 phonics screening test have fallen recently. You identified the causes of the fall and have taken determined action to tackle the matter. That action includes introducing a different way of teaching phonics from that used previously. I found early indications that the new way of teaching is improving the pupils' progress, but the changes are recent and have not had enough time to have their full effect.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's policies and practices for safeguarding the pupils are fit for purpose. The school's procedures for registering any concerns are straightforward and are understood and implemented by the staff. You have put in place effective arrangements that ensure that your procedures are able to work, even when key personnel may be absent from the school. You explained to me that the procedures have been tested in such circumstances and still worked properly.

The staff told me that safeguarding is at the forefront of their minds. You ensure that there are regular and frequent opportunities for the staff to discuss any concerns about pupils. You have ensured also that the staff receive training about safeguarding often. As a result, the staff are aware of and alert to the latest guidance from the government and the full range of potential concerns that the guidance identifies.

The governing body is fully alert to its responsibilities for safeguarding. It carries out an annual audit of safeguarding and monitors the progress of cases referred to the designated person responsible for safeguarding. It checks that the staff receive appropriate training. Members of the governing body have also undertaken a variety of training about safeguarding. They have done some of the training jointly with the staff.

You work well with other agencies, when individual pupils are in need of help. You show determination and persistence in getting for them the help that they need. Your actions have led to the pupils feeling safe and happy at the school and contributed to the strongly positive views among parents about this aspect of the school's work.

Inspection findings

- You have inculcated in the school a well-balanced approach to the care and welfare of the pupils that includes an unequivocal focus on meeting their academic needs.

- You check thoroughly on the impact of teaching and to good effect. Most recently, you have ascertained that the school's new approach to teaching phonics is being implemented consistently by the teachers. The teachers described to me how the feedback that you provided to them has helped them to make further improvements.
- The governing body assists the school well by providing an appropriate balance of challenge and support. It is well informed about the work of the school and knows what things are done well and where improvements are needed.
- The school, classrooms and lessons provide purposeful places in and occasions on which to learn. As a result, typically, the pupils reach standards in tests at the end of Key Stage 1 that are around average and sometimes better, from below-average starting points.
- The teachers assess the pupils' progress carefully. They use the information to devise lessons that are focused on the pupils' particular needs and that are structured in ways that enable the pupils to learn step by step.
- For example, work in science helps the pupils to understand the importance of orderly approaches, getting the pupils to work through four stages: resources, prediction, method, and results.
- The pupils are encouraged to make predictions and then to test the predictions practically. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the pupils were making predictions about the effects of adding items to, or removing them from, weighing scales. The class watched attentively as individuals were asked in turn to make a prediction and then to use the scales and to report on what happened.
- In another example of a practical activity that was used to good effect, this time in a mathematics lesson, a group of low-attaining pupils was helped to get a better understanding of proportions when they had to work out and cut up portions of toast, such as half a slice, or a quarter of a slice.
- The pupils have targets that help to give them a sense of ambition and aspiration to improve. For example, one of them told me that the targets 'tell you what you've got to see in your work and do better'. The rewards that the teachers give the pupils for meeting their targets, such as 'smelly stickers', add to the pupils' motivation to do well.
- You have progressively improved the provision in the early years in a thoughtfully planned and logically sequenced way. You have revised the outdoor learning area, so that it is now fit for purpose.
- The early years coordinator has changed the way that the children's learning is assessed in the early years. The staff now understand more precisely how well the children are doing and are able to use the outdoor area more effectively, as a result.
- The staff are using the school's resources, including the outdoor area, imaginatively. For example, I observed a group making good progress learning about the shape of letters by writing them large in chalk on the playground.
- You have now a consistent approach to teaching phonics in all classes. In addition to the regular lessons focused on phonics, the teachers take the opportunity to reinforce the pupils' knowledge and skills by getting them to apply their learning in other subjects and lessons.

- As well as making good progress academically, the pupils, rapidly, gain in confidence as a result of the ways in which you and the staff work with them.
- The pupils show a lot of confidence in the staff. For example, they say that behaviour is mostly good and raised no concerns with me about bullying, but told me that, when there is misbehaviour, or someone gets called 'nasty names', the teachers sort things out effectively.
- The school sets very clear expectations for behaviour. The pupils understand well the school's rules for behaviour. They think that the sanctions that are used are effective and are adamant that 'you don't want to get sent to Mrs Politowski!'
- You have used the school's duty to promote British values very effectively. You have made British values a thread that runs through the curriculum.
- The teachers incorporate that thread into their planning and use a broad variety of contexts and subjects to teach about different aspects of British society and the different communities and cultures within it.
- As a result, the pupils, including the children in the early years, are increasingly recognising, valuing and respecting differences and gaining a good understanding of how rules help people to live together harmoniously.
- I found examples of how the school's work to promote British values is shaping the pupils' understanding and attitudes and helping to set the right tone for behaviour. A member of staff summed up the school's approach by describing it as being about helping the pupils to understand that 'Everybody's different. Everybody's special'.
- In the early years, the children made a display of everyone's handprints and the staff used the display as a focus for learning about individuality and the need to respect differences. The staff drew out lessons about how to behave and to get on with people.
- In Year 1, the pupils produced a 'class friendship garden' filled with examples of what they value about each other.
- Comments written by the pupils in Year 2 explained how work on British values had, for example, helped them to understand that 'We have school rules to be happy at school.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the children's speaking, listening, and communication skills are improved in the early years, with particular attention to the accuracy with which the children hear initial sounds
- the revised approach to teaching phonics is embedded, with particular attention to helping the pupils to transfer and to apply the learning to different subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with senior leaders, representatives of the governing body, the early years coordinator, the member of staff responsible for phonics, the designated person responsible for safeguarding, other members of staff, and with a representative of the local authority. I made a series of visits to lessons jointly with the headteacher, spending time in all classrooms at different times of the day. I examined examples of the pupils' work and looked at the teachers' assessments of that work. I held a range of discussions with a wide variety of pupils, informally when observing breaktimes and during lessons, and formally with a group of pupils. I observed the pupils' behaviour around the school at the start of the day, at breaktimes, and during lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day, looked at the views of parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and a letter written by a parent to the inspector. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, behaviour records and policies, the latest achievement and attendance information for the school, the school's improvement plan, and documents from checks on the quality of teaching and learning. I looked at a questionnaire completed and returned by a member of staff.