

Heronswood Primary School

Heronswood Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY10 4EX

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since opening as an academy in October 2014, Heronswood Primary School has been through a period of significant turmoil. That is now past. In the words of an astute parent, 'The school is now the best it has ever been.'
- Current senior leaders have energetically and systematically transformed the school's culture. Pupils and staff alike are proud to be associated with the school. It is a happy, interesting and worthwhile place to be.
- Considerable turbulence after October 2014 affected greatly the quality of teaching. Thus, academic standards dropped. Current leaders have eradicated the reasons for the decline and have overseen substantial improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Therefore, outcomes are recovering quickly. Pupils are, once again, making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that they are making up lost ground. Nevertheless, there is still more catching up to do. Pupils' attainment, while rising rapidly, is still not as high as it should be by the time they leave Year 6.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. From the first day they start at the school, they learn to display impressive levels of self-discipline.
- Leaders believe that pupils' welfare and well-being are the keys to the school's success. Staff work relentlessly to keep pupils safe and to promote their happiness. They do so extremely well.
- Teachers make lessons interesting, fun and challenging. Pupils throw themselves into learning with enthusiasm. Teachers pitch lessons well at the expected standards for pupils' ages. Some are less confident at taking pupils beyond this.
- The high quality of care in the early years provision helps children settle quickly into the routines and challenges of school life. Teaching is good. Therefore children make good progress in the pre-school and Reception Years.
- Trustees of the Rivers Academy Trust provide high levels of effective support, along with the necessary resources, to help the school deliver a good quality of education. The local governing body holds leaders closely to account for using those resources effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the proportions of pupils that reach and exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 continue to rise, so that they are at least in line with national averages by maintaining the effective rate of improvement in teachers' ability to plan lessons that move pupils quickly to a greater depth of understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders' enthusiasm and passion ripple through the culture of the school. Staff are proud to be part of it. The headteacher has ensured that the school's motto, 'Love, Learn, Live,' is embraced completely. As a result, staff do everything they can to enable pupils to excel. This is why current leaders have managed to overturn the decline in the quality of education that followed the turbulence in staffing and leadership that took place after the change to academy status.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work as a highly effective, tightly cohesive unit. This senior team models the high degree of professionalism and commitment it expects of all staff. Senior leaders have fostered an atmosphere of challenge, trust and respect among staff. Staff seek to learn from external expertise and from each other because they want to be the best they can for the benefit of pupils. This desire to learn is key to the substantial improvements seen in the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders know every single pupil very well. Consequently, they are aware of which pupils are achieving well and who needs to do better. Senior leaders hold teachers closely to account for rectifying this. They provide excellent training to improve teachers' skills where needed. Teachers must demonstrate that advice is being followed and that pupils' progress has improved accordingly. This cycle of accountability and professional development is an exceptionally effective vehicle for driving up standards. This is why outcomes have turned around and are improving so quickly.
- Middle leaders use information about pupils' performance in the subject or year groups for which they are responsible effectively. For example, outcomes in early years are good because the early years leader uses assessment information to plan carefully how to improve the provision. Similarly, the quality of mathematics teaching has improved. This is because the subject leader correctly identified that teachers lacked confidence in teaching the requirements of the new national curriculum. He put in place effective training, which has increased teachers' knowledge of the subject and boosted their skills to teach it.
- Staff value the training, support and accountability programme highly. They see it as an opportunity to keep improving their practice and to help them develop in their careers. Staff also appreciate leaders' efforts to keep workloads to a manageable level. This keeps staff motivated and encourages them to work hard.
- The curriculum is highly successful in achieving its aims. These include: inspiring a love of learning; giving pupils key skills for life; nurturing pupils' ability to reflect, and their resilience and perseverance; and embedding empathy, understanding and respect for others. Varied and interesting experiences are underpinned by a strong focus on developing pupils' basic skills and personal qualities. In-school lessons are well supplemented by worthwhile visits and out-of-school activities. As a result, pupils become confident learners who are well prepared for the opportunities and responsibilities they will face in the future.

- Leaders receive considerable additional funding from the government to support the achievement of particular groups of pupils. This money is used very well. The effective use of pupil premium funding has resulted in much better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress because the funding for their needs is used appropriately. Parents are particularly complimentary about the quality of provision for these pupils. The judicious use of the primary school physical education and sport premium has increased the quality, range and frequency of physical education and is encouraging pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- The Rivers Academy Trust provides strong vision and strategic direction for the school. Trustees also ensure that the school has the necessary resources to implement this vision. They have put in place highly skilled leaders who have, in a relatively short time, turned the vision into reality. These leaders demonstrate substantial capacity to improve the school further.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body holds school leaders closely to account for the quality of education. It ensures that resources, including additional funding from the government for specific purposes, are well spent.
- The local governing body is well informed about the strengths and relative weaknesses in pupils' outcomes and skilfully ensures that statutory responsibilities are met to a high standard.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' welfare is of uppermost importance to staff. As a result, the school actively promotes pupils' safety and takes swift action where risks to it are identified.
- Staff are well trained in how to spot signs that pupils could be at risk. They are vigilant in recording and acting upon concerns. Those staff who are designated leaders of safeguarding work effectively with relevant outside agencies to ensure that appropriate support is provided to families who need it.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is underpinned substantially by the strong relationships that exist between staff and pupils and those that exist between pupils. Pupils trust staff to care for them. Pupils support each other in lessons, offering praise and encouragement to their classmates. All of this leads to a climate where pupils push themselves to achieve well and feel able to take risks in their learning.
- Teachers have worked hard to improve their assessment skills. They now identify accurately what pupils can do. They use this information to plan lessons that build effectively on pupils' knowledge, understanding and abilities. Teachers are confident that they can plan lessons that will enable pupils to achieve appropriate, age-related

outcomes. However, some teachers are less confident that they know how to ensure that pupils reach a greater depth of knowledge and understanding. They are getting better at this. Nevertheless, this is why fewer pupils than nationally have reached the higher standards in recent national assessments for reading and mathematics.

- Lessons proceed swiftly because teachers explain clearly what pupils need to do. Pupils follow these instructions without hesitation and settle quickly to their work. As a result, no learning time is wasted.
- Teachers and teaching assistants keep a close eye on how well pupils are learning during lessons. They are quick to respond when a pupil needs extra help or when one needs more challenging work. This helps pupils acquire more understanding and speeds up their progress.
- Pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work because teachers make full use of the school's policy and guidance on feedback and marking. Teachers give helpful feedback in lessons and write useful comments to encourage and improve understanding. Pupils readily follow this advice. As a result, their work shows clear improvement and they make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to probe pupils' understanding and to challenge them to think more deeply. This helps pupils make sense of what they are learning.
- Teachers consistently expect pupils to use the correct language for the subject they are studying. During the inspection, many examples of this were observed. For example, Year 2 pupils were required to use the terms 'noun' and 'adjective' correctly. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 could readily identify time connectives and subordinating conjunctions. In science lessons, pupils were expected to use correct scientific names for parts of a plant. This emphasis on technical vocabulary deepens pupils' knowledge of the subjects they are learning.
- Teachers in early years and key stage 1 teach phonics very well. As a result, pupils quickly learn to recognise letters and know the sounds they represent. This helps them learn to read new words confidently, or to 'have a go' at spelling words for themselves.
- Teaching supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Teachers encourage pupils to be reflective about their learning. Lessons are often organised in ways that promote collaboration and cooperation between pupils. This, in turn, helps pupils develop empathy, understanding and respect for others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel safe at school because the school's culture puts their welfare uppermost. Staff actively teach pupils how to be safe in and out of school. For example, pupils know what to do when they hear the fire bell. They can explain how to keep themselves safe when walking to and from school. They can describe ways to protect themselves when using the internet.

- Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils told an inspector that bullying would not happen because it is not tolerated. One said that if bullying did happen, other pupils would tell the bully to, 'communicate more effectively,' with the victim. Pupils say that they know staff would take any bullying seriously and deal with it effectively.
- Parents are highly complimentary about the care given to their children. They say that staff go, 'above and beyond,' in the interests of their children's welfare. This statement is accurate.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct is impeccable. They are exceptionally well mannered, courteous and considerate towards one another and to adults. This leads to a calm, caring environment in which pupils thrive.
- Pupils like being at school. They are happy there. They enjoy each other's company and get on well in lessons and at playtimes.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their frequent attendance. Rates are above the national figure.
- Staff have invested a great deal of time and effort into building pupils' self-confidence, self-awareness and ability to learn from mistakes. As a result, pupils' attitudes to their learning are exceptional. They want to be the best they can, believe that they will succeed and work hard to do so. This is making a difference to their academic outcomes. Pupils' efforts contribute notably to the good progress they make.
- Pupils' behaviour enables them to work productively in pairs and groups. They listen to each other with interest and contribute their ideas confidently.
- On the rare occasions that a pupil misbehaves, staff use the behaviour management system, known as 'zone boards', very effectively. Pupils understand what the different zones mean and accept the consequences of bad behaviour. However, this sanction is rarely needed.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- At the start of their school career, many children's skills are considerably lower than those of typical three- or four-year-olds. Pupils who are currently in Year 6 are working in line with the expectations for their ages. This shows that they have caught up with pupils nationally and represents good progress over their time at the school.
- The downturn in the quality of teaching, caused by the many staff changes in 2014, led to lower-than-national standards in key stages 1 and 2 in recent years. However, pupils in all year groups now make good progress. As a result, attainment is rising quickly. Standards in all year groups are in line with those nationally and are improving.
- Since the school became an academy, a new national curriculum, together with new assessment criteria, have come into use. This means that the measures used to judge whether pupils are working at the right standards have changed. The new measures do not compare with the previous ones. Published national data about the school's

performance does not accurately represent the quality of education for current pupils in the school. The school is developing its assessment systems and its approach to measuring pupils' progress and attainment. Currently, work in pupils' books and in lessons shows that they are achieving at a higher standard than is shown by national assessment data.

- Pupils' books and their work in lessons show that they make good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. Across the school, most pupils are meeting or exceeding the appropriately challenging rates of progress that school leaders now expect. As a result, pupils are catching up from recent underperformance.
- Across the school, the proportions of pupils working at or above the expectations for their ages are increasing. Most pupils now attain broadly in line with these expectations. More are acquiring the greater depth of understanding appropriate to the most able pupils. However, this number should be greater, given some pupils' previous high attainment. Similarly, some pupils who could be working at age-appropriate standards currently are not. This picture is improving quickly, but there is more to be done before all pupils achieve as well as they could. This is why outcomes have been judged to be good, rather than outstanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils now make swifter progress, on the whole, than other pupils in the school. This is good because it means that disadvantaged pupils in the school are catching up with other pupils nationally. This improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils demonstrates that the pupil premium is being used effectively.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good, and sometimes impressive, progress. This is due to the skilfully targeted support they receive and means that many are reaching age-related standards in their work. Some have made substantial progress in reading and are now reading very well for pupils of their age.
- Parents have noted the improvements in their children's progress since the current leadership team took over. They say that their children are now learning well and are well prepared to move on to secondary school. The standard of pupils' work in the school confirms that this view is correct.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is well led. The leader has ensured that teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes now work closely together to share information about children's progress. This has made a difference to outcomes. Children are now much more ready to learn when they start the Reception Year of school.
- Teachers in early years use a wide range of evidence during children's first few weeks at school to establish what skills they have. This information shows that many enter the pre-school with weak skills for their ages. For example, many struggle to communicate, and so cannot express their needs and feelings well.
- Children settle very quickly into school life. They soon learn to follow the well-established routines and start to form secure relationships with trusted adults. Within a short time, children learn to listen to the teacher and to play sensibly together. Their behaviour is exceptionally good. For example, inspectors were very impressed to see

pre-school children walking sensibly across the school field on their way back from the 'forest school' area. They walked quietly, in single file, without fuss. These three-year-olds had been in school for under three weeks.

- Children enjoy the broad range of stimulating activities on offer. Teaching is good. Teachers use their ongoing assessment of children's growing skills to plan activities that capture children's imagination and allow them to explore and investigate.
- Teachers in the early years place great emphasis on giving children the knowledge and skills they will need to help them cope with the demands of the national curriculum when they start Year 1. This focus on building secure skills benefits the children greatly because it means that they are well placed to move on at the end of the Reception Year. However, it does lead to over-cautious recording of children's attainment in the national early years profile. This has a negative impact on published data about children's outcomes at the end of Reception Year. The fact is that children in the early years make good progress from their starting points.
- Classrooms and the outdoor environment are well resourced and organised effectively. They support children's development across all areas of learning.
- Procedures for keeping children safe are effective.

School details

Unique reference number	141246
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10037088

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Appropriate authority	The Rivers Academy Trust
Chair	Nick Mossop
Headteacher	Rhoda Pierpoint
Telephone number	01562 69750
Website	www.heronswoodprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	hwoffice@riverscofe.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Heronswood Primary School opened as an academy, sponsored by the multi-academy trust, Rivers Academy Trust, in October 2014. It is one of seven primary and first schools in the trust. The headteacher left shortly afterwards. The current headteacher has been in post since June 2015, initially as head of school, under the direction of an executive headteacher, and subsequently appointed as headteacher.
- The board of trustees is the strategic authority for the multi-academy trust (MAT). Heronswood has its own local governing body, which oversees the quality of education and the safeguarding of pupils at the school.
- The school receives support from the MAT for supporting newly qualified teachers on

their first year of teaching and those who are in their second year. Additional training is brokered from the MAT for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as identified by the headteacher.

- The school has grown since it opened and continues to get larger. It is currently just above the size of an average primary school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning by visiting lessons in all classes and talking to pupils about the work in their books.
- Inspectors met with: the headteacher and deputy headteacher; other school staff; the executive headteacher of the Rivers Academy Trust; the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body; and two groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke to other pupils and staff during lessons, at breaktimes and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. The 84 responses to the online survey Parent View were considered.
- Inspectors read a range of documents, including: leaders' checks on the quality of teaching; information about current pupils' attainment and progress; and paperwork relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Sandy Hayes, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sara Arkle	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Minter	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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