

# Riverwalk School

South Close, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3JZ

## Inspection dates

4–5 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Senior leaders do not have an accurate picture of the school because robust monitoring systems are not in place. They do not make use of information about pupils' progress when evaluating teaching.
- All checks to safeguard children have been carried out. However, a new check, although conducted, had not been recorded as required.
- Teaching, overall, is not good enough because of its variability. Teachers do not always provide well-pitched activities to stretch pupils or give feedback to all pupils on how they can improve.
- Inconsistencies in teaching mean that there is variability in pupils' progress and achievement, particularly for the most able.
- Governors are not challenging the school sufficiently. They have relied upon information from senior leaders about the progress of pupils and have not interrogated it.
- The quality of provision in the sixth form requires improvement. This is because not all teaching in the sixth form is yet good and consequently pupils' progress is not as good as it can be.

### The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is sometimes outstanding because staff know how pupils learn best and can respond to their changing needs rapidly.
- The use of a wide range of communication aids and strategies by staff ensures that all children work towards independence at a level appropriate to them.
- The school makes very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helps pupils understand how British values are shaped.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Adults are committed to ensuring they respond to and communicate with pupils in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they attend regularly and say they feel safe.
- Good leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures provision is effective. Children make a good start to their learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher, observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons across the whole school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the English and mathematics subject leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher of Sextons Manor Primary School. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local social care team who works closely with the school.
- Inspectors sampled pupils' work in different year groups, examined records of pupils' progress and scrutinised the school's improvement plan. A range of documentation relating to safeguarding children was examined.
- Inspectors evaluated the views of 39 staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed the nine responses from parents on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also took account of parents' responses to the school's recent questionnaire of parents.
- On day two of the inspection, many pupils were taking part in swimming lessons and were, therefore, not on site.

## Inspection team

Mary Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Debra McCarthy

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Riverwalk School caters mainly for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. A significant proportion have additional needs including severe challenging behaviour, multi-sensory impairments and a range of complex health needs. All pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- The school is a 3-19 provision and operates on two sites: The early years and Key Stage 1 provision is on the Sexton Manor Primary School site, which is a mainstream school. Key stages 2, 3 and 4, as well as the sixth form, are on based at Riverwalk School site.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is similar to the national level. A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few speak English as additional language.
- Pupils come from across Suffolk. Some pupils attend local mainstream schools on a part-time basis.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all groups of pupils make good progress by:
  - making sure that work given to pupils matches their abilities so that all are effectively challenged in their learning, particularly the most able
  - giving students regular and appropriate feedback so that they know what to do to improve their work, and that any misconceptions they have are corrected
  - sharing the excellent practice in the school, as well as in its partner schools, to raise teachers' expectations of pupils.
- Improve the impact of leadership at all levels by:
  - ensuring that governors acquire an accurate understanding of the school, particularly regarding pupils' progress and well-being
  - ensuring appropriate training for leaders so that they are rigorous in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
  - improving the quality of evidence recorded relating to pupils' progress.
- Improve the safeguarding of pupils, by:
  - ensuring all relevant checks are recorded as is required
  - ensuring that the recording of restraint meets with the school's policy, and keep accurate records to show how the school addresses the issues leading to the need for physical intervention
  - ensuring that the entrance to the school and car park area are safe for pupils when arriving and leaving the school grounds.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- The procedures for checking the quality of the school's work are not robust enough to identify gaps in pupils' learning and tackle them quickly. When evaluating the quality of teaching senior leaders do not take account of the full range of evidence, particularly evidence of pupils' progress in their books and other records. This means that variations in the achievement of pupils at different key stages are not identified early enough. Middle leaders do not all accurately monitor the work of teachers within their key stages.
- While all checks on staff working with children have been carried out, these had not all been recorded as is required by the government. By the time the inspection ended, senior leaders had corrected this oversight.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. It offers pupils a breadth of experience in school and beyond, which helps them learn about the world and prepares them for the future. The school is adapting its curriculum to meet the new requirement.
- The school makes very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say that staff make sure that they know right from wrong and consider the feelings of others. Leaders and staff effectively foster good relations among pupils and with adults and tackle discrimination well. Pupils have opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness through, for example, taking part in visits to places of worship. The curriculum strongly reflects the cultural and religious diversity of Britain; it helps pupils understand how British values and beliefs are shaped and promotes equality of opportunity.
- Most pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 are well prepared to make decisions about the next step in their learning. The school works well with parents and carers. For pupils leaving the school it ensures that parents are well informed, offering them advice and guidance through a market place of providers. They are given information which helps them make informed decisions about the next step for their child. Consequently, pupils move on to appropriate placements.
- The headteacher has rightly introduced new systems which link teachers' performance with the achievement of pupils. Teachers have clearly defined targets which gives them clarity about what they need to do. Systems to check the performance of specialist support assistants are in place but they have not yet been linked to pupils' achievement.
- Good use is made of the pupil premium funding to offer effective, targeted support as well as intensive one-to-one interventions to eligible pupils. This results in their good progress.
- The primary physical education and sport premium that the school receives has been used well. The funding has allowed the school to build on the current skills of teaching staff to raise standards in physical education. This gives them the skills to help less physically able pupils enjoy the freedom of movement through activities such as multi-sensory experiences.
- Partnerships with external agencies are strong. The school works very well with social care services to support families of pupils with complex needs. Social services see the school as central to this process and are positive about the work carried out. The links between Riverwalk School and Sextons Manor Primary School are very strong and pupils from both schools benefit from the integrated work. At lunch time pupils happily take part in a physical activity group alongside mainstream pupils.
- The local authority has not yet visited the school in this academic year. Previously the support has consisted of annual data monitoring and termly visits. However, these have not challenged the school sufficiently to ensure good achievement across all key stages. The situation in the car park at the start and the end of the day is not satisfactory. Although teachers do all they can, the school needs further support from the local authority to ensure that pupils enter and exit the school safely.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body ensures the school has clear policies and guidelines. However, governors are not

checking, through regular reviews, how well policies are implemented and what the impact is on progress.

- The governing body meets its statutory duties but is not as effective as it could be. For example, they had not monitored that the school records were up to date. It has recently restructured. New committees are intended to provide better challenge and support to school leaders and managers so that governors rely less on the information provided solely by senior leaders. They also don't have enough first hand knowledge of the work of the school.
- Governors are beginning to use data effectively, especially information around the school's additional spending on the pupil premium and sport funding.
- Through the teachers' new performance management targets governors are developing an improved oversight of what the school does to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to staff, peers and visitors. Older students develop independence appropriate to their abilities. This was evident during observations at lunchtimes and as students moved around the school.
- There is a positive atmosphere around the school. Pupils are warmly welcomed each day, are happy to be there and ready to start their learning. Attendance is in line with the national average.
- Those with the most challenging behaviour are well supported by staff, who are active in their management of difficult situations. They often pre-empt any difficulties and so avoid situations escalating and help to maintain the calm atmosphere in the school.
- Relationships are excellent between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils respond quickly to instructions. Requests made are well matched to the pupils' level of understanding and made in appropriate ways, through the use of symbols, signing or by touching. This level of understanding of the needs of individuals contributes much to the progress that pupils make in their personal development.
- Teachers' lack of planning sometimes means that pupils have to sit and wait unnecessarily. Pupils do not take the opportunity to use their developing independence skills to seek out further learning experiences.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- While the high presence of staff ensures that pupils are safe as they enter and leave the school, the current car park situation is not satisfactory.
- The management of challenging behaviour is calm and well ordered. However, on the Riverwalk Site, behaviour incidents with older students, including the use of physical intervention are not recorded well enough. Analysis to identify if behaviours are repeated or if there are particular triggers to behaviours is not sufficiently developed. The method the school uses to record incidents does not match the school's very clear policy and precise instructions to staff about what exactly should be recorded.
- Detailed risk assessments are in place for school trips and activities. Assessments are thorough and actions ensure pupils are safe when outside of school.
- Pupils are kept safe during activities. Staff think carefully about their needs and difficulties, managing a range of learning opportunities in the community well.
- In discussion pupils said they felt safe at school. They told the inspectors that bullying hardly happens and it is dealt with effectively if they tell an adult. They say that the school has taught them about staying safe

outside of school, for example, setting boundaries in personal relationships and when using computer games.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Teaching is not planned or adapted well enough during lessons to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged in their learning.
- In a few lessons, time is not used effectively. Inspectors observed lessons where pupils were late returning from break or where particular groups of pupils were left to wait while staff taught an activity to a group of differing ability.
- There is not yet a consistent approach for giving feedback to pupils or marking their work. Consequently, pupils do not always know if their work is right or wrong. Teachers do not plan sufficiently well to support pupils to move on in their learning.
- Positive relationships between teachers and students can be seen across the school. Teachers are skilled in using a wide range of communication strategies which enables pupils to access learning activities. They all plan their lessons, and have learning objectives for individuals. However, the quality of this planning is variable.
- The school is not doing enough to learn from the good practice which exists, in the Early Years Foundation Stage and for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, to raise teachers' expectations and improve pupils' progress.
- Teaching for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good. Staff show high expectations and this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress in all areas of their learning and development. This was seen to particularly good effect during a sensory session where a pupil was encouraged to take control of the music he was enjoying. The pupil was seen to gain independence in the task he was set.
- In the school there are pupils with challenging behaviour. The very positive relationships teachers have with pupils are helping reduce potential behavioural issues. The specialist assistants who support learning are used well by most teachers and provide good help and guidance to the pupils. This is seen very clearly in the work they do with pupils with the most complex needs. Their clear verbal language, use of sign language and other forms of communication, ensures that pupils access the activities at a level appropriate to their needs.

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not make as much progress as children in Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching is variable and this affects pupils' achievement.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not make as much progress as they could given their individual starting points. Their transition from Key Stage 1 at Sexton Manor is not planned for effectively enough. This is both in relation to the physical environment that would help settle children quickly and academically by ensuring teachers understand what children are capable of when they join Key Stage 2.
- In Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics pupils make good progress. They have the opportunity to take a range of appropriate courses, such as life skill courses and gain independence skills. However, the most able in Key Stage 4 do not always achieve as well as they could.
- School data show that pupils' progress in reading is good. This is because staff encourage pupils to enjoy and read books, regardless of ability. One pupil in particular was very keen to share a book with the inspector, gathering all of the items needed to retell the story in actions.

- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding and those who are looked after by the local authority make good progress. Their achievement is regularly and carefully monitored in line with their individual plan. This careful monitoring is not the case for all pupils.
- Where learning is at its best pupils make good and at times outstanding progress. This was clearly seen during a lesson in a Key Stage 1 class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils were learning about bonfire night with objects such as sticks and torches as the main stimulus. Excellent support and skilful observation by staff rapidly ensured that the responses pupils gave and progress made was used to plan their next steps. Excellent modelling of sign language and spoken language which reinforced learning also allowed pupils to make good progress in all aspects of their language and communication skills.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Leadership of the early years is good. The wide variety of well-planned teaching activities has a positive effect on learning in all areas, as well as improving children's independence. Children are active in choosing activities but also respond well to adult-led activities and one-to-one work.
- Early years' staff have excellent relationships with each child. Children respond positively to praise given and are highly engaged in well-pitched activities. Teachers' good assessment shows that children make significant gains in their personal, social and emotional development, physical development and in their communication skills.
- High quality teaching and support enable children to make good progress across the areas of learning. This prepares them well to start Year 1. However, the school recognises these skills are not always built upon effectively in Year 1.
- Children's communication develops well, whether speaking and listening or by using signs and symbols, and underpins their increasing engagement in the world around them. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties are given a good variety of sensory experiences, which improves their engagement, feelings, awareness and their range of responses.
- The very challenging behaviour of some children is managed thoughtfully and consistently by all adults. Overall behaviour is good.

### **The sixth form provision** requires improvement

- The leadership of the sixth form requires improvement because it has not ensured that the quality of teaching results in good progress. This is due to insufficient monitoring in the sixth form. Leaders do not recognise where weaknesses in achievement are and as a result have not taken action to address them.
- Teaching in the sixth form is not consistently good. Work is not always well matched to students' individual needs. Students sometimes have to wait while the teacher works with other students who need more support. Consequently, learning time is wasted and students do not make as much progress as they could.
- In the sixth form, the curriculum is appropriately accredited and enables all students to achieve qualifications that are supportive to the next steps in their learning. The curriculum provides students with some good opportunities to improve their basic skills and to take part in work-related activities. The school is effective in helping students to develop the necessary personal skills such as looking after themselves and skills for independent living. This prepares them well for the next stage in their life, whether it be college or work placements. Good plans for transition ensure that future learning programmes are matched to the needs of individual students. The school is very successful in enabling students to gain college placements when they leave.
- Specialist support assistants know the students well and are able to provide tailored support. They often make a significant contribution to students' progress encouraging their independence. Students are rightly

proud of their own achievements and that of their peers. They work well together and behaviour in lessons is generally good.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124902
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	447969

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	123
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Nick Davis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Hatchell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 October 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01284 764280
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