

Riverside School

Main Road, St Paul's Cray, Orpington, BR5 3HS

Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils from Riverside St Paul's Cray and Riverside Beckenham do well in this happy and caring community.
- Leaders and managers, including the governors, are ambitious for pupils. They have improved many aspects of the school's performance since the previous inspection.
- Almost all groups of pupils make good progress from their very low starting points. Many make outstanding progress in their communication skills.
- In the early years, children settle in quickly. They enjoy school and make good progress.
- Teaching is typically good. Leaders support new staff well and teaching improves as a result.
- Teaching assistants support individual pupils well. They work closely with teachers to help pupils make fast progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are friendly, show respect to others and try hard in lessons. They have a positive attitude to learning and know that they are safe in school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form provision requires improvement. Students have not made good progress over time in English and mathematics.
- Almost all students move on to one of two colleges when they leave school. There are not strong enough links with these to ensure that students can build on the progress they have made.
- Teachers do not consistently give work that is at a high enough level for some most able pupils.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers do not consistently give feedback to pupils about how they can improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons, visiting both the St Paul's Cray and Beckenham school sites. Many of these were seen jointly with senior leaders. They observed pupils at the start of day and during breaks and lunchtimes, including in clubs.
- In addition, they had discussions with senior leaders, key stage leaders, governors, pupils, students and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documentation including about attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, leaders' self-evaluation and school data.
- The team took account of 29 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's most recent parental survey and other comments received from parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Helen Howard , Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jackie Blount	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Riverside is a special school for pupils aged four to 19, who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, or autistic spectrum disorders.
- In recent years, the school has accepted pupils with increasingly complex needs. The proportions of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties have considerably increased. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, grouped according to their stage of learning. Some, whose primary need is autistic spectrum disorders, are taught in one of six classes on the Riverside Beckenham site. All other pupils are taught on the Riverside St Paul's Cray site.
- Reception children are taught full time in mixed-age classes.
- There are more boys than girls. An above average proportion of pupils are of minority ethnic heritages. The largest group is of any other mixed background.
- More than one third of pupils are supported by pupil premium funding. This is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. The proportion is above that found nationally.
- Twenty Five students aged 16 to 19 are in the sixth form. A few are taught in mixed-age classes, separately from the sixth form, depending on their needs.
- The school has partnerships with a number of other schools and organisations, including Sidcup Arts and Adult Education College (Kent), Bromley and Nash Colleges (Kent), Wood Lodge and Ravensbourne School (Bromley).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding by consistently:
 - ensuring most able pupils are given work that is challenging and is not too easy
 - giving feedback to pupils in their books about how to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form provision by:
 - checking that the recently-introduced subjects result in students making at least good progress from their starting points, especially in English and mathematics
 - making stronger links with colleges to ensure that the progress made in the sixth form can be built on at college

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The aspirational headteacher, leaders, managers and governors have high expectations of staff and pupils. Their unshakable belief that all pupils should make as much progress as possible is shared by other leaders.
- Leaders, including those at the Beckenham site, have made improvements to many aspects of the school's work including use of data, achievement and pupils' behaviour. As a result, they have created a community where pupils achieve, behave well, are happy and try their best.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed effective systems for tracking how well pupils are doing. They use this information well to evaluate pupils' progress over time and to plan actions to help pupils catch up if necessary. They make sure that pupils who attend colleges or schools for some of their time behave well and continue to make good progress.
- Some pupils are working at National Curriculum levels. The school is currently developing its approach for tracking their progress as these levels are removed.
- Leaders and managers carefully monitor the work of the school and use this to evaluate the impact of actions that they take to improve aspects further. Their regular observations of teaching across the school provide the information they need to organise training for staff. The 'Learning Lounge', an informal weekly session to share best practice, is an effective way to improve teaching.
- The subjects that are taught in the school are based on general themes and provide pupils with a breadth of experiences. There are many opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through trips and visits, in assemblies and through performing arts such as dance and music.
- The school council, known as 'pupil voice', takes its responsibilities seriously and helps to make decisions about the school. This, together with a strong culture of respect and tolerance for others, means that pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The progress that pupils make means that the majority are well prepared for their next stage. However, in the sixth form there are not strong enough links with colleges to ensure that students can build on the progress they make. Children in Reception have a good start that helps them to be ready for Key Stage 1. Sixth form students are encouraged to consider their futures up to the age of 25 years. Those who are able attend work placements to help them make future choices where appropriate.
- Many subject and phase leaders have been appointed in the last two years. They make an effective contribution to the continuing improvements in the school.
- The school uses additional pupil premium funding well. They are used on a range of activities and resources, such as equipment to support communication, a sensory garden and reading resources. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as others in the school.
- The primary sport funding is being used effectively to increase the range of sports that pupils experience, including cricket and swimming. The funding is also increasing pupils' opportunities to take part in local competitions. The school now has a team in the special football league. The appointment of a specialist sports coach means that school staff are improving their own skills in teaching physical education.
- Leaders and managers promote equal opportunities well and carefully check that all groups of pupils, however small, make similar progress to others. All groups of pupils make good progress, including boys, girls and those who are of ethnic minority backgrounds. Pupils say that there is no discrimination in school.
- Pupils are grouped according to types of need and this is effective in ensuring that pupils' needs are met, including their personal development needs.
- The local authority has confidence in the school and consequently offers light touch support only. It monitors the work of the school through annual audits.
- Pupils in Years 9 to 14 and their parents are supported to make choices about the next stage of their education or placements beyond school.
- Almost all parents who responded to the school's own survey were positive about all aspects of the school. There were 29 parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and most were positive.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school and builds on the very good care and support that pupils receive. All aspects of safeguarding meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is strongly committed to the school and shares the ambitions of the headteacher and other leaders. Governors know how well pupils are doing, including disadvantaged pupils. They

know the overall quality of teaching and that good teaching is rewarded. They check that the information they receive about the school is accurate by making visits and commissioning external support. They provide encouragement and challenge to leaders and make sure that teachers' performance management procedures are robust. They make sure that any underperformance is tackled decisively. Governors meet all statutory requirements and ensure that funding is spent effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their very positive attitudes in lessons, at both the Riverside Beckenham and Riverside St Paul's Cray site, have a big impact on how well they are doing. They arrive in the morning with smiles on their faces and ready to get on. They want to do well and try their best.
- The majority of parents agree that behaviour is good in school and that it is well managed. Pupils say that everyone behaves very well. Those who spoke to inspectors were very clear about what bullying was and the different types there could be. They were firm in their belief that that they have not experienced it at all, but that they would know what to do if it did happen.
- Some pupils have very challenging behaviour as a result of their special educational needs. They are supported very well over time through highly effective behaviour plans. As a result, they learn to manage their own behaviour in a more positive way. There is good evidence in school records and in parents' comments that pupils' behaviour improves considerably in time. The number of behaviour incidents has reduced in the last two years and the school has not excluded any pupils.
- Staff are very respectful and this is helping to create an environment where everyone gets on well with each other and accepts differences.
- Attendance is similar to other special schools nationally. A few pupils' attendance in school is affected by their medical conditions, which result in frequent absences.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school makes thorough checks on all staff and visitors and monitors them carefully. Detailed risk assessments are made when pupils go on trips or visits, and pupils are very well supervised at all times.
- In assemblies and lessons, where appropriate, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, some knew about internet safety. Pupils who were studying food technology learned about kitchen safety. In life skills activities, pupils are being encouraged to travel safely.

The quality of teaching

is good

- School data, records of observations of pupils in class, work done in files and books, and leaders' own records show that, over time, the quality of teaching is typically good and results in good progress overall.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, in a Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were learning about African animals. One pupil was enjoying watching feathers being dropped from a height. When the teacher observed him focusing on the feathers, she anticipated the next step and used a jar of feathers to encourage him to track the movement with his eyes, which he was able to do.
- Staff maintain a positive atmosphere at all times. They are extremely enthusiastic about their work. This enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils. There is lots of laughter and fun in lessons and around the school.
- Literacy, especially communication, and mathematics are planned well to ensure that all pupils make small steps of progress and have lots of opportunities to practise skills.
- Teachers use interesting ways to develop mathematical skills. For example, in a Key Stage 3 lesson, the current African theme was used to explore patterns in African fabrics, so that pupils could identify mathematical shapes. By the end of the lesson, all pupils were able to match or name basic two-dimensional shapes and some could identify three-dimensional shapes.
- Pupils are taught pre-reading skills and go on to learn the sounds that letters and combinations of letters make (phonics). This means that those pupils who are able acquire the skills over time that they need to learn to read and write. Some pupils read more complex texts with fluency and understanding by the time they reach Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Almost all pupils enjoy reading or listening to stories.
- Staff know the pupils very well and are skilled in meeting their communication and medical needs. They work very effectively as a team in lessons to provide constant care and support. Pupils' personal care

needs are met sensitively.

- Adults make very detailed assessments of what pupils can do, including evidence from photographs and videos. Teachers use these to plan short term targets. The activities they plan are matched to the level that pupils are working at. If necessary, teachers plan additional support for pupils who have not made sufficient progress so that they can catch up quickly.
- Some pupils in Years 9 to 14 attend activities or work experience in local schools or colleges. They are escorted by school staff, who make sure that pupils are taught well.
- Teachers use a range of activities to make learning fun, for example using dance and music, and pupils love to join in. Teachers sing memorable songs, for example when pupils arrive. This encourages pupils to sign or say hello.
- Teachers work very well with external agencies, including therapists, to support programmes in school. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, adults built on pupils' physiotherapy programmes by encouraging movements set to music. This effectively improves pupils' physical development.
- Some of the most able pupils are working at National Curriculum levels. Many teachers plan activities that help these pupils to make outstanding progress, but this is not consistent across the school.
- When pupils complete work in books or files, teachers do not always make comments in their marking to let pupils know how they can improve their work.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most pupils make good progress in their time at school and some make outstanding progress. Learning is planned well and based on detailed knowledge about the pupils. Pupils enjoy achieving and want to do well.
- When they start school, pupils' skills and abilities are well below those that are typical for their age in all areas of learning because of their special educational needs. School data and records of pupils' work show that the majority of pupils make good progress over time in English and mathematics when compared nationally to pupils with similar starting points.
- The progress pupils make in communication skills is outstanding. From an early age, pupils learn to sign and adults take every opportunity to encourage pupils to use signs, symbols or their voice to join in.
- As a result of effective support, all groups of pupils including pupils who were eligible for catch-up funding, disadvantaged pupils and those with ethnic minority heritages, make the same good progress as others. Boys do as well as girls.
- Most able pupils make typically good progress because they have developed their communication and social skills in order to understand the world. They use these skills in a range of other subjects. However, teachers do not consistently give them enough challenge to help them make outstanding progress.
- Pupils with severe learning difficulties make good progress because teachers plan small steps and make good use of resources to reinforce learning. They plan effective questions to make sure that pupils understand before they move on.
- Pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders are engaged and focused because they have clear routines and because they understand the precise language used. They receive clear instructions and use visual timetables and resources to help them feel secure and safe. As a result of these established practices, pupils make good progress over time, both academically and socially.
- Pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress from their starting points. This is because teachers use specialist equipment and sensory resources to encourage pupils' responses. They enable pupils to communicate in different ways, including through the use of information and communication technology.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in performing arts and are benefiting from a new performing arts hall. They enjoy watching and performing drama and recently participated in the Shakespeare for Schools project. Some most able pupils enjoy being part of a steel band. Examples of wonderful art work are on display around the school.
- Although the majority of students in the sixth form make good progress in other areas, they do not all make good progress in English and mathematics from their starting points.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding which are significantly below those which are typical for their age. This is due to their communication and language, social and physical difficulties related to their special educational needs. Each child has a highly individual programme that is based on

accurate assessments. Teachers plan activities to develop physical and thinking skills, and this means that children are well prepared for their next stage.

- Teaching is typically good. School information and learning journals show that, over time, children make consistently good progress because they are taught well and join in a wide range of activities.
- Adults use a range of strategies to record pupils' achievements and these are used by teachers to plan small next steps. In this way, teachers carefully plan for pupils to make good progress over time.
- Indoor and outdoor areas provide children with lots of exciting opportunities to play and learn. Support assistants take every chance to develop communication skills and model expectations at all times. They work very effectively with teachers to make learning fun and engaging.
- There are good opportunities to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. At snack time, for example, children are encouraged to take turns, sit together and learn the skills to eat independently where possible. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The leader has supported teachers and adults well. There are accurate systems for assessing progress. Children behave well and are safe, happy and curious.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Over time school data show that the provision made has not supported all students to make good progress in English and mathematics from their starting points.
- Not all activities are planned precisely enough for most able students and this sometimes slows the progress they could make.
- The school has not made strong enough links with local colleges to ensure that the provision made enables students to make fast progress when they join college.
- New accredited subjects were introduced in September and early signs in students' work suggest that they are making a difference. Students now take Entry level qualifications in a range of options, including food technology, horticulture, animal care, physical education and art and design. Some students also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Teaching assistants help all students to develop independence skills through individual programmes.
- Students behave well, have very good relationships with teachers and other adults, and feel well supported and safe. They have good opportunities to learn outside the classroom, including in work experience placements and learning some subjects in local colleges and schools.
- Most able students are encouraged to develop independence skills, such as prefect roles at lunchtime, attendance on the school council and participation in a recycling project.
- The new leader of the sixth form has established regular checks to make sure that students do well. She quickly identifies any students who may be falling behind so they can be supported to catch up quickly. Teaching is monitored regularly by senior leaders. School records show that teaching in the sixth form is rapidly improving as a result of good support.

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	135232
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	448040
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katrina O’Leary
Headteacher	Steve Solomons
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 November 2011
Telephone number	01689 870519
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