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Nick Banwell
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Dear Mr Banwell

Short inspection of Rydon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your staff, governors and directors of the multi-academy trust hold a very clear vision for the future and share your high ambitions for the pupils of Rydon School. You and other senior leaders diligently promote the school's caring ethos and the qualities, including 'always trying your best', as outlined in 'The Rydon Way'. The pupils' behaviour and improved attitudes to learning are very positive. They take pride in their school and enjoy very supportive relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils, parents and staff are extremely positive about the school.

Since the previous inspection you have maintained the focus on leading improvement. Good work has been done to raise the quality and broaden the expertise of leaders at all levels, including governors. You have ensured that leaders, teachers and support staff continue to benefit from well-planned training opportunities, which include developing their skills with colleagues in schools across the multi-academy trust. For example, your work to improve the teaching of phonics in the early years has resulted in pupils consistently reaching above average outcomes in the phonics screening checks.

You and other leaders in the school work closely with local governors and senior leaders across the multi-academy trust. This ensures that all leaders know and

understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, and prioritise and tackle the right areas for improvement. Consequently, by the time pupils leave the school, they achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.

Your capacity to bring about improvement is evident in the robust way you have responded to the fall in standards in the 2016 key stage 1 national assessments. You and other leaders identified that this was the result of previous inconsistency in teachers' use of assessment information to inform teaching. You have now taken determined action to rectify weaknesses. Checks of pupils' current work and progress show that more pupils are making the progress they should. Precisely planned additional adult support for pupils that need to catch up is ably supporting the changes you have made to teaching. You know that the task now is to sustain this positive momentum of improvement so that pupils achieve to the best of their ability across key stage 1.

Overall, you have maintained the quality of teaching so that pupils learn well and achieve good outcomes. However, you and your team have identified that the quality of teaching and support given to different groups of pupils has varied in the past for Years 1 to 4. For example, your monitoring shows that in some of these year groups, middle-ability and the most able pupils did not progress as well as other pupils. The changes that you have made and your evaluations of teaching indicate that teachers are now using assessment more effectively to set work that suitably challenges pupils of different ability. As a result, the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills from different starting points show a clear improvement. While most pupils are making good progress in developing their handwriting skills, you and other leaders know that further work is needed to improve the standards of spelling in all year groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

A secure safeguarding culture enables all staff to appreciate and understand the processes that keep pupils safe. Staff, including those new to the school, are clear about what actions are required should a potential issue arise. Staff know the pupils well and keep a constant watch over those considered vulnerable. Case studies of the support given to pupils at times of need demonstrate close contact with outside agencies and parents in order to keep pupils as safe as possible.

School leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements, such as staff training, are in place and kept up to date. These arrangements include thorough checks on the suitability of staff and other adults who work in the school. The school's records of the actions taken by staff to keep pupils safe are of high quality. Consequently, safeguarding procedures meet the statutory requirements.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, the accuracy of teachers' assessments and how the information is used to support children moving into Year 1 from Reception was examined. Leaders' response to the drop in standards at key stage 1 in 2016 was

also explored. In addition, how well lower-attaining pupils are supported in Year 3 was investigated. Finally, how effectively middle-ability pupils are being stretched to reach the highest standards or 'greater depth' by the end of Year 6 was checked.

- New assessment procedures are showing a clear impact across the school. Your actions have ensured that the learning experiences provided for all groups of pupils are better planned to meet their needs.
- Children continue to make a successful start in Reception classes. As the leader of the early years, you have developed the curriculum and range of learning experiences provided for the children both indoors and outside. This is supporting better progress for children, especially for boys.
- Close cooperation between staff in the two early years classes is enabling teaching assistants, as well as teachers, to assess the children's skills accurately. As a result, all staff ensure that children's different needs are supported effectively to facilitate a smooth transition into Year 1 classes.
- You have responded swiftly to last year's fall in standards at the end of Year 2. For example, you have helped teachers to improve their use of assessment and target pupils' different needs from their varying starting points. As a result, teachers more precisely provide challenging work and support for pupils who are not yet progressing quickly enough. You have identified that these pupils, who include some middle-ability and most-able pupils, still need this extra assistance to achieve their best.
- Your training and guidance for staff is ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively. For example, pupils are enthused by the activities and number work which are extending their numeracy skills and confidence in mathematics.
- Currently, an increased number of pupils are currently working at or above the levels expected for their age across key stage 1. An earlier focus on developing pupils' ability to join letters when writing is helping pupils across Years 1 and 2 to improve the quality of their handwriting and to write more fluently and confidently.
- Leaders have identified and are taking action to develop the reading and writing skills of some boys and middle-ability pupils across Years 3 and 4. Consequently, boys are improving their reading and writing skills productively when studying topics that capture their interest, such as Theseus and Ancient Greece.
- Leaders and teachers are successfully supporting those pupils in Year 3 who previously did not reach expected standards in the Year 2 national assessments. Your monitoring records and pupils' work seen during the inspection show that strengthened teaching and additional support are helping these pupils to make faster progress and catch up. However, this extra attention and support has not been sustained long enough yet to fully extend pupils' skills and depth of understanding.
- You have identified the need to improve pupils' ability to spell words accurately and are currently tackling this. However, school leaders' and inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' written work across the school show that some pupils are still repeating

incorrect spellings.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:
- teachers in key stage 1 and in Year 3 classes sustain the level of challenge and support necessary to ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability, particularly those who had not previously met expected standards
- teachers place a more consistent emphasis on developing pupils' ability to spell words accurately so that more pupils attain at the highest level.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the Education South West multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Rydon and other schools previously in the Templer Academy Schools Trust merged with Academies Trust South West in January 2017. They now form a new multi-academy trust called Education South West.
- During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with the director of education of the multi-academy trust and the chair and other members of the local governing body. I visited classrooms with you or the deputy headteacher. Together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils and support staff during the morning and lunch breaks. I interviewed different groups of pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3. I examined a range of documents, especially those relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance and progress, and school self-evaluation and development. I also took account of the 97 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey.