

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Sarah Hall  
Headteacher  
Riston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Main Street  
Long Riston  
Hull  
East Yorkshire  
HU11 5JF

Dear Mrs Hall

### **Short inspection of Riston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2018, 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 November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You demonstrate a lively enthusiasm and ambition for the school, grounded in a good understanding of what needs to be done to make the school the best it can be. You have made sure that everyone knows that you are all aiming for the 'Rolls Royce' of education. You are fully inclusive in all aspects of school life, including the work to evaluate the school's effectiveness and the resulting plans of action. Every pupil, member of staff and governor has been part of this process. Therefore, everyone knows exactly what the school's strengths are and the areas that need further development.

Partnerships with parents and carers are very important to you. Every parent spoken to during the inspection and completing Parent View said that their child felt happy and safe in school. One hundred percent would recommend this school to another parent. Many parents took the opportunity during the inspection to comment in detail about the strengths they see in the school. These included many references to the excellent family and community spirit, their children's retelling of great things that have happened during the school day and how well the school listens to and acts upon their children's opinions.

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. One child summed up the views of many

others when he said, 'I feel so happy to be part of this school.' Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning and rise ably to the many responsibilities they are given.

You are honest and accurate in your evaluation of the school. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, you have put in place decisive and realistic actions to address areas of pupils' underperformance. You have prioritised carefully and put in place thorough systems and clear direction, as well as making timely checks on the progress of the actions taken. For example, the whole-school approach to improving pupils' achievements in mathematics is paying off. The stronger outcomes seen in mathematics for Year 6 pupils in 2017 are also apparent for current pupils across all year groups.

You highly value the team of staff you work with. You give appropriate support to staff to ensure that their strengths are used to help pupils shine, and that they are supported well where aspects need to improve. To ensure that teaching assistants feel able to fully support pupils with different needs and starting points, you have put in place whole-team training in areas such as mathematics and phonics.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to accelerate the progress in writing by ensuring that the teaching of letters and sounds is of a consistently high level and that pupils can decode new words and apply them in their writing. Leaders explain that they know that phonics teaching and learning need further improvement. Actions have been taken, such as whole-staff training and visits to other schools, but leaders are honest and accurate in their view that this has not had the intended impact on rapidly improving pupils' skills.

All adults teaching phonics use accurate sounding with pupils, and teach how to say and read sounds alongside writing them down. However, there are no clear routines in phonics teaching. Adults do not all demonstrate clearly enough and say the sounds before pupils attempt to say and read them themselves. As a result, pupils of lower ability are not confident in saying or writing the sounds taught. They are not always sure of the task. When pupils attempt to spell words in their writing, many do not use phonics effectively. You are right in your view that some of the older pupils try to use too many cues to decode new words. You have recognised these weaker aspects of phonics teaching and have started to trial some new strategies to improve pupils' engagement, confidence and skills.

You know that developing early reading skills holds the key to accessing a much wider curriculum. Work to improve reading comprehension and to make sure that pupils are reading books that are better matched to their skills has started in earnest. Pupils are keen to show off their library and the new books and resources they have to share in class and at home. Pupils have books that are pitched at the right level of challenge to ensure that they can read with fluency and enjoyment. Younger pupils, of all abilities, do not always take note of punctuation to support their reading. However, adults make sure that all pupils read regularly in school and lower-ability pupils read aloud with an adult every day.

In the previous inspection, leaders were also tasked with improving the quality of teaching further, ensuring that there are more checks on pupils' understanding in lessons, so that all pupils are challenged and learn exceptionally well. Older pupils have a good understanding of how to edit and improve their own work and that of their peers. The checks that teachers regularly make throughout lessons keep the pace of improvement high and reinforce high expectations in the quality of work and presentation. Leaders are aware that there are some inconsistencies in this direction throughout school. We agree that there need to be careful checks on children's skills and the expectations of what they can do as they move from the early years through key stage 1.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have developed a culture of safeguarding within the school that is well understood by everyone and championed by the pupils themselves. The school council has taken responsibility for making sure that all pupils know what safeguarding is, who the designated adult leaders are and what to do if they have a concern. With the support of adults, pupils have put in place systems, such as worry boxes, and a team of leaders – the anti-bullying ambassadors, digital leaders and play leaders – to make sure that pupils are comfortable in accessing support when they need it. In addition, a wide range of teaching and assemblies take place to help pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. This work is led by adults and pupils.

Leaders have made sure that policies, systems and staff training are all up to date. Recruitment processes are supported by the local authority checks and guidance. Leaders give staff regular updates and carry out frequent spot checks and questionnaires to make sure that everyone is regularly reminded of the safeguarding arrangements. As a result, everyone knows how to recognise potential issues and how to report a concern. Record-keeping is thorough, and appropriate and timely contact is made with external agencies.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I was eager to find out about Year 6 pupils' improved outcomes in mathematics at the end of 2017, compared to the significantly lower performance of Year 6 in 2016. You explained the big changes you have needed to make to the school curriculum to make sure that it is aligned to the national curriculum. Our work together during my visit confirms that outcomes in mathematics for all pupils across the school have improved. This is a result of precise direction from leaders, who have made sure that there is a consistent approach to developing pupils' fluency, application and reasoning in mathematics. A clear calculation policy is in place and applied by all teachers. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained in the strategies to be used, the expectations of the new curriculum and how to assess pupils accurately in relation to this. The school assessment system is well understood by everyone. It is used effectively to highlight any gaps in learning, which are then quickly addressed. Activities are well supported by practical resources where appropriate.

Lower-ability pupils are particularly well supported in their learning, accessing reasoning and problem-solving activities at the appropriate level. Teachers plan real-life activities which engage and motivate pupils. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils were engrossed in their task to find their teacher the best-value telephone product. They collaborated and debated, using and applying their mathematical knowledge and skills to present their findings. You have rightly identified on your school improvement plan that middle- and higher-ability pupils now need more opportunities and challenge to deepen their learning.

- Governance is strong. Governors have a wide range of skills and experience that they bring to the table. These include backgrounds and roles in education, finance and safeguarding. Those governors with relevant skills and qualifications in education support the work of school leaders in checking and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. This enhanced capacity means that, in a relatively small school, a wide range of activities take place to inform improvement plans and highlight where further actions need to be taken. Governors use a wide variety of other means to check on the progress of the school's actions for improvement. These include regular visits to school, audits of the processes and systems school leaders have put in place, scrutinising detailed information you provide for them, such as data information about pupils' progress and attainment, and reviewing external reports, such as those from the local authority and diocese. Consequently, governors have a clear and accurate view of the school.
- Leaders, including governors, seek wider partnerships to validate their evaluations, access support and share ideas and good practice. Leaders value their good partnership with the local authority. The school improvement partner provides regular support and challenge. You say that the local authority's recent thorough review and their guidance in early years have also been very helpful in your journey of improvement. You have strong links with the diocese, who support you, not only in developing religious education in the school, but also in developing your overall ethos and vision. In addition, you regularly consult with other local schools and headteachers. Governors have carefully considered a sustainable option for the school that is right for this community. Plans are well underway to become part of a trust later this year.
- The opportunities leaders give pupils to 'have their say' are exemplary. An abundance of high-profile pupil leadership roles can be applied for. Pupils take their roles very seriously. They do a sterling job in helping their peers to keep safe, happy and entertained, as well as leading aspects of school improvement. For example, pupils talk confidently about the aims on the pupil development plan. (All visitors are given the objectives on this plan in a bookmark upon arrival at the school.) They can explain the success of their actions so far, such as the improved resources to support the development of their reading skills. They also talk excitedly about the improvements made to lunchtimes and clubs after their purchase of indoor and outdoor games and sports equipment.
- Pupils say that they enjoy their visits and learning across the curriculum. They explain that they can choose from a wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities, such as drama, music, cricket, pencil club and 'debutots'. The pupil 'Meet and Greet Committee' says that pupils' behaviour is excellent. They can

give a number of examples of strategies that are used to promote good behaviour and support spiritual and moral development. For example, they pointed out the 'worlds' that are given to a pupil when they have shown great respect, which are then collected on the doors of each classroom for everyone to see each week.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are well supported in developing their phonics skills and applying them successfully to their writing
- expectations of the quality of children's work and presentation are high as they move from the early years through key stage 1
- teachers build on the successful work in mathematics, making sure that pupils of middle and higher ability are supported in deepening their understanding so that a greater proportion reach higher standards.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of York, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I looked at specific aspects of the school's work, including leadership, the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, and safeguarding arrangements.

You and I worked closely together throughout the inspection, observing teaching and learning, looking at pupils' work and discussing the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Some of this took place with the lead teacher. You and I discussed recent changes in the school's curriculum and leaders' action plans. I reviewed school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. I met with the part-time school business manager, staff and representatives from the governing body, including the chair. I met with groups of pupils and heard some pupils read. I spoke to the local authority school improvement partner on the telephone. I considered the views of parents, speaking to them before school and noting the 19 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View.