

Rivers Academy West London

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137009
Local authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	397454
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Liz Duffy

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,180
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Bulpett
Principal	Paula Kenning
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
School address	Tachbrook Road Feltham Middlesex TW14 9PE
Telephone number	020 88900245
Fax number	020 88442441
Email address	general@riversacademy.org.uk

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Introduction

Inspection team

Liz Duffy	Additional inspector
Julie Miriam	Additional inspector
Peter Dannheisser	Additional inspector
Brian Skelton	Additional inspector
Wendy Delf	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 37 lessons taught by 37 teachers. Four of these lessons were observed jointly with senior members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with senior staff, middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including those relating to students' progress, self-evaluation, improvement planning and safeguarding. Inspectors considered questionnaires returned from 263 students, 72 staff and 32 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average secondary school. Since the previous inspection the school has converted to academy status and the new principal has been in post since September 2010. A new initiative is the introduction of GCSE courses in Year 9. The school has introduced the 'Alternative School' which is an area within the school which helps vulnerable students re-engage with school life. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The majority of students are of White British heritage and a third of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students supported at school action plus is above the national average and the proportion of those who have a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The majority of those identified as disabled or with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties. Sixth form students benefit from a range of partnerships with other local sixth form providers. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Rivers Academy West London is a good school. Its highly effective leadership and management are greatly improving achievement and the quality of teaching. It is not outstanding because, while achievement and teaching are now very strong in many areas, there are areas where they are not fully effective.
- Students' achievement is good overall. The achievement of students who speak English as an additional language or who are disabled or have special educational needs is outstanding. From exceptionally low starting points, current Year 11 attainment is in line with the national average. Only in a few lessons does learning dip because of weaknesses in teaching. Although at times boys do not achieve as well as girls, by Year 12, boys' performance is equivalent to girls' performance.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The sixth form prepares students well for their futures and their attainment by the end of Year 13 is broadly average. Sixth formers are good role models for the younger students.
- Teaching is good and at times outstanding. Where teaching is of the highest quality, learning is purposeful, lessons are stimulating and students are highly engaged. On a few occasions where teaching is less effective a few students are not fully engaged and challenged. Marking is helpful although in a few lessons teachers are not guiding students to respond to their written comments on how to improve their work.
- Behaviour is excellent. Students are exceptionally polite, respectful and courteous around the school. Attitudes to learning are positive. Bullying is extremely rare and when it occurs, is dealt with promptly. Students say they feel safe.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Highly skilled leadership by the Principal and senior team, together with very effective systems to monitor performance, including the quality of teaching, are ensuring there is a strong focus on constantly improving achievement and the quality of teaching. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- For the start of the next academic year improve further the quality of teaching and learning, by ensuring:
 - all teachers always take account of the different learning needs of students and work always challenges students
 - teachers consistently use strategies that ensure that all students are fully engaged and enthused during lessons
 - more regular opportunities are given for students to reflect upon teachers' marking and guidance during lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students make good progress in their learning in the large majority of lessons. All parents who expressed a view to inspectors agree with this. Students learn best when they are engaged in creative activities that meet their needs. Enjoyment was seen when students engaged in collaborative work and had the opportunity to be responsible for their learning. A good example of this was in an outstanding textiles lesson where students were able to decide upon their next steps for improvement and their next task to complete. Students were able to assess their own progress due to helpful self-assessment sheets which were linked clearly to success criteria and levels of assessment. There was excellent reflection by students through the use of level ladders in science. High expectations were observed in a variety of subjects. In such lessons boys were equally as engaged as girls and responded well to competitive tasks and completing work under the pressure of time. Where boys were less engaged and made the least progress was typically in a few lessons where there was a 'one size fits all approach', with all students undertaking the same activity regardless of their needs and where tasks were not sufficiently challenging.

Students enter the school with prior attainment which is significantly below the national average. From low starting points, there has been a rising trend in achievement since the previous inspection and the school has been successful in steadily narrowing the gaps between the performance of students in the school and that of their peers nationally. At the previous inspection, the school was asked to develop students' literacy skills. The school has been successful in doing so and scrutiny of data indicates that attainment in English has risen. There has been a determined drive to improve the rates at which students make progress in English and mathematics. Data demonstrate that students' progress in these subjects, including their reading, is improving strongly and, as a result, by the time they leave school it is broadly at the national average.

Students who speak English as an additional language and those who are disabled or with special educational needs make exceptional progress. A small number of Year 8

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students on school action plus are making satisfactory progress in English. The progress made by boys has in the past trailed behind that made by girls. The school correctly identified this as an area for improvement and made adjustments to the curriculum and teaching styles in order to address this issue. As a result, the gap between these groups of students is narrowing. There is substantial improvement in boys' performance in Year 10, Year 12, science, languages and for the more able in mathematics.

In the sixth form achievement is good. Students make exceptional progress in applied subjects and good progress overall. Higher attaining students in Year 12 are now attaining the higher grades in AS levels so that performance in Year 12 matches the national picture.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers who returned their questionnaire feel that their child is taught well. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching has improved over time and is good, with some examples of outstanding practice.

In most lessons, teachers focus overtly on what students need to learn by the end of the lesson and over time. They take account of students' prior attainment in order to match tasks to the students' needs. Lessons are planned carefully so that students are engaged actively and given well-structured opportunities to work in a variety of ways, such as collaboratively and independently. Teachers assess students' progress continuously during lessons and change the pitch of work for individuals and groups where required. In a Year 7 English lesson, highly engaging and enthusiastic teaching motivated and excited students to complete a range of well-matched tasks that developed their analytical skills. In an outstanding Year 8 mathematics lesson a student with reading difficulties spoke very positively about the help received from the teacher when accessing problem-solving questions. However, not all subjects are successful in providing opportunities for students to reflect upon the guidance for improvement provided by the teacher.

Many teachers are highly skilled at developing literacy skills in lessons and this is reflected in the positive outcomes for students who speak English as an additional language and for disabled students or those with special educational needs. The teaching of these students is highly effective. Teachers are equally as adept at developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, creating opportunities for sharing views, using music to inspire and set the mood for learning, and encouraging higher order thinking. Year 13 history students developed their creative thinking and historical arguments via the imaginative task of prosecuting and defending historical figures, for example Stalin.

In a few lessons, teachers take insufficient account of the range of abilities within the class, with all given the same work, irrespective of different prior attainment or targets. Consequently, some students are less engaged and do not always make the progress they should.

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The quality of marking is consistently good. Helpful comments give good guidance to students on how to improve. On the few occasions where less effective teaching occurs, teachers have not used assessment data to systematically plan for the learning needs of each student.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a harmonious community where students and staff show a great deal of respect for one another. The mixed-age mentor groups create a supportive environment which ensures no student is overlooked. Students take responsibility for their own safety through being involved in programmes such as My Voice and Students for Solutions. Students understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it. Bullying incidents, including cyber-bullying, are extremely rare and dealt with effectively. Students understand the different types of bullying and report that they find staff are approachable and know who to turn to should problems arise. Almost all students say that they feel safe and all parents and carers echo this view.

The vast majority of parents and carers feel that there is always a good standard of behaviour in the school, and this sentiment is shared by staff and students. Around the school site behaviour is excellent and this is equally so in the vast majority of lessons. The school has developed effective systems to manage behaviour where it falls short of expectations. A new uniform for the main school and business attire for the sixth form has been enthusiastically embraced by students and one sixth former commented, 'We are better dressed than the House of Commons!' The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions is very low. Students who are at risk from exclusion have been successfully re-engaged in their learning via the 'Alternative School' which provides individual attention and tuition. Attendance is now broadly average and has rapidly improved in the sixth form where it is well above average. The number of students who are persistently absent has dramatically reduced.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and the governing body provide outstanding leadership. The inspirational Principal has galvanised all members of the school community. Together they have established an ambitious vision for the school's effectiveness and have very high expectations of staff and students. Outstanding leadership and management are clearly demonstrated through the outstanding behaviour of students, the substantial improvement in attendance of students whose circumstances might make them vulnerable and sixth form attendance, the rapid increase of students' attainment, the success of their literacy programme and the sustained exceptional progress made by students who speak English as an additional language, disabled students and those with special educational needs. The culture and ethos within the academy encourage high aspirations in a supportive environment where students flourish and are treated equally. One Year 10 girl commented that 'all learners have the opportunity to be recognised for their

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achievements’.

The high quality of leadership and management of teaching is reflected in the improvements in the impact of teaching on students’ progress throughout the school. There has been considerable investment in professional development, and coaching programmes to support individual teachers are having positive results, although, as yet, they are not fully embedded in every classroom. One teacher commented, ‘I have been professionally pushed to be the best practitioner I can be.’ Teachers are held accountable for the progress of their students. Well-established systems for regular assessments and rigorous tracking of individual progress ensure that any students who might be at risk of underachieving are identified quickly with effective follow-up involving students, teachers and parents and carers. The outstanding curriculum is flexibly applied to suit learners and is considerably enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities which add value and promote students’ personal development highly effectively. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well resulting in an environment where all are valued and celebrated.

Monitoring and evaluation are extremely thorough at all leadership levels and there is meticulous follow-up of any areas for improvement identified. The considerable improvement made since the previous inspection and the current strong focus on improvements to achievement and teaching demonstrate the school’s excellent capacity for further improvement. Middle leaders have been very well supported in developing their skills, and they make a strong contribution to school improvement. The academy’s strong commitment to equal opportunities is illustrated by the very well-managed support arrangements for students who speak English as an additional language and for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place to meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Rivers Academy West London, Feltham TW14 9PE

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited you recently and, in particular, our thanks go to those students who met with us in meetings and around the school. We enjoyed talking to you, listening to you, looking at your work and watching you learn.

We found that Rivers Academy West London is a good school, providing you with a good education. The leadership of your school is excellent and you told us that you were proud of your rapidly improving school. We were very pleased to observe your excellent conduct, the respect you show towards one another and your willingness to learn. We found your courtesy towards us exemplary. Your achievement is good and your willingness to learn plays a large part in that success.

You told us that most of your lessons were enjoyable and we agree and judge teaching to be good. You enjoy a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and you appreciate the opportunities given to you, for example being able to visit NASA and leading improvements in the school through the My Voice programme.

To be even better we have asked the leadership of your school to make sure that in all lessons you are always challenged fully, that all of you are always fully engaged and you have more time to reflect on how you could improve.

You can be proud to attend a friendly school where there is a learning atmosphere which buzzes with enthusiasm and where the teachers care passionately for your well-being. We are confident that you will continue to work hard to achieve your best and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Liz Duffy
Lead inspector

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