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3 February 2010

Mr Jim Preston
Headteacher
Riverside Primary School
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Dear Mr Preston

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would be grateful if you would thank the Chair of Governors for making time to meet me.

My visit came only a few weeks after you moved into your new school building and I appreciate how much time and effort this will have taken. I also understand the frustration and difficulty caused by a series of significant delays to the completion date for the building. These have meant that the school has been operating in temporary and cramped accommodation for two years longer than was originally planned.

As a result of the inspection on 20 and 21 February 2008, the school was asked to improve teaching, the curriculum and attendance.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has risen each year since 2007. In 2009, for the first time, no subjects were significantly below average, which was a considerable improvement on the position in 2007. Current attainment in Year 6 is broadly average and the pupils are on track to equal or better the school's performance in the 2009 national tests. Throughout the school, the standard of written work convincingly reflects the school's ambitious projections for future results. The pupils have a good grasp of technical features of language, write neatly in a joined hand and compose imaginative and thoughtful pieces of extended prose. Their understanding of problem-solving in mathematics is also developing securely.



The pupils' knowledge and skills are generally well below average when they enter school. They have consistently made good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are now making much better progress across the rest of the school. The quality of learning seen during the monitoring inspection was often good. Pupils were confident, keen to do well and focused attentively on the task in hand. They were especially good at collaborating purposefully. Until this academic year, the school acknowledges that the pupils' progress over time was only satisfactory despite some impressive gains in their final two years. There are now strong indications that faster progress is being made across the school and that achievement is at least satisfactory and improving securely.

This higher achievement is the result of a concerted effort to develop aspects of teaching and eradicate inadequate practice. The teachers have a good understanding of how to sequence learning and use this insight effectively to steer improvements in attainment. Marking is a particular strength. It is consistently detailed and well focused. The teachers are good at explaining new learning and use the interactive whiteboards to good effect. An effective programme of professional development, clearly conveyed expectations and some well-judged appointments mean that there is no inadequate teaching and a large majority is good.

The pupils' much improved behaviour has played an important part in the school's development since little teaching time is now lost. The work of the two assistant headteachers in promoting the importance of 'values' has been highly influential in creating the right ethos for learning. The school's curriculum has also been completely revised since the last inspection to provide the pupils with topic-based, cross-curricular opportunities to apply literacy and numeracy skills. At the same time, the school has appropriately maintained its relentless emphasis on teaching English and mathematics as discrete subjects.

The school works hard to encourage and support the small number of families whose children's attendance is less than 80%. Attendance has risen but only slowly and remains low. In general, most parents support the school well and the Chair of Governors reports that this is in striking contrast to the position several years ago.

The school's track record outlined above clearly demonstrates the impact of the school's strengthening capacity. Self-evaluation is honestly self-critical and realistic, enabling the school to focus its energies where they are most needed. The headteacher has been resolute in concentrating on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils rather than being distracted by the logistics of the building works. Monitoring of the pupils' books and of assessment data has continued unabated to inform planning and ensure consistency. The deputy headteacher has a good overview of the tracking information which is used well in regular progress meetings with class teachers. Target-setting is effectively rooted in knowledge about individual pupils. However, quantifiable success criteria to articulate the school's ambitions are not always stated clearly in improvement plans. The school is busily transferring data

to new software made possible by the better technology in the new building. This will enable more efficient and precise analyses to be carried out, for instance of the performance of specific groups of pupils.

The school has paid meticulous attention to carrying out all of the required safeguarding checks on staff, governors, volunteers and visitors but needs to integrate its record of identify and qualification checks with the single central record.

The school has valued the challenge and support provided by the local authority to secure better teaching and learning but thinks that more could be done to support its efforts to improve attendance. There has also been some tension between the school and local authority over funding issues but the school's budget has been managed effectively and is in balance.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Hubbleday". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rob Hubbleday
Her Majesty's Inspector