

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Ann Politowski  
Headteacher  
Riddings Infant and Nursery School  
West Street  
Riddings  
Alfreton  
Derbyshire  
DE55 4EW

Dear Mrs Politowski

### **Short inspection of Riddings Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 2019, 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 January 2016.

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

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

You continue to lead by example and promote high expectations for pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together with a common purpose and a consistent approach. They are determined to provide pupils with a good quality of education. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed that they are proud to work at the school.

Pupils are proud of their school. You have established a positive climate for learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong throughout the school. Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and to adults. Pupils explained to me how adults care for them and help them to learn new things. One pupil was keen to share with me how 'incredible' the adults are. Many parents also shared this view.

The school provides a colourful, well-presented and lively space for pupils to learn. Classrooms are calm places that contribute well to purposeful learning. Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to the school, and this is supported by above-average attendance. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to learn beyond the school day. In particular, pupils enjoy the school's many sporting activities. You and your leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's current performance. Your plans clearly set out what needs to improve, and you use

pupils' progress and attainment to measure the impact of any actions taken.

Together with the deputy headteacher and senior leaders, you have worked diligently to improve the school's curriculum and the quality of teaching. You have created an effective teaching and learning team. Teachers and teaching assistants work in harmony to provide pupils with targeted learning. Pupils make good progress throughout the school.

The governing body is effective. Governors know the school well and are ambitious for the pupils. They use a variety of sources of information to check on the school's overall effectiveness. Governors are, therefore, aware of the positive impact that leaders' actions are having on school improvement. They are not afraid to have challenging conversations and to hold leaders to account.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school, as they showed in their responses to the Parent View survey. One parent summed this up by saying: 'My child has had a fantastic journey at Ridding's. I am proud to have my child attend this school.' Another said: 'My son has been supported to become a thoughtful young man, with a good moral compass and a fantastic work and play ethic.'

Your commitment has helped to maintain the strengths of the school identified in the previous inspection. You have also addressed the recommendations for improvement made by inspectors. You have improved children's speaking, listening and communication skills in the early years. When children enter the school in Nursery and in Reception, many start with skills that are below those typical for their age. This is especially true for language and communication skills. You and your team of staff have ensured that children catch up quickly. More children now leave Reception with better speaking, listening and understanding skills than at the time of the last inspection. In addition, you have successfully embedded the school's new approaches to the teaching of phonics. In both 2017 and 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard was similar to that seen nationally in the Year 1 phonics screening checks.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and there is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. All staff are checked thoroughly before they are appointed, to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. You keep staff well informed about, and trained in, safeguarding matters. Staff explained with confidence the action they need to take if they have a concern.

All of the pupils I spoke with told me that they feel safe in the school. They explained that this is because their teachers help and reassure them. The curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn about potential dangers. Pupils know how to stay safe when online. Pupils also understand about different forms of bullying and they report that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

You have established strong relationships with parents and outside agencies which support positive communication and access to any extra help that pupils, or their families, may need. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View said that their children feel safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children make good progress in the early years. The progress made by girls, however, has typically been stronger than that made by boys. Leaders have taken effective action to rectify this. Adults have amended their teaching approaches and improved resources to ensure that boys are fully engaged in their learning. Boys are now keeping up with the girls.
- Although phonics learning has improved across the school, in Year 1 boys' phonic skills have not developed as quickly as girls'. Leaders have modified the school's approach to the teaching of phonics to remedy this. In particular, they have improved the small-group learning sessions to better target gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants alike are confident in delivering these sessions. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' phonic skills. Currently, these checks are indicating that most boys are likely to reach the national standard in the phonics screening checks this year.
- Pupils make good progress during key stage 1. However, their attainment, especially that of girls, has not reached national averages in reading and writing. Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on improving the teaching of reading. They have identified that pupils' comprehension skills are not as well developed as they should be. Pupils now have more opportunities to increase their vocabulary and understanding of new words. They also have access to more high-quality books. Teachers are now using resources well to improve pupils' understanding of how a text is written. The school's assessment information indicates that girls are attaining higher standards in reading than they have in previous years. Some pupils are not yet, however, confident in making sense of complex texts. Leaders have improved the culture of reading, but some pupils still do not enjoy reading.
- Leaders have reviewed how the curriculum is taught. A new timetable structure and different pupil groupings are helping teachers to improve pupils' writing. Leaders have researched effective practice and shared this with all staff. For example, learning walls now provide pupils with a quality learning resource to 'magpie' ideas for their own work. Pupils continue to make good progress in writing, and pupils' handwriting, in particular, is improving. Boys, however, are not making enough progress to catch up to age-related expectations. The proportion of boys reaching greater depth in their writing remains below average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has seen a small rise in the number of pupils given a fixed-term exclusion. Leaders do all they can to support pupils' behaviour and prevent the need for exclusion. The vast majority of pupils behave very well. A very small number of pupils, however, demonstrate more challenging behaviours. Leaders work with imagination and determination to support their individual needs effectively. Fixed-term exclusions have now reduced, and incidents of poor behaviour within the school are rare.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers:

- improve pupils' comprehension skills, so that more of them make strong progress in reading
- provide more opportunities for boys to improve their skills and reach a greater depth in writing

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I discussed leaders' self-evaluation of the school and shared my key lines of enquiry. I held meetings with you, several leaders and members of the governing body.

You accompanied me when I observed pupils' learning. I visited most classrooms. I also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school.

I spoke with pupils informally and met formally with two groups of pupils. I also listened to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 reading and examined samples of pupils' work.

In addition, I considered a range of documents. These included the school's improvement plans and records relating to pupils' behaviour, progress and attainment.

I considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, as well as the responses to the staff survey.

I reviewed the school's safeguarding practices. The school's website was also checked to confirm whether it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information.