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Mrs Emma Shearer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Shearer

Short inspection of Riverside Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2018 with Michael Appleby, Ofsted Inspector, 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Riverside Primary School is a vibrant, friendly place where all children are welcomed and well supported. Parents say that their children are happy and feel safe in school. Pupils say that they love learning because teachers make lessons fun.

Since the last inspection, there have been some significant changes to leadership. You took up the post of headteacher at the beginning of September 2017 and the chair of governors took up his role shortly after the last inspection. The school is currently without a deputy headteacher but a new deputy headteacher will take up the post in January 2019.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Together you have evaluated the quality of education thoroughly. You have identified the correct priorities for improvement based on a detailed analysis of how pupils have achieved in the past, as well as the needs of all pupils currently in the school.

Pupils behave very well throughout the school. They are cheerful, respectful and polite. They recognise and celebrate their different cultures, faiths and beliefs. They enjoy learning because lessons are lively and engaging. There is no disruption to learning through poor behaviour. Pupils value the many opportunities they have to take on roles of responsibility, such as school councillors, sports leaders, playground leaders or reading champions. They also enjoy a broad range of after-school clubs,

including Latin and sign language as well as sports activities and music groups.

Parents are fully involved in the life of the school. Every class has a parent forum representative. They meet regularly to plan fundraising activities such as school discos. The funds help to pay for educational trips and special treats for pupils. At Christmas, every pupil receives a book as a present from Santa in the grotto run by parents.

Pastoral support is one of the strengths of the school. Many pupils join the school part-way through the year, but they settle in very quickly because they are made to feel at home by other pupils and staff. Parents value this and appreciate the support they themselves receive. One parent reflected the views of many by saying, 'The teachers have a real passion for their work. They are approachable and friendly and always willing to listen and help.'

Staff provide comprehensive support to families to help them to get their children to school. When necessary, leaders challenge parents' decisions not to send children to school. As a result, attendance has improved recently. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils needs to improve further so that they do not miss any learning time.

The school has a number of areas of strong practice, including safeguarding and assessment. Good practice is regularly exchanged with other local schools. Leaders and teachers track pupils' progress closely to identify any gaps in learning and address them quickly. Many of the school's teachers work with the local authority, checking teachers' assessments in other schools.

Parents say that communication between school and home is very good. They are actively encouraged to support their children's learning, and an increasing number of parents attend workshops to help them understand how they can do this. Through newsletters, parents are kept up to date on current topics. For example, the whole school focuses on a different value each month. Parents were able to support the recent focus on perseverance because they learn about it in the newsletter. Parents say that they appreciate the opportunity to reinforce these valuable life lessons.

Governors are well informed. They know the school well because they visit often and report back to the full governing body on their findings. For example, one governor took part in the recent review of the impact of pupil premium funding.

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection well. There have been steady improvements in pupils' achievements over the last few years. Pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Attainment is also improving. For those pupils who had been in school since the Reception Year and who did not have special educational needs and/or disabilities, a higher proportion than nationally achieved the expected standard for their age in 2018. However, there is potential for more pupils to achieve at the higher standard. Currently, not all teachers have high enough expectations of what all pupils can achieve.

Leaders ensure that teachers have a range of opportunities to develop their skills, such as peer reviews with other schools and carrying out research. There is a vibrant professional culture in the school, where teachers discuss their teaching approaches, share good practice and improve their skills together. Staff say that they are proud to work at Riverside.

Work in pupils' books shows that they now have more frequent opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in number and shape.

Leaders and governors are ambitious for outcomes to improve further because they know that, despite the challenges some children might face, they all deserve to achieve their full potential.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. You are the designated safeguarding lead. You work closely with the safeguarding manager and the family support worker to keep children safe by making referrals promptly and following up on any actions. You and your team are not afraid to escalate your concerns with external safeguarding teams when you believe children may be at risk.

Staff at all levels are aware of their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding. They are vigilant and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. They receive regular training and updates, for example about national and local safeguarding advice and guidance. Governors ensure that the child protection policy reflects the latest statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- More pupils are now achieving the expected standard in reading at key stage 1 and at key stage 2 as a result of a concerted focus on improving language and communication skills. Leaders have identified that for some pupils their weak language skills have an impact on their achievement in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have focused on developing a 'communication friendly' environment. Teachers use clear language to explain instructions. Classroom displays contain visual prompts to remind pupils of key facts and reinforce strategies. When introducing a topic, teachers make sure that all pupils learn important vocabulary to make sure that they have a good understanding of the context before they start. This supports pupils' learning very effectively.
- The school employs a reading champion, who has reviewed approaches to the teaching of reading. Reading ambassadors write book reviews and make reading recommendations. They choose new books for the library and act as librarians. Recently purchased books were chosen because they would appeal more to boys. Current assessment information and pupils' reading demonstrate that many pupils, particularly boys, need to develop their reading skills further. This will

enable them to attain the higher standard in reading by the end of key stage 2.

- Phonics is taught well in the main. Pupils have many opportunities to apply and practise their skills. Teaching is well matched to pupils' abilities. When reading, pupils are able to decode words confidently, and they are supported well to move on to more independent reading. Leaders monitor pupils' learning closely to ensure that any gaps in skills are addressed quickly. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check has improved steadily over recent years and is now in line with the national average.
- Teaching across the school is effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use questions well to support pupils' learning. Pupils have many opportunities to discuss how they will approach tasks. Teachers ask pupils to explain their thinking so that they can spot any misunderstandings and address them quickly. Pupils say that they find teachers' feedback helps them to improve. Work in pupils' books clearly shows how pupils have responded to feedback. However, expectations of what all pupils can achieve are not consistently high. As a result, not all pupils achieve at the very highest levels of which they are capable.
- Leaders have established an ambitious culture. They are addressing the priorities in the school development plan effectively, often finding innovative solutions to bring about the necessary improvements. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced because pupils are well supported to settle in school and behave well. Attendance has improved overall, and a smaller proportion of pupils now have low attendance.
- The 'learning challenge' curriculum is well planned and engaging. As a result, pupils are genuinely excited about learning. Topics begin with a series of research questions, decided together by teachers and pupils. Through projects such as the Anglo Saxons and 'How to travel to the South Pole', they develop their knowledge and skills across the curriculum, such as researching historical facts and analysing data. They apply their literacy skills well in their topic writing, which is of a good standard and well presented. They apply their mathematical skills well across the curriculum, for example when learning about coordinates to plan their imaginary trip to the South Pole.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the proportion of pupils achieving at the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics improves further by ensuring that:

- all teachers have the highest expectations of all pupils
- attendance continues to improve, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- there is a continued focus on improving pupils' reading skills at the higher standard, particularly for boys.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Before the inspection, I looked at a range of information, including the previous inspection report, the published achievement information and the school's website.

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the areas of focus and the timetable for the day.

During the inspection, you visited lessons with me and we discussed our observations. The assistant headteacher visited lessons with the other inspector. We met together to discuss current assessment information, the school's self-evaluation, the development plan and monitoring information.

I met with a small group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with representatives from the parent forum and spoke to parents as they dropped off their children in the morning. I also took account of 52 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

We spoke to pupils during lessons and at break and lunchtime. An inspector listened to pupils read and I met with a small group of pupils at the end of the school day. I took account of 30 responses to the pupil survey and 29 responses to the staff survey.