

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 July 2018

Mr Andy Hall
Headteacher
Riverside Special School
Ainsty Street
Goole
DN14 5JS

Dear Mr Hall

Short inspection of Riverside Special School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2018 with Sarah Roe, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in March 2015.

The school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. You and your leaders commit to every pupil achieving their best. You encourage all your pupils to become good citizens and to be as independent as they can be. Your staff share your commitment and work hard to ensure that they meet every pupil's special educational need.

You have been planning for a move to new accommodation and a changing cohort of pupils with severe learning difficulties since the last inspection. This has seen several delays and has meant that leaders have had to spend time planning for the new build while ensuring the present accommodation continues to be of a satisfactory standard. At times, this has affected leaders' ability to drive forward school improvement at the pace needed.

Despite these challenges, you continue to provide a broad curriculum that has at its heart a focus on the personal and social development of your pupils. You offer varied and creative opportunities in which pupils can excel, whether this is at a sporting event or singing at a local arts venue. Across every week, you plan opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and life skills. This is particularly strong in key stage 4, where pupils undertake independent travel programmes, work experience, and learn skills such as shopping, cooking and cleaning.

Inspectors identified two areas for improvement at the last inspection: to refine assessment procedures to provide a more detailed record of progress made by the growing number of pupils with more complex learning needs; and to make sure all policies are reviewed by governors against an agreed timetable. You have tackled both of the areas well. You have thorough records by which you measure pupils' progress, and have ensured that you identify the small steps of progress that pupils with more complex learning needs make. School policies are also reviewed by governors in a timely and systematic manner.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent both in lessons and when out playing at breaks and lunchtimes. The lunchtime activities were joyful to watch with pupils of all ages having fun, and supporting one another. One pupil said: 'Riverside is a family and everyone looks after you.'

Where teaching was at its strongest was when pupils were engaged and were active in their learning. In these lessons, teachers had planned activities that were interesting, personalised to the pupils, and had the right amount of challenge. For example, in one lesson where pupils were learning the song 'Frère Jacques', they were writing this in English and French and were singing along as they were writing. Pupils with autism spectrum disorder were well supported in these lessons. Visual supports combined with skilled staff ensured that pupils were able to complete their learning tasks.

On the whole, teaching is good. Pupils are active in their learning. Teachers plan activities that are interesting, enjoyable, personalised to the pupils, and have the right amount of challenge. However, this strong teaching is not consistent throughout the school. At times, the pace of learning is slower, such as when pupils wait too long for their turn, and where learning targets lack challenge. Ironing out these few inconsistencies in the quality of teaching is an important next step.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of your school. They describe the many welcome changes in their children since starting at Riverside. They praise the school for the support they have received and particularly value the many activities and trips their children attend. Comments from parents described the school and all its staff as 'amazing' and 'simply the best'. One acknowledged that their child 'loves school so much that they would attend on weekends and holidays'.

You invest in staff training and development, to enable all who work at the school to excel in their roles. There has been recent training and support from another special school to 'up-skill' your staff in preparation for your changing cohort. Staff value the support and encouragement you give. As a result, staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work at Riverside School.

You have a new group of governors who are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They have recently reorganised their roles and responsibilities and formed new

committee structures. They are very supportive of senior leaders in ensuring a smooth transition to your new accommodation, and are mindful of the risk assessments, and new resources that are needed to ensure pupils' well-being. They are aware that they need to develop their skills in checking the school's work and challenge to senior leaders, particularly in relation to their evaluations of teachers' performance management, and evaluating the impact of school improvement plans.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The well-maintained register of staff pre-employment checks meets all legal requirements. You and your staff are knowledgeable about your pupils and record all areas of concern. Staff training about safeguarding and child protection is extensive and regularly refreshed.

You work with external agencies to support children in need. As a result, you take prompt and robust action to keep pupils safe and protect them from harm.

Staff support and manage pupils' behaviour well. Detailed records of incidents and physical restraints are kept and school leaders are aware of the need to review these more regularly and are taking steps to do so.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and that staff are always there to help if they have a problem. Importantly, pupils are learning how to stay safe, for example, when they are out in the community or using a computer or the internet. This helps them to be well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Inspection findings

- From the moment pupils step off their home-to-school transport, they receive high-quality support from staff. Staff encourage pupils to be as independent as possible. Pupils settle quickly into their tutor groups and begin their work for the day. Opportunities to develop pupils' personal and social skills are threaded in throughout the school day, ensuring that pupils make strong progress in this area.
- Primary-aged pupils make good progress from their low starting points. This is because each pupil is well supported by skilled staff. The development of reading is a particular strength, with a focus on phonics and word-recognition skills. Staff find the best ways to engage pupils, and work on developing pupils' ability to attend, take turns and concentrate on learning. This builds a solid foundation for their learning and development in the senior part of the school.
- Pupils in the senior part of school work hard in lessons. They are proud of their work and are ambitious for their futures, wanting to attend college and, in some instances, to gain employment. Leaders have recently changed the range of examinations and accreditations on offer to ensure that all pupils are able to achieve. You have entered some pupils for GCSEs in mathematics and Functional

skills in English. This ensures that pupils leave the school with the best possible outcomes.

- Senior leaders observe teaching regularly and have recently undertaken paired observations with leaders from another special school. The information gained from these observations, however, is not summarised or evaluated, so leaders cannot describe the most effective teaching or be clear on the impact of school-wide initiatives. This, in turn, weakens leaders' ability to appraise teachers' performance and to provide accurate information to governors.
- Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress in English and mathematics, which the assessment leader reviews each term. Where pupils fail to make enough progress, the school provides extra support to boost their learning. As a result, most pupils achieve the targets set for them. Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in speaking and listening, and reading. As a result, staff training has focused on developing writing. The English leader has introduced 'five minute word boxes' to support pupils in this area. In mathematics, pupils make better progress in number than other areas, because the school invests more teaching time into the development of number. As a result, pupils develop strong functional skills, for example using money when shopping.
- You have a detailed plan for how you have spent additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who need help to catch up. You have used this funding to support a large number of areas, including communication, water confidence, work experience, and social and emotional support. However, further work is needed to make sure that the impact of these initiatives on improving pupils' outcomes is clear.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- monitor and evaluate clearly the impact of school improvement plans and actions taken on improving pupils' outcomes, and use it to provide accurate information to governors
- develop governors' skills so that they challenge and support the school more effectively
- ensure that teaching is at least consistently good across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Riding of Yorkshire Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bernadette Moorcroft

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior and middle leaders, five representatives from the governing body and one group of pupils. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment in a range of lessons across the school with senior leaders. We looked at the work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning. Inspectors considered the results from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 23 written responses from parents. Inspectors examined a range of documents including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and information about pupils' progress.