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Mrs Joanne Powell
Acting Headteacher
Rivelin Primary School
Morley Street
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S6 2PL

Dear Mrs Powell

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Rivelin Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 21 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the teachers, pupils and governors who spent time talking to me and the many parents and carers whom I met in the playground before school.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher retired in July 2009 and the local authority, in partnership with the governing body, placed a lead headteacher to run the school for one term. The deputy headteacher was appointed as the acting headteacher from January 2010. The lead headteacher is now executive headteacher and is in the school for one day each week to provide support and guidance. The governors intend to appoint a substantive headteacher from September 2011. As part of the new arrangements for the senior leadership team, two members of staff have been appointed as acting assistant headteachers. Seven new teachers have joined the school. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected and seven new governors have been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 27-28 April 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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.



Standards are rising in both key stages and are above the national average. In the most recent tests at the end of Year 6, nearly half of the pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English and well over half gained that level in mathematics. Overall, pupils achieved well. The school's rigorous tracking data indicate that rates of progress across the school are accelerating and that many pupils are now making better than expected progress and achieving well. The school has identified writing as the weakest area and has an effective action plan in place to address this.

Standards are rising because pupils are keen to learn and apply themselves well in lessons and because the quality of teaching has improved significantly. The strengths in teaching that were evident during the visit were good planning, which closely matches each lesson to the individual needs of the pupils, pace, variety and challenge so that pupils are engaged and find learning enjoyable. Teachers use drama and information and communication technology (ICT) to particularly good effect. Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that these pupils can participate well in all lessons. In the few areas where teaching remains satisfactory, it is because the balance of the lesson is uneven with teachers talking for too long. As a result, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to take an active part in learning and the pace is slower.

Marking and assessment have become strengths of the school. Marking is meticulously carried out. There is a clear policy that all pupils understand and all teachers adhere to. Pupils receive praise, encouragement and advice on how to improve their work. Scrutiny of their work books shows there is an effective dialogue between teachers and pupils. Work is repeated or altered to show pupils' better understanding. Teachers pay attention to spelling and punctuation and often set a new challenge at the end of marking a piece of work to reinforce learning or model good practice.

The governing body is now up to full strength and governors have immersed themselves in the life and work of the school. There is a well-organised sub-committee structure and governors now hold the school to account and support and challenge it to do even better. Governors have introduced a wide range of strategies to improve and enhance communication with parents and carers. These include 'meet and greet' sessions when governors are available on the playground at the start and end of the day; 'tell us what you think forms' freely available for parental comments; a half termly news letter and 'drop-in sessions' when governors are available at key points in the day to meet parents and carers.

The executive headteacher provides strong leadership and brings a wealth of experience to support the senior leadership team. The acting headteacher, well supported by two assistant headteachers, has succeeded in motivating staff and raising morale. They have instituted a rigorous system of monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and have set high expectations for themselves and others. Staff have responded with enthusiasm and commitment and are all

engaged in helping to improve the school. The acting headteacher continues to develop better communication with parents and carers by holding 'drop-in' sessions and making sure that all teachers are available to see parents and carers on the playground for 10 minutes at the start and end of the school day. She provides a daily bulletin available at all entrances to the school which keeps parents and carers informed about what is happening that day. In addition, there is a weekly newsletter and a new school website, which makes information available to all parents with access to ICT.

The local authority has provided effective support. In addition to the executive headteacher, it has provided the services of other consultants and professionals to advise the school in improving provision and the curriculum. The local authority has shown its confidence in the capacity of the school to improve further by placing the school in a secure category.

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

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2009.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more lessons are good and work is better matched to pupils' abilities to raise achievement.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking and of the academic guidance given to pupils.
- Ensure that governors and leaders have effective arrangements for seeking parents' views of the school to improve communication and relationships with parents.