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Mr D Amesbury  
Headteacher  
Rack House Primary School  
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Dear Mr Amesbury

### **Short inspection of Rack House Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 October 2014.

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

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are a determined and motivated headteacher who strives to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. Since the last inspection, you have established a dynamic and knowledgeable leadership team that is making many improvements, especially in relation to pupils' outcomes. Staff morale is high. Staff feel supported and have many opportunities to learn new skills. Those who responded to the online survey stated that they are proud to work at the school. Governors and your highly effective leadership team share your ambition that all pupils will succeed. As a result of your actions, the progress that Year 6 pupils made by the time they left the school in 2017 was in the top 22% of schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

The members of the governing body are knowledgeable and have a wide set of skills that they use to challenge and support you. As a result, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are

exceptionally proud of the school and determined to raise achievement even further for all groups of pupils.

The pupils I spoke with were equally proud of their school. They enjoy lessons and said that teachers are always there to help and challenge them further in their learning. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were supportive of the school. One comment summed up many positive views of parents: 'The school has moved on so far under this new headteacher. Teachers work very hard to make sure my children are cared for. The learning progress my children have made is excellent.'

The previous inspection report identified the need to improve teaching and thereby raise standards, further increasing pupils' rates of progress, particularly in writing. You have addressed this admirably. Pupils make rapid progress and attain standards higher than the national average by the time they leave the school. Leaders monitor teaching, learning and assessment regularly to ensure that pupils make at least good progress. Assessment systems are rigorous and inform planning. As a result, tasks are set at the appropriate level to challenge pupils, especially the most able. Leaders ensure that there is effective support for any pupils who may be at risk of falling behind. Pupils are given precise guidance from teachers so that they can improve their work. Pupils I spoke with were keen to explain the many different ways that they do this. They enjoy the challenge that this often brings.

Finally, you were asked to develop effective strategies to support pupils who speak little or no English on starting school. You appointed a leader to ensure that this was an area of priority across the school. She monitors the progress that these pupils make and ensures that planning meets pupils' individual needs. As a result, these pupils are making good progress across the school.

Recent improvements in provision have resulted in strong progress made by children in the early years and pupils at key stage 1. However, we discussed that, in order to raise standards further, a greater proportion should achieve a good level of development in the early years and the expected standards at the end of year 2.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and at the core of the school's ethos. The safeguarding lead ensures that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff and governors receive a wide range of effective training. Consequently, they all have a good understanding of their responsibility to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The checks that leaders undertake on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are robust.

Pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe and they appreciated the many ways that teachers support them. The curriculum ensures that there are many opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe, for example when using the internet or working online. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View said that their children are safe and happy.

## Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at the achievement of children in Reception. This is because the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has been consistently below the national average. However, because of recent improvements, it is increasing over time. Children enter the school with skills below those typical for their age and with limited experiences. Leaders, including governors, are keen that children get off to an excellent start in their education. They regularly evaluate the quality of provision and have invested in many improvements, especially to the outdoor learning environment. Individualised assessments are completed when children start at the school. Teachers use this information to adapt the learning environments and to plan relevant learning opportunities. Consequently, children's individual needs are met and they make rapid progress in their learning. Current school assessment information indicates that a greater proportion of children in Reception are on track to achieve a good level of development. Additionally, more children are now exceeding the expected standard in comparison to previous years. We agreed, however, that the quality of early years provision needs to remain a school priority so that a greater proportion of children continue to achieve a good level of development.
- We also looked at the progress that boys are making in their phonics skills in Year 1. This is because, over the last few years, boys have achieved below boys nationally. Staff make good use of a range of opportunities to develop pupils' ability to use phonics. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1. Teachers ensure that pupils read texts that match accurately their level of development. Leaders have targeted boys' progress and adapted the structure of the phonics lessons to engage pupils in their learning further. As a result of these changes, achievement in phonics is continuing to rise.
- Another area that we discussed was the progress of pupils in key stage 1. This is because pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been below the national averages. Leaders are aware that this is an area for improvement. You and your leaders have developed well-thought-out plans to address this. This has ensured that staff have a better understanding of the curriculum and how they can challenge pupils further in all subjects. As a result, teachers plan learning activities that excite and motivate pupils and meet their needs and abilities. The changes made to teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1 ensure that pupils are making strong progress. Outcomes in 2017 improved at the expected standard in reading and mathematics. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth increased. Despite the good progress that pupils are making across key stage 1, you agreed that the proportions of pupils achieving the expected and highest standards could be even higher.
- The last key line of enquiry considered the attendance and persistent absence of pupils. You and the governors are aware that there have been attendance issues and you are taking appropriate action to ensure that this situation improves. There are effective systems to check pupils' attendance and punctuality. Pupils enjoy the various ways that leaders celebrate good attendance across the school.

You and your attendance lead support families well to improve attendance for all. As a result of actions taken by leaders, attendance is rising and persistent absence is declining. Attendance is now similar to that of other schools nationally.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements made to the quality of teaching in key stage 1 become embedded so that greater proportions of pupils achieve the expected standard and greater depth
- they build on the improvements made within the early years so that a greater proportion of children achieve a good level of development.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I observed teaching and learning and scrutinised examples of pupils' work. I met with you, senior leaders and the designated leader for safeguarding and attendance. I spoke with six pupils in key stage 2 and with pupils informally in lessons and around the school. I also spoke with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with the representative of the local authority.

I evaluated the 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and took account of the 24 free-text responses from parents. I also took account of 30 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I reviewed a range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plans and assessment records, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. I also considered information posted on the school's website.