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10 October 2018

Mrs Nicole Caulfield
Headteacher
Riverview Infant School
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Dear Mrs Caulfield

Short inspection of Riverview Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2013.

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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are unswerving in your expectations of what pupils, staff and the community can achieve. You have developed a strong leadership team whose members consistently articulate the same high expectations about the quality of teaching and learning. You have recently strengthened this team with the appointment of a head of school. This very strong leadership brings a consistency of approach to the way that teachers teach across the school. They plan together and identify where pupils may go wrong and need extra help. Teaching across the school, including in early years, is highly effective. Only occasionally do teachers choose tasks that do not challenge or support all pupils well enough. The strengths in teaching and leadership mean that the best practice from Riverview Infant School can be shared across the growing Pathway Academy Trust. Indeed, your role as director of education for the trust gives you the opportunity to share your school's many strengths more widely.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and feel lucky that their children are able to attend. One parent said it was a 'fantastic school', while another wrote, 'Parents all around this area have been singing the school's praises.'

Rates of attendance are understandably consistently high. Parents say that their children make great progress over time. They are especially encouraging about the opportunities to take part in activities in school with their children, such as supporting visits in the local community and attending workshops. Parents are particularly grateful for the support provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Staff feel highly valued and contribute extremely well to helping pupils to develop their personal and social skills, as well as making strong progress across the curriculum. Leaders work hard to give pupils a range of experiences to develop their learning further, including in the forest school. However, we agreed that your exciting and ambitious vision for the Riverview curriculum needs further development so that all of its very well-thought-out elements are implemented successfully. Leaders also encourage pupils to take on responsibilities such as being a member of the pupil council or a 'Riverview Ranger', looking after the environment. Some Year 1 pupils told me, 'We learn to share' and, 'We are honest with everyone'.

In recent years, attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been high, meaning that pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. This was confirmed by your headteacher colleague in the neighbouring junior school. Disadvantaged pupils have historically achieved as well as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in 2018, this was not the case as the cohort included more disadvantaged pupils who also had SEN and/or disabilities.

At the time of the predecessor school's last inspection, you were asked to improve writing across the school and to develop the outside area in the early years to make it more engaging. Since then, significant investment in the outside area means that children are now inspired to learn. Your 'storytelling' approach to teaching writing has been highly successful and has led to improved outcomes at the end of early years and key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The trust keeps a strong oversight of recruitment procedures and the single central record. Governors are involved in completing regular safeguarding audits with leaders. Leaders know the risks that their pupils face in and out of school and plan suitable training, in addition to that required statutorily, to ensure that staff keep pupils safe. Links with other agencies are positive and you work well together with them to ensure that pupils are safe and attend school regularly. Pupils are taught to take sensible risks and try challenging activities in a supportive environment. Visitors to the school, such as the police, help pupils learn to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on: children's progress in early years; how leaders at all levels ensure that teaching enables pupils to make strong progress; and how well plans for the curriculum are being implemented.
- From low starting points, children make strong progress in early years in all areas of learning. Although attainment was lower in 2017 and 2018 than it has been previously, this was because a higher proportion of pupils had lower starting points or SEN and/or disabilities. These additional needs are quickly identified and those children who fall behind are helped to catch up again quickly.
- Current children in the Reception classes have settled well and have the confidence to talk about their learning. This demonstrates the strong progress they are already making in communication and language. Their personal and social and emotional development is improving rapidly. One new parent commented that their child is, 'already making great progress in phonics'.
- Early years classrooms and outdoor learning spaces are richly resourced and highly stimulating, with a consistency in approach across the different classes. Indoor and outdoor learning is managed sensibly and safely given the large number of children. Children are keen to 'mark make' and enjoy writing and 'doing' numbers. Adults are highly successful at recognising when they can stretch children to develop their learning, for example by describing shapes such as pentagon, hexagon and octagon.
- Teaching across the school is highly effective and, as a result, pupils make strong progress. High expectations and a consistency of approach are evident throughout the school. Pupils deepen their knowledge through studying interesting topics, for example, their understanding of colonisation through the story of Pocahontas. Visual and practical resources are used well, together with the physical environment to promote learning. For example, a 'mastery' approach in mathematics is deepening pupils' understanding of the number system by requiring them to problem solve and reason.
- Systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching are robust and lead to continuous improvement. Additional professional development opportunities and research enhance teachers' understanding of how to teach highly effectively. Just occasionally, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to adapt tasks to challenge or support pupils as well as they could.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged is monitored meticulously. Additional teaching or support is put in place to help these pupils catch up if they fall behind. Many pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, are making strong progress. For example, I observed Year 1 pupils writing their own compositions, making a list of sounds using onomatopoeia and time connectives.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and allows pupils to develop their knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects and aspects of learning. Governors want pupils to have fun when they are learning and to be well prepared for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain. For instance, they want pupils to develop their understanding of respect and have

the confidence to talk to adults. Governors visit the school regularly to check for themselves the progress the school is making.

- You are very clear about what you intend pupils to achieve as part of the curriculum. You have strong aims and take on board the views of pupils, exploring different approaches to learning. The curriculum is intended to produce successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Year group leaders ensure that there is a consistency of approach to covering the curriculum across the year group. They predict where pupils may need additional help with skills and knowledge and adapt planning accordingly. Groups of teachers meet to consider how pupils at Riverview should progress in a range of subjects. More work is needed to link curriculum planning more closely to your overall vision and intentions. This will enable pupils to make progress in developing the knowledge, skills and qualities leaders believe are essential beyond the traditional subjects taught.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum is further enhanced to ensure that leaders' intentions are realised and there is a clear progression in the knowledge and skills pupils are expected to accomplish each year
- teachers consistently use assessment information before and during lessons to adapt tasks to the needs of pupils.

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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your head of school and deputy headteacher throughout the day. We visited the majority of classes together to observe learning and talk to pupils about their work. I spoke to some pupils informally at breaktime. I met year group leaders and looked at a range of pupils' work with them. I met with three members of the local governing body, the chief executive of the trust, the link junior school headteacher and held a telephone conversation with a leadership consultant. I considered 84 responses to Parent View and 40 responses to the confidential staff survey. A wide range of documentation relating to safeguarding, assessment, teaching and learning, governance and external support was scrutinised.