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Susan Dutton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dutton

Short inspection of Riverside Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 May 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 and your team lead the school with determination and dedication. You work closely with your governors and the multi-academy trust, REAch2 Academy Trust, to which your school belongs. Together, you offer stable and secure leadership for your school. Staff say they appreciate your leadership and the training and professional development you provide. As a result, pupils are making good progress in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), key stage 1 and key stage 2. You are ambitious for the school. Pupils have challenging targets and they say they find these motivating. Pupils want to do well and respond well to the feedback teachers give them. The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors challenge and support you in equal measure. They are proud of what pupils can do and they know where improvements are required.

Pupils' test results have been good and better than the national averages. You were disappointed that a few pupils in 2017 did not make the progress you had hoped, especially in reading at key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are now making much better progress. Teachers have always worked well together but, since the 2017 results, there has been more effective sharing of planning and teaching ideas. This means that pupils whose confidence was low feel more involved in their learning, understand it more and make good progress.

You track closely the learning pupils undertake across different year groups. When you see the need for extra support, you provide it. For example, since 2017, you now make it clearer what reading skills you want pupils to learn each year. You make sure reading is challenging and well matched to pupils' abilities.

During the inspection, pupils spoke highly of their lessons and were proud of their achievements, especially in English and mathematics. The learning environment is now more engaging, and pupils speak of what you call 'learning boards'. These help pupils see what they have learned and what is next in a learning sequence. Staff help pupils to use their workbooks to check back on what they have learned and how to ask for help quicker. Teachers have sharpened their questioning skills, so they can challenge and support pupils more effectively. They have improved pupils' ability to understand new words and I could see pupils were interested in expanding their vocabulary. You and your staff have helped pupils' resilience, for example through what you call 'Secrets of Success', which teaches pupils how to express their feelings, share their successes and ask for help when they need it.

At the last inspection, you were asked to make improvements in three main areas. These were: further improve the quality of writing; close the achievement gaps between groups of pupils; and develop the role of subject leaders.

You and your staff have worked hard at these areas and there are clear successes. Evidence of these successes is reflected in the school's monitoring records and in its performance data. In addition, they were apparent during my inspection visit. I saw many examples of successful writing in EYFS, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I saw pupils experimenting with different styles of writing, trying out challenging grammar and extending their vocabulary in non-fiction and descriptive writing. I also saw how gaps between, for example, disadvantaged pupils and other pupils have narrowed this year. Disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are doing as well as other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. I met with subject leaders and discussed with them how they work together and plan learning across different year groups and subjects. This is now effective. For example, you have worked hard to raise the profile of history and geography. I could see an enthusiasm for learning about the Tudor period in pupils' books, enriched by school visits to Warwick Castle. I could see how teachers are helping pupils to understand geography by, for example, studying the formation of volcanoes and learning about how tectonic plates help create land formations.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding policies give clear guidance to staff and governors. Staff use them to offer effective and early help when necessary. Governors make good use of the school's documentation and the training they receive to monitor safeguarding and to keep well informed about what the school is doing to keep pupils safe. Record-keeping is thorough. As a result, staff are able to carefully track what support is being given to pupils and keep in close communication with other agencies that provide help. Pupils are safe and feel safe. They say they have an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They value being on the school council and can say how this helps them understand life in modern Britain. Pupils say bullying is extremely rare. They know who they would go to if

anything worried them. They trust staff to offer speedy and effective resolution of any difficulties they might have. Pupils know the dangers of radicalisation. The curriculum includes helpful lessons on e-safety and, as a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils welcome diversity and say they are proud of the range of backgrounds represented at the school.

Inspection findings

- A few pupils in 2017 did not make the progress you had hoped for. We explored the reasons for this and followed our discussions by observing pupils' learning in lessons and in their books. Pupils are now making much better progress. You have identified that some pupils require even more support in their learning. You have trained your staff in areas such as explaining the learning clearly, and building pupils' self-confidence and resilience. I could see disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities enjoying their learning and making progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils' writing has improved. This is because teachers have made pupils more aware of the skills pupils need in order to write accurately and with imagination. Pupils learn effectively, for example about tenses, verb forms, how to start writing well and how to structure longer forms of writing. In their books, I saw writing about real and imagined events. Pupils now use a wide vocabulary and a range of sentence forms.
- In mathematics, you have worked with teachers to ensure that pupils learn problem solving and mathematical reasoning in a step-by-step manner. This has improved pupils' confidence and so disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making much better progress than last year. Pupils have been helped to reason more and to problem solve. Teachers now plan more effectively how to teach mathematics skills through from EYFS to Year 6.
- The standard of pupils' reading this year is now good. You have made this a focus for staff training. Teachers provide high-quality support for parents and carers with clear and interesting homework tasks and events before and after school for parents to find out how to help with reading. Year 6 pupils can now explain what their reading skill target is and they are making effective progress. Every day, the whole school reads together at midday and at the end of the school day, and this encourages an interest in reading. Pupils' workbooks show plenty of evidence of reading. For example, I could see that inference skills have improved. Pupils know how to search for information and how to use it in their writing. I heard pupils read with confidence and fluently. Pupils are more confident because they see reading for a purpose.
- In early years phonics, pupils make good progress in reading skills. Through smaller group work linking the sound of letters to writing, more pupils are securing reading skills quicker. Parents are much more involved. I saw a Reception class, for example, where you had invited parents to join you at a Thursday phonics session. The result is that pupils are growing in confidence when they discuss reading with their parents and teachers.
- We also looked at whether attendance has improved, especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have been thorough and diligent in your support for

families and pupils whose attendance is too low. You talked me through case studies that showed how meticulous you and your staff have been in working with other agencies, offering challenging targets to pupils, putting on assemblies and teaching the benefits of attendance in lessons. The result is that attendance, particularly of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, has improved considerably compared with last year. There are still some disadvantaged pupils who do not attend school regularly enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to make at least good progress
- they pursue high levels of attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Graham Tyrer
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks, documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, including the school's safeguarding policy, and policies relating to governance. I looked at pupils' behaviour and attendance records. Meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the chair of governors and representatives of the multi-academy trust board. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans. I observed learning in key stages 1 and 2 and the EYFS, reviewed pupils' workbooks, and listened to pupils read. I observed pupils in a range of situations, including at breaktime and lunchtime. I had conversations with a group of pupils and with individual pupils in lessons. I took into consideration the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well the 9 free-text responses from parents.