

Riverside Community Special School

Scratchface Lane, Waterlooville, Hampshire, PO7 5QD

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good for all groups of pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders. They achieve particularly well in the development of their communication and social skills and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Teaching is good and inspectors observed some exemplary lessons where pupils were enthused and challenged by creative teachers.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are valued as individuals, and relationships are built on mutual respect. Pupils and their parents and carers rightly feel that the school is a safe place where pupils do not fear bullying or harassment.
- The school works in very close partnership with health professionals and external agencies to support pupils' therapy and health needs.
- Leadership and management are good. The strong leadership of teaching and the rigorous checks of performance ensure that the quality of teaching and learning, and consequently pupils' achievement, are constantly improving.
- The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and leaders and staff share a common vision to provide the best for all pupils, including good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The pupil premium funding has been used well to provide specific support for individual pupils. This is seen in the improved pupils' reading and spelling skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still variability in the quality of teaching and too few examples of outstanding teaching. Too much teacher talk sometimes limits opportunities for pupils to work and learn by themselves.
- Staff do not consistently use information about pupils' progress to check that pupils are doing as well as they can.

Information about this inspection

- Ten teachers were observed teaching 12 lessons. Over one third of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and/or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors reviewed many documents including those relating to pupils' progress, school self-evaluation, school improvement and pupils' safeguarding.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, two representatives of the governing body, members of the school leadership team, pupils, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of six responses to Parent View, the on-line questionnaire for parents and carers, and 34 completed staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Richard Hill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The majority of pupils have severe or moderate learning difficulties with an increasing number having a range of additional special educational needs including speech, language and communication difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- About 40% of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support looked after children, those eligible for free school meals and those from service families. This is well above the national figures.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The school has an outreach service which provides support and training for parents and carers, staff and pupils of other schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that lessons are not too teacher-dominated so that pupils have more opportunities to undertake planned activities, practical work, group work or independent research
 - ensuring that support offered to pupils in lessons is timely and that pupils have enough opportunities to think for themselves
 - ensuring there is a brisk pace in all lessons to promote maximum involvement of the pupils in their learning.
- Further develop the checks on pupils' progress by:
 - comparing the school's information on pupils' progress with other reliable data on the progress of similar pupils nationally to give the school a fuller picture of how well it is doing
 - ensuring that leaders responsible for specific areas make better use of data to evaluate the impact of the provision in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards and rates of progress across the school are rising rapidly with all pupils making good progress and an increasing proportion making outstanding progress from their starting points. Senior leaders and managers have effectively speeded up pupils' progress since the last inspection.
- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points at all key stages. They settle to their lessons well, take part in lessons to the best of their ability and show interest in, and enthusiasm for, their favourite subjects. They generally know their targets, which have good levels of challenge, and understand how these help them to improve their work.
- The school's system for tracking and checking pupils' progress is relatively new and developing well. Allocation of extra support for pupils is linked to the tracking system and the amount of benefit this provides to individual pupils is carefully assessed to ensure that there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Pupils make outstanding gains in their communication skills. They develop skills of literacy and numeracy well. The communication and interaction skills of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are developing particularly well and this is due to the highly appropriate and well-matched methods used to help them.
- The school's focus on improving reading has increased pupils' progress in the subject across all key stages and many older pupils now demonstrate good word-attacking skills, expression and understanding when reading. By the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress when measured against their starting points in reading.
- As a result of well-targeted intervention strategies, many pupils are now making accelerated progress in mathematics. This could clearly be seen in a mathematics lesson where Key Stage 2 pupils, through effective signing and role play, demonstrated their knowledge of numerical sequences. The high level of engagement and the tenacity with which they continued to apply their skills was admirable. As a result, their confidence grew and, by the end of the lesson, they were able to demonstrate what they had learnt well.
- Changes in the curriculum resulting in a more practical approach have led to marked improvements in pupils' attitudes and a real desire to learn. 'Learning is fun,' remarked one pupil.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching over time has rapidly improved and is good across the whole school. The proportion that is outstanding has increased since the last inspection.
- Teachers have high expectations for their pupils. Staff have good subject knowledge and meet the Teachers' Standards set by the government.
- Typically, teachers use a wide range of helpful resources, including the use of symbols, signage, and information and communication technology to enhance learning. They use questioning well, using visual communication cards where appropriate, to extend and develop pupils' thinking and understanding.
- Teachers routinely use assessment and data on pupils' progress to plan for their pupils and ensure that they provide sufficient challenge and pace to lessons.
- All lessons incorporate activities to promote social communication extremely well and teachers use pupils' interests effectively to motivate and enthuse. For example, in a communication lesson, pupils were helped to understand the sequence of a story through acting out the main events. They demonstrated their understanding through the use of hand-held devices to register their answers to questions. Pupils' engagement in the task was excellent, their learning and enjoyment clearly demonstrated.
- Recent improvements to the curriculum, with an emphasis on skills development, have

significantly raised the proportion of outstanding teaching in the main school. For example, in an excellent lesson on personal, social and health education, pupils readily took responsibility for their learning and the teacher used carefully selected questions to support and challenge their understanding and development of skills.

- The strong focus on the teaching of reading, including phonics (linking sounds and letters), helps pupils throughout the school to make good gains in reading and writing, and has improved attainment in each year group.
- Some of the teaching observed in the inspection was less effective. This was generally because too much teacher-talk and explanation left less time for pupils to develop as independent learners or to work collaboratively in pairs or groups. In a few lessons, the pace was too slow as pupils waited patiently to be allowed to start activities. The school's records show that this weaker teaching is uncommon.
- Teachers deploy support staff effectively and this results in all pupils gaining the support they need. Support staff provide good, discrete assistance and know their pupils well. In a good lesson, the teacher and teaching assistants helped pupils remain on task with clear verbal and visual prompts. This practical approach provided a good stimulus that helped pupils to overcome communication problems. However, on occasions, this can inhibit the development of pupils' ability to work things out for themselves, as support is too swift and pupils do not have enough time to think about concepts or solutions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. They are friendly and polite because the staff have high expectations regarding behaviour.
- Pupils get on extremely well together so that there is a very calm and harmonious working atmosphere throughout the school.
- Nearly all parents and carers feel that the school's strategies for managing and improving pupils' behaviour are effective. Parents and carers indicate that they feel their children are safe and secure at all times and that any type of bullying is extremely rare; records show that any such instances are dealt with appropriately.
- Despite their learning difficulties, the pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. At break times and lunchtimes, pupils play confidently and safely. They have a good basic understanding of the various types of bullying they may encounter and particularly those linked to use of the internet. This is due to the concerted efforts of all staff to ensure pupils can keep themselves safe.
- Discussions with pupils confirm that behaviour is good for the majority of the time and they are well aware of what to do if they encounter difficulties with others. This tolerant and empathetic approach helps staff to reduce interruptions to learning in the classroom. There have been few exclusions since the last inspection.
- All staff are well trained in supporting pupils and the focus is clearly on developing self-management skills and self-regulation. Pupils' social and emotional progress is efficiently tracked and underpinned by individual opportunities for targeted support.
- The school is a cohesive community. Its inclusive nature is very effectively enhanced by its successful outreach service, which serves local mainstream schools. In addition, the family link worker has enabled effective support to be given to families who have children with particularly challenging needs.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by her leadership team, has been effective in bringing about rapid improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching.
- The school's recently revised tracking systems are becoming well established. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and issues identified at the last inspection have been

effectively addressed.

- Information on earlier progress is used effectively to provide starting points for pupils' programmes. Information from lessons and the extra support provided for some pupils is evaluated carefully to identify pupils' next steps in learning. However, staff do not always make the best use of information about pupils' progress to check that pupils are doing as well as they can compared to national figures.
 - The school has recognised that managers in charge of subjects or particular areas do not yet take enough responsibility for ensuring that the provision in their area is of the highest quality, particularly in terms of using data to gather evidence on the quality of provision.
 - Performance management is used effectively to ensure that all staff are accountable and yet also fully supported through appropriate professional development. Senior leaders and managers have a clear understanding of what makes good or better teaching and have successfully communicated this to all staff. This has resulted in the quality of teaching rising considerably since the previous inspection. This, in turn, has raised standards and accelerated progress.
 - Leaders and members of the governing body tackle discrimination and promote equality well. Close working partnerships with a range of health, medical, therapy, and social care agencies help break down barriers to learning and ensure all pupils reach their full potential. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve equally well from their various starting points.
 - The wide range of enrichment activities, before- and after-school clubs and holiday activities are easily accessible to all pupils. These aspects of the curriculum are very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The extra funding the school receives through the pupil premium is well deployed to provide additional support, resources, and opportunities for pupils that result in good progress.
 - The school has good partnership links with parents and carers. The parent workshops are an excellent introduction to the school and of great benefit to parents.
 - The local authority has provided effective support in helping the school to validate its monitoring of the quality of teaching and evaluate the steps taken to bring about improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
- effectively supports and robustly challenges the school
 - ensures a clear future direction and sets challenging targets for both the headteacher and school as a whole
 - secures good arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116600
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	401601

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Bowen
Headteacher	Catherine Marsh
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 May 2010
Telephone number	0239 2250138
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Email address	catherine.marsh@riverside.hants.sch.uk

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