

Riverside Primary School

Brighton Street, Wallasey, Merseyside CH44 6QW

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils love Riverside. They enter school happily and their enthusiasm for learning does not falter throughout the school day.
- Pupils feel safe. Staff are highly skilled in creating warm and nurturing relationships which help all to thrive.
- Respect and tolerance are at the core of this welcoming school. It shows in pupils' good behaviour and in their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in writing and mathematics. They are higher in reading. All groups of pupils do well in this subject.
- Pupils achieve well across the school. Different groups, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, make the same progress as others nationally.
- The specialist provision is calm, inviting and meets pupils' needs very well. Consequently, these pupils are settled and enjoying success.
- The support for vulnerable pupils and those who need extra help to catch up is strong.
- The passionate and committed headteacher has excellence in her sights. Dedicated staff share her ambition for the future.
- Weaknesses from the previous inspection have been tackled with rigour and success.
- Pupils, and their families, are at the heart of the school's work. A culture of vigilance means everyone plays their part in safeguarding pupils.
- The early years no longer lags behind the rest of the school. Children make good progress and gain a firm foundation for future learning.
- Not all leaders have the skills or expertise to drive improvements to teaching across different subjects.
- Some governors are not well equipped to ask challenging questions about pupils' achievement and the difference additional funding is making to disadvantaged pupils, especially those who are most-able.
- Information from assessment systems is not used well enough by leaders to identify weaknesses in pupils' achievement.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils do not make swift gains in writing and mathematics. Leaders do not keep a close enough eye on this group to make sure they can soar.
- Progress in mathematics slows because pupils are not able to use their good basic skills to solve problems.
- Some pupils have weak communication skills. This gets in the way of their progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement further, by:
 - ensuring the teaching of mathematics provides greater opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning by solving problems
 - placing a greater focus on the most able disadvantaged pupils so they achieve as well as other most able pupils in writing and mathematics
 - making sure that teachers give pupils with weaker communication skills more opportunities to practise speaking and listening.
- Develop leadership and management of the school, by:
 - ensuring that all governors have the knowledge and skills to ask challenging questions about pupils' achievement, and especially the outcomes of the most able disadvantaged pupils
 - supporting new leaders so that they are making a greater contribution to lifting the quality of teaching across different subjects
 - tightening up the assessment systems so information is used more effectively to identify weaknesses in the achievement of different groups, especially the most able disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Riverside sits within the heart of the community. Pupils and their families are the driving force behind everything that happens at this successful school. The willingness of dedicated leaders and staff to do all they can for pupils underpins the tight-knit family atmosphere. Pupils' love of school shines out of their beaming smiles and parents are unstinting in their praise. One comment captures the views of parents perfectly: 'We love our school. It is an amazing place for our children to grow and learn.'
- The headteacher has won the trust and confidence of staff, parents and pupils quickly since her fairly recent appointment. She is determined to remove barriers to learning and lift aspirations. Her desire for pupils to face the world armed with self-confidence, academic ability and a wealth of magical memories influences all that happens in school.
- The headteacher is not alone in her ambition for the future. She has the backing of staff who share her appetite for excellence. The capacity to improve the school further is strong. This is shown by the marked improvements in pupils' achievement, attendance and in the early years provision since the previous inspection.
- Changes in leadership during the past year have had a knock-on effect on roles across the school. This has led to the headteacher carrying a heavy load. Action is already underway to develop other leaders. Nonetheless, not all leaders are currently having enough influence in lifting the quality of teaching in different subjects.
- Teachers are supported to be the best through frequent checks on teaching and relevant training opportunities. Links with other schools are used well so teachers can learn from each other. This has led to an improving picture. The unevenness in teaching cited at the previous inspection is diminishing rapidly.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively for most of the disadvantaged cohort. A whole host of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils' academic, emotional and social needs are in place. This is making a real difference to lower- and middle-ability disadvantaged pupils. Their achievement stands strong when compared to others nationally. However, there is not enough focus on the most able disadvantaged pupils to make sure their strong gains in reading are matched in other subjects.
- Sports premium funding is making a positive difference to pupils' participation in, and enjoyment of, physical activity. Expert coaching is helping to lift teachers' skills in teaching physical education. Pupils are also gaining a broad experience of different types of sport. For example, they can sample tennis, rugby and judo. The youngest children are also involved with ballet lessons, helping to develop their physical skills. Pupils and staff are extremely proud of the school's recent success in local football and volleyball competitions.
- Leaders and staff know the pupils at Riverside exceptionally well. They are quick to spot any factor that could interfere with pupils' emotional stability or their ability to learn. A whole range of successful strategies comes into play to support pupils, and often their families, during challenging times.

- There is much to celebrate about the school's curriculum. It is innovative, exciting and designed well to help pupils achieve across all subjects. Corridors, and the school's website, are jam-packed with photographs, films and quality writing. These show the breathtaking range of opportunities available to pupils. Topics are brought to life through meaningful and creative themed days. Local resources are squeezed dry for all they can offer to enrich pupils' learning.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' self-confidence and enhances their strong spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. A focus on British values runs throughout different topics. As a result, pupils learn to appreciate differences between people who make up modern society. In adopting their own British hero, each class learns first-hand how to live and breathe respect, tolerance and democracy.
- The assessment systems link well to the new curriculum approach. However, the information leaders glean about pupils' progress is not used well enough to identify weaknesses in achievement for different groups. This is especially true for the most able disadvantaged pupils.

Governance of the school

- Governors share leaders' passion for the school. They give their time generously and have a good understanding of the positive difference staff make to pupils' personal development. Some governors have the skills and experience to ask challenging questions about teaching and pupils' achievement. Newer governors are not at the same stage. This means their understanding about academic success is underdeveloped.
- Governors spend time reviewing their skills. They are beginning to seek training to make up for shortfalls in their collective expertise. Governors know how additional funding is being spent and the difference this is making. Their understanding of sports funding is stronger than their grasp of pupil premium expenditure. They are not checking how well the most able disadvantaged pupils are faring.
- Safeguarding is given due weight. Governors have a strong understanding of their responsibilities. They ensure that appropriate filters are in place to keep pupils safe while using the internet.
- Performance management systems enable governors to keep a check on leadership and reward strong teaching practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- 'It could happen here' is the sentiment staff and governors keep at heart when thinking about pupils' safety. A culture of vigilance, underpinned by up-to-date knowledge, means all adults in the school know the signs that may indicate pupils are suffering from harm.
- Effective systems are in place for reporting any concerns. School records show staff are willing and confident to raise issues and that these are followed through to resolution. Good partnerships with external agencies ensure that pupils and their families gain the support they need to get through difficult times.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Care, nurture and respect underpin the work of teachers and teaching assistants at Riverside. Warm relationships underpin safe, welcoming and harmonious classrooms in which pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, effective use of resources and imaginative activities capture pupils' interest and give their learning purpose. Teachers' high expectations mean that pupils work hard and behave well. All teachers follow agreed policies closely, including those for homework and marking, to ensure pupils throughout the school get an equal deal.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for imparting knowledge sometimes overshadows meaningful opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking skills. This stops some pupils, especially those with weaker communication skills, from surging ahead.
- Teaching is organised well to ensure that pupils who need to catch up are given the time and extra help to gain the skills and ideas that have evaded them in the past. This is also true for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Well-trained teaching assistants work alongside teachers seamlessly to help these pupils make strong progress.
- Teaching in the specialist provision base is well matched to pupils' needs. Staff have an excellent knowledge of each individual. Adults are highly skilled in adapting their teaching plans as the lesson progresses to maintain pupils' interest and the pace of progress.
- The most able pupils, particularly those in the older year groups, are benefiting from small-group work which moves them on at a pace. In these groups, teachers do not hold back on their challenge. In a mathematics session, the most able pupils grappled with a demanding task that made them think hard about number values. Excellent levels of concentration and resilience meant they enjoyed great success.
- The teaching of reading and writing is strong across the school. Phonics teaching is well organised to meet the needs of different ability groups. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are catered for well. Irrespective of their age, pupils who have a good knowledge of sounds and letters are moved forward quickly in their learning.
- Teachers are equally skilled in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding in other subjects. Lively displays around the school and the work in pupils' books are testament to the broad range of learning opportunities pupils face each day. Teachers help pupils to put their reading, writing and mathematical skills to good use across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils live up to the school motto 'Da Totem Habes – Give it all you have got!' They are fiercely proud of Riverside and keen to make a contribution to its success. For example, they take their roles as play leaders, anti-bullying ambassadors and school councillors extremely seriously.

- Pupils understand fairness and they accept, and abide by, the school rules. Pupils understand the differences between people from other faiths, cultures and sexual orientation. They do not use these differences to single out individuals or unleash harmful name-calling because they have respect and tolerance for others.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using technology. Pupils feel safe and are safe. They have few worries about bullying because it happens so rarely. They also know adults listen to their concerns and sort out any problems.
- Time and time again, pupils refer to Riverside as 'one large family'. This underpins their sense of security, their love of school and their friendly manner. Everyone is at liberty to excel, knowing their efforts will be applauded and not used as a reason for being teased.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' warm handshakes and open smiles welcome visitors to Riverside. This sets the scene perfectly for the respect and care that pupils show to each other and to adults. Their thoughtful behaviour in all classes, including the specialist provision, ensures learning is rarely disrupted and no-one feels ill at ease.
- Pupils listen attentively, tackle activities with enthusiasm and are willing to work with others. Their beautifully presented books, a common feature in all classes, points to the efforts they make to do their best. The most able pupils do not shy away from the extra challenges they receive. They apply themselves with gusto and do not give up even when the going gets tough.
- Pupils say behaviour is typically good. Parents and staff agree. School records confirm that there are few instances of poor behaviour. The number of pupils who find managing their behaviour more difficult is reducing over time. When incidents do occur they are managed sensitively, so everyone's learning continues without interruption.
- Pupils' attendance, a weakness at the previous inspection, is improving each year. It is above average. All groups of pupils attend school regularly and on time. Very few have long periods of absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement, by the end of Year 6, has risen steadily since the last inspection. In 2015, pupils made strong progress. Their standards in reading, writing and mathematics matched or exceeded the national average.
- This positive picture is reflected at the end of key stage 1. Despite their good progress in the early years, over one third of pupils enter Year 1 with lower than average skills and knowledge. They make up ground quickly and reach the standards they should by the time they are ready to move into Year 3.
- Pupils' books show that progress across different classes and subjects is good for most groups. The extra help many receive makes a difference to their academic achievement. For example, a small-group session for Year 1 pupils helps them to pick up key mathematical skills quickly so they do not fall behind.

- Pupils read with enthusiasm, fluency and understanding because reading is promoted well across the school. Some younger pupils take longer to grasp the sounds that letters make. Consequently, the Year 1 phonics check is slightly below average. However, these pupils catch up. They can read and write unfamiliar words with confidence by the time they reach Year 3.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are accomplished readers. They glean much enjoyment and knowledge from their reading. This accounts for their above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' writing skills are matched by their enthusiasm to put pen to paper and produce high-quality work that appeals to a reader. The writing books they take with them as they move classes tell a good story of their strong progress.
- Although few disadvantaged pupils gain a good level of development by the end of the early years, they do not flounder as they move throughout school. Effective additional support, either in the classroom or through small-group work, means they gain ground quickly. These pupils make the same progress as other pupils nationally and the same number reach the expected standard for their age.
- The most able pupils are surging ahead. They are relishing the extra challenges they face in classes and appreciate the opportunities to attend additional events at other schools to nurture their talents.
- However, not all of the most able disadvantaged pupils are enjoying the same success in writing and mathematics. Although they make the same progress as others, this is not enough to help them exceed the expectations for their age.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets. This pattern is reflected in the specialist provision. These pupils work hard and enjoy success due to careful teaching and the nurture they receive.
- Pupils make similar gains in their learning across the curriculum. They enjoy learning Spanish and their books show that they can work scientifically and understand geographical features within their local area.
- The work that pupils produce in history is especially noteworthy. They gain a strong understanding of the past because they have the chance to live and breathe key historical events through visits and imaginative themed days. The 'Titanic' topic is brought alive when pupils visit a museum, then take tea, in full period costume, in an historic hotel.
- These life-enhancing activities, too many to list, are a key reason why pupils leave Riverside as mature, empathetic and tolerant youngsters who have a love of learning. Consequently, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The results from the 2016 tests, based on the new national curriculum, were below average for all subjects. Pupils moving in and out of the school at different times had a bearing on these outcomes. Pupils' books, across different classes and subjects, indicate that the 2016 results are not typical. Nonetheless, the slower progress that pupils made in mathematics does have some grounding in how the subject is taught. Pupils gain a good grasp of key mathematical skills but too few are challenged to put their mathematical knowledge to the test by tackling problems that deepen their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years was one of the few weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. This is no longer the case. Leaders, with effective support from the local authority, have successfully brought about a positive transformation to this part of the school.
- When children enter the Nursery, very few have the skills and knowledge to make a flying start. Speech and language difficulties, alongside weaknesses in personal development, get in the way of children accessing the activities they should for their age. Quality teaching in Nursery sets children up well for their move into the Reception class.
- Children, including the third who did not attend the Nursery class, continue to make rapid gains in Reception. Over three quarters catch up very quickly. There is no difference in the progress made by boys, girls or children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional funding is used well so disadvantaged children make the same quick gains in their learning. The small group who are ready for school make the progress they should and most exceed the early learning goals.
- Children come a long way in their learning from their starting points. Even so, the numbers gaining a good level of development by the end of Reception remains below the national average. This means that around four in ten children are not quite ready for Year 1. The biggest gaps they have are in reading, writing and number.
- Children settle quickly because of smooth routines and the warm, nurturing environment. They know adults care about them. In turn, they follow adults' good modelling and learn to care about each other. Children are safe and all welfare requirements are met in full.
- Children thoroughly enjoy their time in early years. They behave well, take turns, share resources and listen attentively. The building blocks to become successful learners are firmly in place by the time they leave Reception.
- Adults' careful planning and their organisation of interesting activities encourage children to be curious, to explore and to experiment. Children were completely engrossed in making 'food' for their dinosaurs, mixing different materials and describing the taste. They finished the task flushed with success and sporting a fair amount of glitter!
- Teachers and teaching assistants promote learning well, following children's interests and supporting their play.
- Good links with parents are fostered through many opportunities for parents to see their children at play and to view their work. Transition for those children who did not attend the Nursery class at Riverside is effective. It helps children to settle quickly. The transition into Year 1, especially for those lower-achieving children, is not as strong.

School details

Unique reference number	104996
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10001449

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Jones
Headteacher	Mrs C Lahive
Telephone number	0151 6399787
Website	www.riverside.eschools.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@riverside.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school provides short-term specialist provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It can support up to eight primary-aged pupils.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all of the pupils who attend this school are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The number pupils who receive support through the pupil premium funding is more than double the national average.

- The school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in key stage 2.
- There have been a number of changes to leadership roles. The headteacher took up post in November 2015. The deputy headteacher was appointed in May 2016.
- The school has a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited each classroom, including the specialist provision, to observe teaching and pupils' learning.
- They observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, middle leaders, members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority and an external school improvement company.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of each school day. They also considered the 13 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire), including nine free text comments. The inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Doris Bell	Ofsted Inspector

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