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Mr Steve Solomons  
Headteacher  
Riverside School  
Main Road  
St Paul's Cray  
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BR5 3HS

Dear Mr Solomons

### **Short inspection of Riverside School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 2018 with Kanwaljit Singh, Ofsted Inspector, 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 December 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

You and your team have created an environment of extremely high expectations, where every pupil is valued as an individual. Pupils are certainly given every opportunity to 'be all that you can be', which is your school motto. You and your staff firmly believe that your pupils and their families deserve excellence in everything you do for them. This shines through all aspects of the school's work.

You have developed many strengths within the school, such as the innovative approach to the curriculum based on 'the pursuit of happiness'. Performing and expressive arts are very well established. The school has presented some of its work in performing arts both nationally and internationally. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence are transformed through participation in the performing arts. You and your team identify ways for individual pupils to communicate effectively. The curriculum is highly personalised and matched to the needs of each pupil.

Parents and carers say that there is excellent communication between home and school. They describe the school as 'truly amazing', 'fantastic' and 'brilliant'. Parents

are very pleased with the progress that their children make academically, personally and emotionally. They praise you and your team for your dedication to supporting their families and say that you have changed their lives. Parents appreciate the strong links that the school has with outside agencies and available support groups.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that staff will always do their best to help them. They enjoy school and appreciate the range of activities on offer. Pupils say that they make lots of progress, including with their confidence and communication skills. They say that the staff help pupils to be happy. Pupils take part in projects to help others in the school, such as planning a new playground and improving bathrooms. They say 'we help each other out' and 'we help each other to learn'. Pupils behave exceptionally well both in class and around the school. They are highly motivated and engaged with their learning.

Your staff speak highly of you and your leadership team. They feel well supported and value the professional development opportunities available to them. Staff appreciate the weekly well-being activities and regular sessions for sharing best practice.

Leadership at all levels is highly effective. Governors are passionate about their work and fully involved in the life of the school. They fully understand, and can describe in detail the improvements made since the previous inspection. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and give appropriate positive challenge to help make the provision even better. Leaders at all levels are always looking for ways to improve outcomes for pupils and there is no complacency whatsoever.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Parents say that their child is safe. Pupils know who to talk to if they have a problem. They understand different types of bullying but say that there is no bullying in the school. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and staying safe in their local area.

Staff are well trained and vigilant in spotting any signs of concern. Safeguarding policies and procedures are rigorously implemented and monitored by leaders. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. The school has excellent links with outside agencies and families are well supported. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils' attendance is thoroughly monitored. There have been no recent exclusions. Many pupils arrive on transport at the beginning of the school day. Their arrival is well organised, safe and efficient as staff welcome them into school. Pupils' behaviour at lunchtime is excellent.

## **Inspection findings**

- We agreed to look at what leaders have done to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teaching is consistently strong across the school. Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching is closely monitored through a well thought out teaching and learning framework.
- Pupils' work is closely matched to their needs because teachers effectively use assessment information in their planning. All pupils, including the most able, are fully engaged in learning because work is highly personalised and set at just the right level. Teachers and support staff know the pupils exceptionally well and have high expectations of what can be achieved in lessons. Teaching assistants are expertly deployed in lessons and work as a team with teachers to the benefit of pupils.
- Next, we looked at the effectiveness of the sixth form. At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that students make at least good progress from their starting points in all subjects, especially English and mathematics. Students make very strong progress in the sixth form. They have opportunities for gaining qualifications in English and mathematics and other subjects. Leaders have strengthened links with other post-school providers, enabling progress in the sixth form to be effectively built on. They have also widened the range of further education or training providers they work with, including a performing arts college. Students and their families are well supported with the transition to college, ensuring that placements are successful.
- Lastly, we looked at pupils' progress over time and how well the curriculum prepares them for the next stage of their education, training and life. Progress in all areas of pupils' development is meticulously tracked against highly individualised expectations and outcomes. Moderation with other schools ensures that academic assessments are accurate. Leaders make sure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the age range is consistent, resulting in pupils making the best progress that they can as they move through the school. Pupils' work in books and their learning journals show clear progress over time. Leaders have developed a well-thought-out individualised curriculum that is personalised for pupils. The curriculum encourages independence and involvement in the community and, where appropriate, pupils complete work experience placements.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities for pupils to gain externally accredited qualifications, where appropriate, continue to develop
- work with other schools to share strong practice is further developed.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspection team met with you and your senior team, teachers and teaching assistants. They also met with the school business manager to review the school's single central record. They met with governors, including the chair, and spoke to the director of education within the local authority. Inspectors visited classes across the school, accompanied by senior leaders, to gather a range of evidence relating to teaching, learning and assessment. They met with pupils to talk about their experience of school and aspects of safeguarding. They also talked to parents. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, policies, assessment records and work in books. Inspectors took account of the 36 responses to the staff questionnaire, 22 free-text responses to Parent View and 27 responses to the Parent View survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.