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Martin Doyle
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Dear Mr Doyle

Short inspection of Riverside School

Following my visit to the school on 12 October 2016 with Joan Deslandes, Ofsted Inspector, 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Senior leaders work well together to drive forward improvements in the school. They have clearly identified roles and responsibilities and communicate effectively with each other. Leaders and teachers work closely with professionals from other agencies to make sure that pupils' health and care needs are well met. This enables pupils to make progress in all areas of their development.

Since the previous inspection, systems for assessing pupils' progress have been significantly extended and revised. Led by one of your deputy headteachers, this work has transformed the way in which teachers use assessment. Teachers now plan sharply focused activities which enable pupils to make sound progress. As a result, the recommendation from the previous inspection that assessment information is shared better with teachers has been fully addressed.

Similarly, at the time of the last inspection you were asked to extend links with the co-located academy and local sixth form in order to broaden the range of learning opportunities for pupils. This recommendation has also been fully addressed. You work closely with the sixth form provider, which

most of your pupils move on to after school. You are considering ways in which this work could be extended further to ensure that there is a local educational offer for young people up to the age of 25. Pupils from Riverside access the co-located academy as appropriate to their abilities and needs. Some classes are twinned with a class in the mainstream academy for projects. In addition, all Year 11 pupils are engaged in weekly work experience placements tailored to their individual interests, preferences and abilities.

Leaders and governors carefully monitor the school's performance. They identified that the responsibilities of middle leaders were not structured as effectively as they would like and implemented a change in September 2016. This exemplifies senior leaders' commitment to continual improvement.

Teachers and other staff members know pupils well and quickly recognise small changes in their behaviour or mood. They know what each pupil's preferences are and meet their needs quickly. Adults use a range of strategies and resources to communicate with pupils, including objects, signing, electronic devices, symbols and text. The implementation of these strategies, however, is sometimes variable.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Multi-agency meetings are held fortnightly in which professionals from health and social care agencies meet with school leaders to discuss any ongoing cases or emerging concerns. As a result, all professionals working with families are kept well informed and can pass on relevant information. Safeguarding issues are discussed at the start of every staff meeting, ensuring that these issues remain at the forefront of the school's work.

Members of staff and governors attend regular training in relation to safeguarding and leaders have ensured that all adults in school have up-to-date knowledge about current issues such as female genital mutilation and the government's 'Prevent' duty.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe at a level they can understand. This includes lessons on e-safety and the development of routines such as wearing protective helmets when cycling.

Inspection findings

- The restructured middle leadership team are enthusiastic and experienced. They are excited about their new positions and have grasped the opportunity to take a more significant leadership role with relish. You have encouraged them to develop their own ideas. Already,

they have established a strong team ethic within their departments. They can identify an increased focus on learning in some activities. For example, a sharp focus on developing the ability of a particular group of pupils to prepare and cook their own food during a residential visit. The middle leadership roles are newly established, however, and it is not possible to judge the full impact of these changes.

- Leaders have introduced comprehensive systems for assessing exactly what pupils can do and what they need to learn next in a range of different subject areas. The assessments that teachers make are checked to ensure that they are correct. Consequently, senior leaders and governors can be sure that the information they receive is accurate.
- Leaders and governors have refined the way that assessment information is presented this year to make sure that comparison is made between groups of pupils and others with similar ages and starting points. This has been a brave decision. It provides more sharply focused information which supports leaders as they improve the school further. The information shows that in 2016 very few pupils made weak progress in any aspect of the curriculum. Most pupils made good progress, and some did even better. Pupils identified as having moderate learning difficulties were more likely to make rapid gains, showing that these most-able pupils in the school are well catered for.
- Leaders carefully analyse the performance of groups of pupils such as those from different cultural backgrounds and those who are eligible for pupil premium funding. Their analysis is correct in identifying that there are no significant differences in the performance of these groups.
- Leaders work effectively with families to make sure that pupils attend school as often as they can. Any absence from school is followed up swiftly. Strategies that are tailored to families' particular circumstances are put in place to support them. For example, pupils with complex health needs who may need to sleep following seizures are able to arrive later in school when necessary, rather than taking a day's absence. On the other hand, leaders send text messages to parents whose children travel independently but are regularly late to make sure that parents know exactly what time their child arrives in school. In 2016, there was no significant difference in the attendance of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for support from the pupil premium funding and those who are not.
- Teachers and other adults use a range of effective strategies to develop pupils' reading and pre-reading skills. These include the use of visual symbols and objects of reference. Pupils learn to recognise what these familiar items or symbols represent, before moving on to decode text.
- Pupils are taught to communicate effectively with adults and each other using a range of systems and resources. These include the use of technology, signing, symbol exchange and verbal language. However, at times adults do not apply these systems consistently. This reduces pupils' ability to make their needs known or to understand what is required of them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that outcomes improve further, by:

- embedding the new middle leadership structure so that it is highly effective in driving forward improvements in teaching, learning and assessment for the specific cohorts of pupils they serve
- implementing the existing communication systems consistently and with greater precision, extending pupils' ability to express their needs and further developing their understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection: the strength and accuracy of the school's systems for measuring pupils' progress; whether groups of pupils make strong progress over time; the effectiveness of leaders' actions to reduce persistent absence, particularly for those eligible for pupil premium funding; the effectiveness of leaders' actions to address the areas for development identified at the last inspection; and the impact of the revised middle leadership structure.

Inspectors carried out activities to explore these areas during the inspection. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, a group of staff, three governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors made visits to lessons to observe teaching and learning. Some of these visits were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at assessment information relating to different groups of pupils. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding, records of pupils' absence, leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance and pupils' work.