

Riverwalk School

South Close, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 3JZ

Inspection dates

12–13 October 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and leadership team provide good leadership and benefit from effective support from the governing body. As a result, the school continues to improve.
- Staff have a good understanding of how to support the special educational needs and/or disabilities of the pupils they provide for.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their physical well-being effectively.
- Staff have good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well.
- Pupils are well behaved throughout the school. They have good attitudes to learning and have positive relationships with others.
- The school promotes pupils' well-being and safety effectively through its good welfare provision. Consequently, pupils feel safe.
- Teachers make good use of resources in planning interesting activities to motivate pupils to learn.
- The teaching of reading at key stages 1 and 2 is of inconsistent quality. Occasionally, adults fail to check how well pupils use phonics in reading and writing, which limits the progress of a small proportion of pupils.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils' learning.
- A few teachers do not track pupils' progress across all subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Older pupils at key stage 4 make good progress in their examination courses.
- Groups of pupils, including the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, make equally good progress as others with the same starting points.
- As a result of good leadership in the early years, the quality of teaching is good and the links with parents and local schools are strong. Consequently, children make consistently good, and occasionally outstanding, progress in all areas of learning.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress in examination courses as a result of good teaching and good leadership. Students are prepared well for living in the community and all move on to appropriate courses in further education or training.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching is as good in the primary department as it is in the early years, the secondary department and in the sixth form
 - teachers check carefully how well all pupils use phonics in reading and writing at key stages 1 and 2
 - teachers track pupils' progress consistently across all subjects and use the information to plan activities that build on previous learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders are ambitious for pupils and communicate this effectively to staff, pupils and parents alike. They have successfully moved the school forward and show a determination to improve the school still further, especially at key stages 1 and 2.
- School leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school based on close monitoring of all aspects of its work. This monitoring information is used effectively to set clear and well-founded priorities for improving the provision, pupils' learning and their well-being. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved significantly.
- The leadership of teaching is good and includes effective procedures for managing the performance of staff, based on raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching. Senior leaders successfully support the few areas where weak teaching remains.
- Leaders rightly recognise that there is still work to do in securing consistently good teaching, especially in the teaching of reading and phonics at key stages 1 and 2 and in the consistency of teachers' tracking of pupils' progress across all subjects.
- Leaders have developed new systems to assess and track the progress of each pupil across a range of subjects. However, these are not being used consistently enough to ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding based on their prior learning throughout their time at the school.
- Senior leaders hold a meeting every half term to review the progress of each pupil in some subjects. They look at the work in pupils' books and regularly visit lessons to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on the learning and progress of all pupils to determine the progress each pupil is making and to identify any strengths. They then set challenging targets to improve the learning of those pupils who are underachieving or falling behind.
- The curriculum is relevant and personalised to each pupil's special educational needs at each stage of their learning.
- The curriculum includes a range of opportunities to enrich learning, such as outdoor trips, visits to local places of interest and lunchtime play activities.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of subjects with a strong emphasis on developing communication, literacy and numeracy skills, especially in the lower school.
- In the early years, there is a sharp focus on developing children's communication, language and literacy, and their physical, personal, social and emotional development.
- At key stages 1 and 2, the basic skills of writing and mathematics are taught effectively and further developed through a range of topics.
- At key stages 3 and 4, pupils continue to build on their learning of the basic skills and are well prepared for the world of work and a range of examination courses.
- In the sixth form, there are good opportunities to prepare students for life in the community and to provide them with a range of relevant courses to enable them to

transfer successfully to further education.

- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Well-chosen topics in the programme of personal, social, health and economic education promote the awareness of fundamental British values and people from different cultures and religions.
- School leaders promote equality of opportunity well, ensuring that all pupils have the same opportunities to learn and make progress. They promote good relationships towards others from different backgrounds and deal effectively with any form of bullying or harassment. Leaders have clear procedures in place to deal with any form of extremism or radicalisation should it occur.
- School leaders across all three sites and governors engage well with parents and carers, outside professionals and local schools to promote pupils' well-being and learning.
- Partnerships with outside agencies and local schools are strong. Leaders work closely with social services and health professionals to provide good support for families of pupils with complex needs. The excellent links between the school and Sextons Manor Primary School ensure that pupils from both schools greatly benefit from integrated activities, for example in assemblies, in joint outdoor learning activities and during playtime.
- The local authority provides good support in reviewing and challenging the work of the school.
- The school uses its additional pupil premium funding well to provide additional support to ensure that each pupil makes similar progress to other pupils with the same starting points.
- Leaders use primary physical education (PE) and sports funding effectively to provide additional sporting activities, such as pentathlon and swimming. There is a significant increase in the proportion of pupils participating in sports, and a positive effect on their well-being as they stay fit and healthy.
- The school makes good use of Year 7 catch-up funding to provide more resources to enable pupils in Year 7 to make fast progress in literacy and numeracy. As a result, pupils are more focused and motivated to learn and this increases their rate of progress.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is using the outcomes of the external review, which took place after the previous inspection, to strengthen procedures for holding the school to account for its work.
- Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning through regular visits to the school, analysing reports provided by the headteacher and through scrutiny of the school's assessment information.
- Governors oversee effective arrangements for managing the performance of the headteacher and staff. They ensure that good teaching is rewarded and that underperformance is tackled effectively.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the additional spending on the pupil premium,

Year 7 catch-up and primary PE and sports funding.

- The governing body reviews policies regularly, particularly for safeguarding pupils, to make sure they are up to date and meet legal requirements.
- Governors check that pupils are protected from extremism by ensuring that the school promotes fundamental British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. The school has developed a culture of safeguarding, where all staff use their updated training in child protection effectively. Staff work closely with parents, carers and outside agencies to make sure pupils stay safe. Staff maintain high levels of supervision of pupils at all times. The school thoroughly checks the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly from requiring improvement at the previous inspection. Evidence from the school's monitoring of teaching over time, the work in pupils' books and the whole-school information about the progress pupils are making confirm that teaching is mostly good across the school. It is particularly strong in the early years and consistently good in the upper school.
- Teachers' good use of resources to captivate pupils' interest is evident in pupils' work and in visits to lessons over time and seen during this inspection. For example, in a key stage 1 mathematics lesson, pupils listened intently to number songs, using 10 green bottles to count backwards and counted the spots on butterfly wings accurately.
- The teaching of communication is good across the school. All staff make consistently good use of communication aids to ensure that pupils have full access to learning. Practical resources and symbols for communication are used effectively to ensure that pupils with a range of different needs are motivated to learn and make good progress.
- Teaching assistants usually provide good support for pupils' learning, especially with real-life objects, communication aids and signing. This ensures that the most vulnerable pupils, including the disadvantaged, looked after children, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, those with complex medical needs and pupils with multi-sensory needs, make the same good progress as one another.
- There is a caring and happy atmosphere in school that enables pupils to learn well. As a result, pupils listen, concentrate and try their best.
- The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics is generally good. It is strong in the early years and good in the upper school.
- The quality of teaching is variable at key stages 1 and 2 where some elements in the teaching of reading and phonics require improvement. Pupils learn phonics and adults listen to pupils read every day. However, adults are not systematically checking how well pupils use phonics to sound out unfamiliar words and to spell words correctly in their writing.

- Most teachers make good use of the school's new assessment systems to track the progress of individual pupils across a range of different subjects, although this is not consistent across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a range of good opportunities, such as engaging in practical, enjoyable activities, to increase their self-esteem. Good welfare support for each pupil ensures that they develop good attitudes to learning as they increase their awareness of how to be successful learners.
- Staff pay particular attention to the personal care and dignity of pupils with complex needs.
- Staff work closely with health professionals and therapists to develop exercise and feeding programmes to enable pupils with complex needs to stay healthy. They encourage all pupils to eat healthily and to exercise.
- Staff work very closely with parents and carers to ensure that pupils are safe, secure and happy in school. Pupils told the inspector that they could go to any member of staff if they felt unsafe. Adults engage closely in pupils' activities, maintaining high levels of supervision. Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe and pupils confirmed this in discussion. They said that bullying is rare and they are taught to stay safe. Pupils learn to cross the road, travel confidently and use computers safely.
- All potential risks to pupils' well-being and safety, in all activities, including educational trips, are carefully assessed to make sure that pupils are safe.
- Pupils are kind to one another and show tolerance and respect to others from different backgrounds. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they display an increasing awareness of British values as they move through the school.
- Older pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from high-quality careers advice. This enables them to move on successfully to the next stage of their lives or further education when they leave school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff, parents and pupils agree that behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils respond well to the school's code of discipline and the system of rewards and sanctions. Occasionally, pupils lose interest in learning and do not focus fully on their activities.
- Staff manage pupils' challenging behaviours effectively to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum. As a result, pupils with severe challenging behaviour learn self-control and make progress increasingly as they move through the school. Since the previous inspection, the instances of disruptive behaviour and the need for physical intervention to ensure pupils' safety have reduced.
- Staff promote good attendance and monitor absences effectively. As a result,

punctuality is good and there are very few unauthorised absences.

- Children in the early years settle into their routines quickly. Older pupils and students in the sixth form successfully develop their independence skills by the time they are ready to leave school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Staff ensure that pupils throughout the school make good progress from their individual starting points in a broad range of subjects, including communication, English and mathematics.
- Pupils make consistently good progress in communication, physical development and in their personal, social, health and economic education because staff work effectively with health professionals and therapists to promote these areas of learning well.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start and make consistently good and sometimes outstanding progress in all areas of learning.
- At key stages 1 and 2, the majority of pupils make good progress in learning. However, a small proportion are not making enough progress in reading and writing because they are not usually encouraged to use their phonics skills to support their reading and writing.
- At key stages 3 and 4, pupils make good progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Older pupils successfully take a range of appropriate examination courses. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- Students in the sixth form are prepared effectively for further education and life in the community when they leave school. As a result, all students transfer smoothly to further education or training when they leave.
- The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because staff provide effective individual support for their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those who are looked after and the small proportion of most able disadvantaged pupils make equally good progress as other pupils with similar starting points because the pupil premium is used well to support their individual learning needs.
- The few most able pupils make good progress and successfully integrate into their local mainstream schools.

Early years provision

Good

- Strong and effective leadership of the early years ensures that teaching is consistently good and children make at least good progress in all areas of learning. Excellent links with Sextons Manor Primary School and close liaison with parents and pre-school settings ensure that children rapidly develop their communication and social skills.
- All staff have excellent relationships with the children. Staff assure children's safety and well-being effectively through close engagement in well-pitched activities and high

levels of supervision at all times. Children's behaviour is good and they respond well to praise and encouragement.

- Teachers use a wide variety of well-planned activities and practical resources, indoors and outdoors, to stimulate children's curiosity and imaginations. As a result, they settle in quickly, respond well to their activities and enjoy their learning.
- Arrangements for assessing children's progress are good and involve parents and outside professionals. Staff use this information well to support each child's learning. Detailed teacher assessment records show that children make at least good progress in all areas of learning and the strongest progress is in physical development, communication and in developing their personal and social skills.
- Children make at least good progress in their communication skills, which enables them to engage in a wide range of learning experiences. Staff provide a range of sensory learning experiences for children with complex needs such as profound and multiple learning difficulties. This increases children's awareness and responses to the world around them.
- Staff manage challenging behaviour effectively to ensure that all children are safe and enjoy learning.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form has improved since the previous inspection, when it required improvement. Good leadership of the sixth form ensures that teaching and support for students' learning is good. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers make good use of students' prior learning to match work to their individual levels of ability. The work in students' books shows most take pride in their work and make good progress in a variety of subjects including writing and mathematics. Occasionally there are a few gaps in students' work, showing that their progress has slowed down.
- Leaders provide an appropriate range of well-chosen examination courses, such as unit awards and functional skills, based on good independent careers guidance, which are leading to students' chosen pathways when they leave the school.
- Students have good opportunities to develop work skills and self-help skills to promote independent living within the community because staff have developed a well-thought-out programme of community-based activities. These include travelling by public transport, ordering snacks in a local café, shopping in supermarkets within a budget and checking the amount of change received. All students transfer successfully to appropriately challenging courses at colleges of further education or training.
- Teaching assistants have a thorough knowledge of each student and use this well to support learning. They provide encouragement to develop students' independence and clarify any misunderstandings in learning.
- Students' behaviour is good; they have good attitudes to learning and say they feel safe.

School details

Unique reference number	124902
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10019613

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	13
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Nick Davis
Headteacher	Jan Hatchell
Telephone number	01284 764280
Website	www.riverwalk.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@riverwalk.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 November 2014

Information about this school

- Riverwalk provides for pupils who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties and those who have complex health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils come from across Suffolk and some attend local mainstream schools on a part-time basis.
- The school uses no alternative providers and there are no offsite units run by the school or in conjunction with other schools.

- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding is slightly higher than in most schools.
- A high proportion of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British and a small proportion speak English as an additional language.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has been reorganised into a lower school consisting of early years, key stages 1 and 2, an upper school consisting of key stages 3 and 4 pupils and the sixth form.
- The school now operates from three sites, which is an increase from the two sites at the previous inspection. Children in the early years are based at the mainstream Sexton Manor Primary School site. Pupils in key stages 1 to 4 are educated at the Riverwalk School site. Students in the sixth form are now educated in new purpose-built accommodation, Riverwalk College.
- Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been reorganised, with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, and there has been a significant turnover of staff.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, accompanied by a senior leader, visited a variety of lessons and activities on all three sites.
- The inspector sampled pupils' work from a range of subjects in different year groups and heard a few pupils read in key stages 1 and 2.
- The inspector held meetings with school leaders, seven members of the governing body, the headteacher of Sextons Manor Primary School, a deputy headteacher of a local primary school and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector examined the response of 18 parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and looked at the parental responses to the school's most recent survey of parents. The views of 44 staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were considered.
- The inspector looked at the school's website and a range of documentation including: safeguarding policies and procedures; provision for looked after children; attendance figures and the school's procedures for recording any children who might go missing from education; records of behaviour; the school improvement plan and self-evaluation documents; and records of visits by governors.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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