School report

Rivacre Valley Primary School

Rivacre Brow, Overpool, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 1LE

Inspection dates	25–26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	**Good**	**2**
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Behaviour is outstanding and pupils feel safe because they very much enjoy being part of a caring school community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- The great majority of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading and respond well to the good teaching and support they receive from teachers and their assistants.
- There are strong procedures in place to check the quality of teaching and learning.
- The quality of teaching is good, leading to the great majority of pupils and groups making expected or better progress in their learning, especially in reading and writing.
- The headteacher inspires other leaders to work well towards achieving school improvement. There is very high morale among staff.
- Governance is a strength because leaders are held rigorously to account by the governing body.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching has not been consistently outstanding over time.
- The extremely good systems for checking pupils' learning and progress are not always used to best effect by all teachers when planning for the needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils.
- Individual education plans are not always clearly written to indicate what pupils with special educational needs should do to improve their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed seven teachers and one teaching assistant teach 14 lessons, part lessons or interventions.
- One lesson was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors met with senior staff, groups of pupils and three governors.
- One inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence that included: the school's website; pupils' assessment information; school improvement partner reports; headteacher's reports to the governing body; the school improvement plan and self-checking documents. They also studied pupils' workbooks and files, school policies and documents, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered 18 staff questionnaires.
- One inspector met with eight parents and one grandparent. There were insufficient responses on the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) for inspectors to make a judgement.

Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Sheila Loughlin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action, school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- One teacher is on long-term absence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
  - ensuring that all staff make consistent use of the school's achievement and progress information system to inform their lesson planning
  - ensuring that all pupils and groups consistently receive precise teaching, marking and feedback so that they make expected or better progress in their learning
  - ensuring that all individual education plans for pupils supported by school action plus or those with statements of special educational needs are sharply focused upon individual needs to inform teachers' planning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children enter the school with lower-than-expected skills. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are well prepared to do the work expected of them in Key Stage 1.
- Children cooperate well in the Nursery class, listen well during story time and can retell a story. They enjoy learning about letters and sounds or practise counting beyond 10, for example while investigating fruit as part of an 'Understanding the World' topic. In the Reception class, children with different needs are included well. Progress is checked through well-maintained learning journals. There are occasions when one or two children drift away from an activity if staff explanations are not matched to children's levels of understanding.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils respond well and make good progress when given writing tasks that match their ability. More-able pupils work confidently when writing simple sentences about how to make a meal. Less-able pupils responded equally well when sequencing printed cards that described the process. Occasionally, pupils lose concentration and do not make progress when teaching fails to take full account of individual needs.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average and there is an improving trend in all subjects. There has been an effective drive to increase pupils' progress by introducing higher targets for all groups, which has resulted in rapid improvements over the past year.
- Older pupils enjoy exploring numbers or developing their writing skills, especially through topics about the Second World War, or when lower-ability pupils work out how to agree a sum by using different number operations. Pupils in Key Stage 2 work well in ability groups and make good or better progress in their knowledge and use of number skills.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy reading and use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read new words. Last year, pupils in Year 1 exceeded national expectations when completing the sounds and letters check. Pupils read widely, for example, as part of their topic work on the Vikings and when enjoying Roald Dahl stories.
- The great majority of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding have made good or better progress in their reading, writing and mathematics in relation to national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 2 last year, this group of pupils exceeded national expectations for attainment in English and attained higher levels than other pupils in the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs generally make better progress than their peers nationally.
- The good or better-than-expected progress made by different groups of pupils indicates that the school effectively promotes equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is now mostly good or better. Reliable school data, endorsed by inspection evidence, show that very little teaching requires improvement.
- Where teaching is particularly strong, good use is made of the information about pupils' attainment and progress in teachers' planning. This means that staff and resources are well used to meet individual needs; this is the case for example, when more-able pupils are able to work independently through challenging written mathematical problems, while other groups receive adult support or benefit from adapted resources or computer software programs.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff use learning journals to record their observations about children's achievements and progress. These observations inform the teachers' plans, for example, when challenging the more-able children's understanding of terms, such as 'squashed sphere' during an investigation.
- In Key Stage 1, a writing lesson gave equality of opportunity to pupils of different abilities. More-able pupils worked independently when forming simple sentences to compile a glossary for the

topic on France, while less-able pupils were well supported to do this through speaking and listening.

- In a Key Stage 2 lesson, the teacher's skilled use of questioning gave pupils the chance to talk to one another about odd and even numbers in the course of an investigation. This approach allowed pupils to extend their learning and to gain confidence when working out number problems.
- Topic work, for example, on the Second World War or France, is planned well to involve all pupils, girls and boys alike, so that writing becomes an enjoyable and purposeful activity. Such work is enhanced by the school's attractive corridor displays, particularly demonstrating pupils' strong social and cultural development.
- Very occasionally, pupils lose concentration because teachers' planning does not take full account of the very good assessment information about each child, for example, when visual or adapted resources are not used to assist less-able children in their independent writing or use of taught number skills. On the other hand, more-able pupils who have completed their work are sometimes kept waiting while other pupils finish the same task.
- In outstanding lessons, teachers' planning refers to individual education plans for pupils that benefit from support by school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs, so that these pupils receive focused support and make good or better progress. Occasionally, though, there is a lack of focus in some of these plans and they are not used in teaching and support to best effect.
- In good or better lessons, teachers use the marking and feedback system to good effect so that pupils know how well they have learnt and how to improve. On occasion, some staff do not make consistent use of this good practice and, as a result, some pupils do not make the same good progress as most.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are rightly proud of their school and are exceptional ambassadors. They have a sense of togetherness, feel safe and are well supported by all staff.
- Parents say that 'exceptional things happen here'. One parent said that she 'would be devastated if she missed the weekly celebration assembly'.
- Older pupils care for and nurture younger children, for example, when escorting them out at break time. This was observed after a wonderful community assembly where senior staff and pupils enjoyed discussing friendship, saying a school prayer led by two pupils and singing a French song with actions, all in absolute harmony. This was evidence of the pupils' very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils say there is no bullying because it 'would not be tolerated'. Staff help sort out occasional arguments. There have been no exclusions, racist or homophobic incidents recorded.
- Pupils concentrate extremely well in lessons. A few pupils who have difficulties attending are encouraged into school and subsequently catch up with their work and make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour in, around and out of school is exemplary. They show care and empathy in their behaviour to one another and are very respectful and polite to staff and visitors. Pupils showed great maturity and responsibility when spoken to about the school's effective personal, social, health and sex education programme.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has made good progress in addressing the issues from the last inspection. For example, there have been improvements in pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing. In addition, vulnerable groups, including pupils with special educational needs, now make better progress.

- The headteacher inspires other leaders to work in harmony in pursuit of excellence, ably supported by a strong governing body. The recently formed leadership teams ensure that there is full representation of the whole school community to help to drive forward school improvement. Roles and responsibilities, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are clearly defined so that action points for development are closely checked.
- The local authority's view is that the school's leaders are working well to improve the school and do not require any direct involvement or support.
- There are well thought-out policies, based on leaders' accurate view of how to improve the school further, to make sure that pupils make at least good progress in literacy and other subjects, for example, through the use of reading journals to track pupils' progress or by grouping Key Stage 2 pupils by ability in mathematics. This means that teaching and support are increasingly focused upon pupils' individual needs. There is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity in the school's work, with the aim that all pupils should meet their potential.
- There are robust procedures for checking the quality of teaching, overseen by the headteacher and her senior team. Good reference is made to the Teachers' Standards to assess the quality of teaching and to inform staff performance management. Performance management covers both teachers and support staff, resulting in good professional development that enhances the quality of teaching.
- Teachers are held to account and are responding well to whole-school approaches to assessing pupils' performance, collecting information about their learning and progress, and setting challenging targets. This has led to the improved quality of teaching over time. However, for more teaching to be outstanding, there needs to be more consistency in the use of the very good information about pupils' attainment and progress in order to plan lessons more precisely to meet pupils' individual needs. In addition, some individual education plans could be more effective in offering appropriate challenge to pupils with special educational needs.
- The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. Currently, a French topic is inspiring pupils to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in another language, and this adds value to pupils' already strong cultural development.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. There is a parent forum that oversees fundraising and training events such as family literacy.
- The school meets requirements for safeguarding and follows safe recruitment procedures, with staff checks routinely made.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are very well informed about the school's work and hold leaders to account effectively.
  - Governors have received training in the analysis of pupils' performance so that they know when to challenge leaders about, for example, pupils' progress in mathematics. As a result, staff and governors agreed a strategy to improve mathematics outcomes, leading to a recent positive impact statement.
  - Governors oversee the performance management of the headteacher and are fully informed and involved in the whole-school approach to staff development.
  - Governors oversee the management of the school's finances, including the capital programme, with great efficiency.
  - The pupil premium funding has been well used to provide staff and resources to support vulnerable groups and the governing body checks that these groups make the progress the school expects of them.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	130270
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	412051

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Aspden
Headteacher	Kate Docherty
Date of previous school inspection	21 April 2010
Telephone number	0151 3382020
Fax number	0151 3572932
Email address	head@rivacrevalley.cheshire.sch.uk

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