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Mrs Kate Docherty
Headteacher
Rivacre Valley Primary School
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Dear Mrs Docherty

Short inspection of Rivacre Valley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 2017, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a clear vision for the school and are accurate in your choice of priorities to drive improvement. Your governors support and challenge you well and are also very clear on what the school needs to do to improve further. Most parents who took part in the online survey were positive about all aspects of school and all of them would recommend the school to others. Furthermore, parents I spoke to during my visit were extremely positive about the school.

You have a clear passion and a determination for improving your school and you have continued to extend your leadership team to support you.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress continues to be strong at key stage 2 and in the early years. You are keen to ensure that all pupils make equally strong progress, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able pupils. Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress in reading, writing and mathematics than you would like in some parts of your school. You are keeping a close eye on these groups and there is evidence that differences are starting to diminish.

You clearly understand that writing is the main area for improvement for your school. You and your leaders have introduced a wide range of strategies to address this, such as an editing and basic skills project involving all classes. However, you

agree that further work is required to ensure that more of your pupils reach the expected standards.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that teachers needed to use achievement and progress information systems to inform lesson planning. They also reported that pupils should receive more precise teaching and feedback so that they make expected or better progress in their learning. The inspectors said that your plans for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities needed to be more sharply focused.

Leaders have addressed all aspects effectively. As a result:

- teachers use their good knowledge of pupils well to match activities to the different abilities and needs of pupils
- leaders have improved systems to track pupils, check regularly on their progress and address any underachievement quickly
- pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive clear and focused teaching to support their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is robust. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. There are strong systems in place in all areas of safeguarding, understood by staff. Regular and appropriate training for staff is undertaken and is up to date. There are effective relationships with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met. Governors make regular checks on the procedures for keeping children safe.

Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school. They are confident that adults will help them if needed. Almost all parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after. Consequently, pupils are happy and keen to come to school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils have many opportunities to write throughout the school. Leaders have introduced a wide range of activities to support the improvement of writing and there is a focus on supporting the pupils' editing skills, grammar and punctuation. Pupils write with pride and handwriting improves well as they journey through the school.
- You have further developed your leadership team to have a greater focus on learning in key stage 1. Leaders are clear about priorities. For example, you have introduced strategies such as a new pupil tracking system and gained support from a school improvement expert. These actions are having a positive impact, such as on the quality of writing the pupils produce and the varied and practical mathematics activities they experience in lessons. Since these initiatives have been introduced, pupils are making better progress and your expectations for

2017 for how well pupils will achieve are positive. However, these strategies need further time to embed to ensure that the attainment of pupils continues to improve.

- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2 in reading and mathematics is similar to the standards reached by other pupils nationally. You have rightly identified that you need to continue to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Recently, you have employed extra teachers and speech and language therapists to accelerate pupils' progress, and developed strategies to support pupils' well-being.
- The provision for learning in the early years is vibrant and well ordered. The early years leader has a clear vision and understanding of the needs of the children. Teachers are providing a challenging and stimulating environment.
- You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. Everyone in school is clear about the direction for improvement and you have a lucid plan to move more of your pupils to the expected standard.
- The information you gather about pupils' progress is thorough. All leaders use it effectively to identify which pupils or groups are making progress and which need some additional support or challenge. Termly pupil progress meetings enable teachers to reflect and discuss pupils' learning with senior leaders and to discuss how teachers could further adapt their teaching to meet the pupils' needs.
- Governors play an active and informed role in evaluating the school's effectiveness and know the school very well. They show support and challenge in equal measure.
- Attendance is getting closer to the national average. You are using a range of strategies, including the school bus to collect pupils, to address your attendance issue. This initiative is having a modest impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further embed the strategies already in place to raise achievement at key stage 1, with a focus on writing
- teachers have a clearer view about good writing and how to improve pupils' compositional skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Howard Bousfield
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and a group of three senior leaders. I held discussions with two governors and a representative from the local authority. We visited seven classrooms to talk to pupils, observe them at work and look at their books. I chatted to a small number of parents and grandparents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 31 responses on Parent View. I considered 17 responses from the staff online questionnaire. I also evaluated the seven online responses completed by pupils.

I considered a range of school information, including your self-evaluation and your current action plan. We discussed your assessments of pupils' progress across the school. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including the policies to keep children safe; staff training; safeguarding checks on adults who work at or visit the school; and the records kept of any concerns raised about pupils' safety.