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Felix Rayner  
Executive headteacher  
John Rankin Junior School  
Henshaw Crescent  
Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 6ES

Dear Mr Rayner

### **Short inspection of John Rankin Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 2019, 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 your school was judged to be good in June 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team share a clear vision and are highly ambitious for all the pupils to do well and have a rich range of experiences. The pupils are at the heart of everything that you do. You have established a new and effective leadership structure and team, reviewed and revised the deployment of staff and provided high-quality training for the school team. All the staff who completed the online survey said that they feel well supported to carry out their work.

Pupils enjoy school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and describe lessons as 'fun' and 'influencing'. Pupils are polite and friendly. Their behaviour in class and around the school is consistently good. This creates a calm and purposeful environment for learning.

Parents were very positive about the school in their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Typically, they reported that they are extremely pleased with the quality of teaching, the support for their children and the wider curriculum opportunities. Parents said how their children are 'coming on in leaps and bounds' and 'flourishing'.

The governing body is effective. Governors know the school well. They use a wide range of achievement information, reports and visits to check the school's effectiveness carefully. Governors check diligently how well leaders are tackling the school's current priorities. They plan training well to improve the quality of their

work, develop their skills and increase their knowledge about key aspects of their responsibilities.

The previous inspection report asked leaders to increase the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics and across the curriculum. They receive effective help through support during lessons and specific programmes. This focuses effectively on any gaps disadvantaged pupils may have in their learning.

The previous inspection also asked the school to improve communication with parents. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day, and those who expressed a view felt that they are well informed. A very large majority of parents responding to Ofsted's online survey for parents were pleased with the information that the school provides about their child's progress.

Leaders were additionally asked to ensure that teaching in Years 3 and 4 made full use of information from lessons about what pupils know and can do. Pupils across the school are making good progress because teachers evaluate learning accurately. This means that future lessons build systematically on pupils' current skills and knowledge. You are aware that pupils' writing is still not as strong as their reading and mathematics. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length, and teachers do not address grammatical errors in pupils' work consistently.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. There is a strong culture of safeguarding because staff receive regular training and informative updates on the most recent guidance. Consequently, they know and understand how to recognise the signs and symptoms of potential abuse quickly and accurately. Leaders work well in partnership with external agencies to ensure that any concerns are addressed swiftly, and that appropriate support is put in place.

Leaders undertake rigorous checks on staff, governors and regular visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children. Records of these checks, along with other records relating to safeguarding, are detailed and of a good quality. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and are confident that the staff team will look after them.

### **Inspection findings**

- I examined the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in writing. Your school's detailed improvement plan has disadvantaged pupils' achievement as a key priority. In the past, this group has not made enough progress, but they are now making strong progress, including in writing. This is because of the swift and accurate identification of pupils' needs and barriers to learning. Teachers' and teaching assistants' effective support to address weaknesses in pupils' learning has a strong impact on achievement. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils'

attainment is rising rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics and in other subjects. Disadvantaged pupils' knowledge and understanding are closely monitored by the class teachers and senior leaders to ensure that strong achievement is sustained over time and in all classes.

- You have been robust in tackling previously slow progress made by boys in writing. A scrutiny of pupils' work and other inspection evidence show that there is a consistent and effective approach to the teaching of writing. Boys read high-quality texts to develop their vocabulary, ideas and their enthusiasm. Their workbooks show that they write well for a wide range of different purposes and across different subjects. Boys choose interesting vocabulary to make their writing more engaging. They edit their work carefully to improve their own and other pupils' writing because support from teachers and teaching assistants is timely and helpful. During the inspection, boys in Year 4 wrote persuasive letters. They wrote with precision and care. However, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently well to apply their grammar knowledge with accuracy. There are limited opportunities to write at length. This slows the development of pupils' skills and understanding.
- I evaluated the progress made by girls in mathematics. Over time, girls' progress in mathematics has been slower than in reading and writing. You and your team have made mathematics a key focus in your comprehensive programme of support for staff development. Learning in lessons and the school's achievement information show that girls make rapid gains in their mathematical skills and understanding. This is because they benefit from well-planned opportunities to deepen their mathematical skills in a range of real-life contexts and problems. Girls are provided with a wide range of resources to help them to understand how to tackle different calculations. Teachers also provide clear guidance on how to improve if they make mistakes.
- Your senior leaders work extensively to promote frequent attendance. You analyse carefully the attendance of different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that you direct your support and challenge precisely. Pupils receive awards for coming to school regularly, helping them to have a good understanding of the importance of coming to school. You tell parents quickly and clearly when you have concerns about falling attendance. Leaders work closely with other agencies to help parents to overcome any barriers to ensuring that their children attend school frequently. You have provided good support to families that are more vulnerable to enable them to send their child to school every day. As a result, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND has improved strongly and is now close to the national average.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are more opportunities for pupils to write at length to develop their skills and understanding
- teachers improve pupils' understanding and use of grammar.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and senior leaders to discuss various aspects of the school's work, including the school's self-evaluation and safeguarding. Four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, met with me to discuss the school's performance, the priorities for improvement and their role in the school. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

I visited all classes with you and one of your deputy headteachers to observe teaching and learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. I spoke with pupils during lessons and met with members of the school council to gather their views of the school. I also spoke with parents on the playground at the end of the day.

I considered 23 responses to the staff survey, 86 responses to the pupils' survey and 72 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including written comments from parents. A range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, school improvement plan, and safeguarding policies and checks, were also taken into account.