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Mr Brian Prebble
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brian Prebble

Short inspection of Rivermead Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 2018, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school with a real care and determination that all pupils should succeed. Staff, governors and parents have confidence in your leadership. As one parent said: 'The head supports his staff extremely well. The buzz around learning is amazing.' Another said: 'Rivermead is an amazing school with strong leadership. The headteacher always makes time for you.'

Your clear thinking and diligence has meant that you have maintained the school's strengths since the last inspection and improved on them further. Standards of achievement have risen in all years. Pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics consistently match those of pupils nationally at key stage 1 and key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils achieve particularly highly by the end of Year 6.

Assisted by your able senior leadership team, you have made sure that staff are very skilled in their roles. Adults' planning and preparations at all levels show judicious attention to detail. Teaching is very well organised, imaginative and of high quality, so that pupils cannot help but thrive and learn. Several pupils told me that their favourite thing about school is the teachers. Parents, too, recognise the strengths in teaching. As one wrote: 'The school goes the extra mile to bring learning alive for the pupils. Teachers are kind, caring and motivating.' Another said: 'All teachers and classroom assistants are fantastic and we are proud our son attends this school.' Every parent who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to others.

This is a happy school. Pupils are confident, well behaved and polite. They are welcoming and friendly to each other and to adults. Leaders have instilled an ethos where it is important to participate. This is exemplified by the high numbers of pupils who enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities you offer. Team sports such as tag-rugby and netball are popular with both boys and girls. In lessons, pupils work hard and with enthusiasm. They help each other and talk enthusiastically about their learning. They relish tackling difficult work, knowing that they will be well supported if they need extra help.

You, leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors challenge and support you well, including through useful visits to check the impact of leaders' actions. You have responded well to the areas identified at the last inspection as needing further improvement. For example, changes made to the early years mean that practice is now much stronger. Improving the quality of questioning in mathematics has raised the achievement of the most able pupils in mathematics so that they now achieve in line with others nationally.

Your motto 'do less but do it better' ensures that the school continues to improve. You collaborate well with outside organisations and other schools and draw thoroughly on research. Only the best new ideas are used in school. You make sure that they are trialled and evaluated systematically before being implemented fully. Your focus on developing staff as they progress through their careers benefits all. Staff are well trained, professional and happy, and pupils' experiences are strong as a result. Nevertheless, you are rightly focused on raising pupils' outcomes still further. You have identified that pupils' writing is not as strong as it could be. Alongside this, your work to strengthen pupils' subject-specific knowledge and skills across the broad curriculum is well underway.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Comprehensive training for staff follows the latest government guidance. Adults monitor pupils' welfare carefully and report concerns promptly. You utilise the support of external agencies when necessary and are diligent in ensuring that these agencies act robustly to keep children safe. You carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of adults to work with children. Governors check that leaders are doing the right things to keep children safe.

Children feel safe in school. They know that adults will listen if they have any concerns. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online, when using social media and in their community. All parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the quality of provision in the early years; the effectiveness of support for disadvantaged pupils; the quality of pupils' writing; and the quality of the wider curriculum.
- Highly effective leaders ensure that the early years provides a strong foundation for children's learning. Above average proportions regularly reach a good level of development by the start of Reception Year. The environment is bright and vibrant, and activities are well planned to meet children's needs. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled and knowledgeable. Children's starting points are identified quickly when they join and adults plan carefully to address each child's learning needs. Opportunities to develop children's speech and language skills, as well as their writing and mathematical skills, are frequent in both inside and outside areas.
- Leaders and governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used extremely well to support disadvantaged pupils' well-being and academic achievement. Leaders identify potential barriers to pupils' learning precisely and put in place actions to help overcome them. For example, leaders' successful efforts to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance mean that disadvantaged pupils now attend as regularly as their peers. Workshops held with parents help them to better understand how to help their child at home, especially with mathematics.
- In school, highly effective 'pupil premium champions' work closely with teachers and pupils to identify and address pupils' individual needs. They ensure that work is tailored to help pupils catch up in their learning and are on hand to help pupils deal with any social or emotional issues that they may have. This is working very well. As a result, disadvantaged pupils at Rivermead Primary achieve highly, and often better than other pupils nationally, especially in reading and writing.
- You identified that pupils' writing is not as strong as their reading and mathematics. Leaders have implemented a carefully researched new approach to teaching writing and have ensured that it is followed consistently throughout the school. Teachers use assessment information of what pupils can already do in order to plan learning which challenges pupils from their different starting points. Exciting and well-planned activities grab pupils' attention from the start and make them eager to write well.
- Pupils are encouraged to write precisely and accurately for a range of different purposes and genres. This recent approach is already having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing in literacy lessons. Your current plans to ensure that pupils write to a similar high quality and in depth across the whole curriculum, are well judged.
- Leaders are reviewing the wider curriculum to ensure that pupils learn subject-specific knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. Work is planned around an enquiry question so that pupils are encouraged to develop their thinking skills in the different subjects that they study. The curriculum is being carefully mapped, and books show that pupils are already developing good subject-specific knowledge and are broadening their use of technical vocabulary. For example, in

geography, pupils can explain how 'tectonic plates' push together to 'form ranges of fold mountains'.

- Subject leaders' effective monitoring and evaluation is ensuring that the curriculum is developing as intended. Their next steps are to make sure that assessments focus sharply on both pupils' knowledge and skills so that teachers can continue to make sure that these are developed to a high standard.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the same high standards expected in English lessons are demanded when pupils write in other subjects
- development of the curriculum continues so that pupils learn subject-specific knowledge and skills across the whole curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders and a group of governors. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. With leaders, I scrutinised pupils' work and observed learning in most classes. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, monitoring visit reports, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I considered the 62 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text responses, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. I spoke to pupils during lessons and when playing outside. I took account of the views of staff through the 24 responses to the staff survey.