

Riverside Bridge School

Renwick Road, Barking IG11 0FU

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not made sure that the school caters well for pupils' complex needs. The number of pupils on roll has increased substantially since the school opened in 2015. Leaders, including governors, have not managed this expansion effectively. Pupils' safety and learning have been compromised.
- Safeguarding is not effective. In key stages 1 to 4, leaders have not ensured that physical restraint is used appropriately. This risks pupils' well-being.
- Leaders and staff do not do enough to pre-empt or de-escalate situations that adversely impact on pupils' well-being. Pupils often become overwhelmed and their behaviour deteriorates rapidly.
- Over time, leaders have not maintained suitable records of pupils' welfare. Leaders do not know if strategies to support pupils' welfare and behaviour are safe and lead to improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- The curriculum is not fit for purpose. Leaders have failed to consider what experiences and content pupils need to learn well and make good progress.
- Teaching does not meet pupils' needs. Teachers do not routinely plan activities which enable pupils to acquire and deepen their skills and knowledge. As a result, pupils' progress over time is weak.
- Leaders and staff do not make effective use of strategies to develop pupils' communication skills. This limits pupils' ability to express themselves and increases their anxiety levels.
- Leaders do not work effectively with external agencies to assess and plan for pupils' needs.
- The pupil premium funding and additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not spent well to improve the outcomes of eligible pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The new leadership team has made a positive start on securing the urgent improvements required. For instance, they have ensured that pupils attend school regularly and that child protection concerns are managed effectively.
- Children in the early years are well cared for. Staff provide appropriate support to help children manage their behaviour and emotions. Nevertheless, more work is needed before teaching and the curriculum routinely secure good outcomes for children.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders, including governors, should take urgent steps to ensure that pupils are kept safe in key stages 1 to 4 by:
 - providing staff with suitable guidance and training on safe and appropriate behaviour management strategies, including the use of physical restraint
 - analysing records of unacceptable behaviour to determine whether strategies are suitable and bring about improvements in pupils' behaviour and well-being over time
 - routinely reviewing incidents of physical restraint to make sure that such incidents are not detrimental to pupils' welfare
 - making sure that staff are clear on which strategies to use when supporting individual pupils' behaviour
 - implementing arrangements in the playground which cater effectively for pupils' needs and safety
 - reviewing the use of 'calm spaces' to ensure that they are effective in helping pupils manage their emotions and behaviour.
- Leaders should improve pupils' outcomes and the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment, including in the early years, by:
 - designing and implementing a curriculum that is meaningful and relevant to pupils' needs, both academically and in terms of their personal development
 - providing staff with high-quality training and guidance so that they have the knowledge and expertise to cater effectively for pupils' needs
 - ensuring that information on what pupils know or can do is accurate and meaningful
 - drawing on advice from external agencies to acquire a comprehensive picture of pupils' needs and progress
 - ensuring that teaching routinely takes account of pupils' interests and abilities
 - making sure that teaching demands enough of the most able pupils
 - using well-targeted resources and strategies to improve pupils' communication skills
 - making effective use of additional funding to improve the outcomes of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- Those responsible for governance should routinely hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's life.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding is recommended to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and governors have failed to realise their vision for the quality of education at Riverside Bridge. Too often, leaders have used systems or strategies without considering whether they are in pupils' best interests. This has been detrimental to pupils' safety and well-being as well as their ability to make progress.
- Leaders have not made sure that staff have the necessary training and expertise to cater for pupils' diverse and typically complex needs. Instability in the senior leadership team has resulted in a lack of direction and support for staff. Staff morale is low.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils receive the support they need to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Staff are unsure what strategies to use to minimise pupils' anxiety levels or to prevent pupils from reaching crisis point. Pupils repeatedly experience heightened levels of distress that are harmful to their mental and physical well-being.
- In key stages 1 to 4, the school's use of physical restraint is not safe. Leaders and staff over-rely on this approach to calm pupils' behaviour and emotions rather than preventing situations reaching crisis point in the first place.
- Record-keeping related to pupils' behaviour and well-being, including the use of physical restraint, is poor. Until recently, leaders only recorded incidents that led to the physical restraint of a pupil or the use of one of the school's 'calm spaces'. Over time, leaders have been unable to identify reasons why pupils' well-being has deteriorated and what they can do to secure improvements.
- The unsuitable curriculum means that pupils underachieve considerably. Leaders said that the curriculum is personalised to pupils' individual needs and interests. In practice, it is not. Although the curriculum provides for a range of subjects, the subject matter covered is usually inappropriate for the developmental stage and aptitudes of each pupil.
- Over time, leaders have not drawn effectively on advice from external agencies to obtain an accurate picture of pupils' needs and agree targets for pupils that are both helpful and aspirational.
- Pupils have too few opportunities, including extra-curricular experiences, to develop and apply their knowledge and skills in purposeful or real-life contexts. This impedes the development of pupils' self-confidence and independence. Pupils are not prepared sufficiently well for life outside of school.
- Additional funding to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium or those who have SEN and/or disabilities is not spent effectively. Poor-quality assessment information means that leaders are unclear on how they can help pupils overcome their individual barriers to learning.
- Through the primary sport premium, leaders have successfully increased pupils' participation in physical activity with a focus on promoting healthy lifestyles. Specialist teaching of physical education (PE) contributes well to this aspect of the school's work.
- The new leadership team shares a determination to improve pupils' life chances. Leaders have quickly identified and addressed some of the most serious shortcomings

relating to pupils' safety and well-being. For example, they have remedied weaknesses in the management of child protection concerns. They have also introduced suitable systems to record unacceptable behaviour and the use of physical restraint. They are beginning to use this information to bring about positive changes in the way pupils' well-being is supported and managed. For instance, they have redeployed staff and classroom spaces to provide intensive support for pupils who experience the greatest difficulties in managing their behaviour and emotions. Nevertheless, the scale of the work required at the school remains considerable.

- Parents and carers have mixed views of the school. While some spoke positively about the care their children receive, others were concerned that their children's needs were not fully understood or provided for. Nevertheless, parents were typically positive about the changes that the new leadership team has made in a short space of time, such as more events to encourage parental involvement in school life.

Governance of the school

- The number of pupils on roll has increased rapidly since the school opened in 2015. Governors have only recently identified that the leadership team was not managing this expansion safely and effectively. Over time, governance provided by the trust and local governing body has not been rigorous or challenging enough.
- This year, governors have taken effective steps to strengthen leadership. They have appointed an acting headteacher who has brought much-needed stability and direction to the school. Crucially, governors have made sure that senior leaders have clearly defined responsibilities and are increasingly held to account for the impact of their work. In addition, governors have appointed external advisers who are helping leaders to prioritise and evaluate their work.
- While governors have made important changes, they do not have sufficient oversight of pupils' personal development and well-being. They have not asked enough questions about whether physical intervention is being used safely and appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff routinely using physical restraint are suitably trained to do so. This is an unacceptable risk to pupils' safety and well-being. It is also an unacceptable risk to the safety of staff who carry out the physical intervention.
- Incidents of physical restraint are too high. When physical restraint is used, leaders do not routinely analyse what happened and why. Pupils' views are not sought or recorded. This prevents leaders from acting to reduce the number of incidents and checking that the use of physical restraint is not detrimental to pupils' welfare.
- Over time, leaders have failed to put in place appropriate strategies to ensure that staff manage pupils' behaviour safely and appropriately when pupils become frustrated or upset. School records show that accidents or injuries involving both staff and pupils are high. Leaders' analysis of these incidents is limited. This impedes them from understanding what they might do to improve the safety of both pupils and staff.

- Some aspects of safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff are knowledgeable and well trained in child protection matters, including their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. They are aware that pupils' needs may make them more vulnerable to harm and are vigilant in identifying signs that may indicate that this is the case.
- Leaders have ensured that staff report child protection concerns promptly. Records of these concerns are well maintained and appropriately detailed. Leaders and staff work constructively with families to ensure that they acquire a full picture of factors that pose a risk to pupils' safety outside of school. Where necessary, leaders seek advice from external agencies to ensure that pupils receive additional help and protection when they need it.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Far too much teaching fails to cater for pupils' needs or interests. Teachers' efforts to inspire and motivate pupils are hampered by the unsuitable and uninspiring curriculum. Teachers do not have the freedom to adapt curriculum plans to provide pupils with appropriately demanding and relevant work.
- Assessment information is of poor quality. Teachers routinely plan activities that are based on out-of-date or inappropriate targets. Consequently, pupils often complete mundane tasks that are of limited value to their learning and development.
- Teachers and additional adults do not provide enough activities to capture pupils' interests. Equally, teachers do not provide pupils with effective guidance on how to explore the resources on offer. Consequently, in some classrooms, very little learning takes place. Pupils often wander around the classroom and become bored and frustrated.
- Staff do not make consistent use of strategies to support pupils' communication skills. This limits pupils' ability to understand what they are learning or express their ideas.
- Additional adults are not clear about their role in supporting pupils' learning. In many classrooms, they focus on ensuring that pupils follow classroom routines, such as staying seated at a table, rather than helping pupils learn well.
- Teaching does not routinely expect enough of the most able pupils. The quality of their learning varies too much between subjects and classes. Some most-able pupils benefit from attending classes alongside their peers in the mainstream primary and secondary schools located on the same site. However, the positive impact of this is reduced because pupils complete work that is too easy when they return to their usual class.
- Teaching provides many resources and experiences aimed at meeting pupils' sensory needs, for instance through exploring textures and sounds. However, the impact of these experiences on pupils' learning is variable because the resources used are not always suitable. Equally, adults' inconsistent use of communication strategies limits the way pupils can respond to the experiences on offer.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.

- In key stages 1 to 4, the inappropriate implementation of the physical restraint policy means that pupils are not kept safe in school. Too few staff who regularly carry out physical restraint have been trained in safe techniques. Poor record-keeping means that leaders do not know whether the use of physical restraint is harmful to pupils' physical and emotional welfare.
- When pupils exhibit challenging behaviour due to their emotional, social and communication needs, staff do not know what they need to do to reduce pupils' anxiety levels and help them feel secure. Staff have not been given guidance on what to do to support individual pupils.
- The playground is not a safe and nurturing environment for pupils. Despite appropriate numbers of staff on duty, staff do not spot and address potential risks to pupils' well-being promptly enough. Pupils do not routinely benefit from appropriate pastoral care to help them make the most of social times with their peers.
- In many classrooms, staff praise pupils frequently to build their self-esteem and confidence. This encourages pupils to try out new activities. However, pupils often lose motivation and become distracted because resources and activities are not tailored well to their needs.
- Pupils told inspectors that they know they can talk to an adult if they have any concerns or worries. They feel safe from bullying or unkind behaviour. Pupils have a basic awareness of potential risks to their safety, including stranger danger and those risks prevalent on the internet.
- A small number of pupils attend lessons in the primary and secondary schools located on the same site. Leaders and staff provide suitably for pupils' welfare when they attend these classes.
- Older pupils receive adequate careers guidance to help them understand the choices available to them when they leave the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour, particularly when they feel upset or frustrated. Sometimes, pupils become angry, misuse resources and refuse to stay in the classroom. Staff do not intervene effectively to defuse situations and help pupils refocus on the activities on offer. This disrupts pupils' learning and the learning of their peers.
- Each classroom has a dedicated 'calm space' which pupils can choose to use when they are feeling overwhelmed. In practice, these spaces do not have a positive impact on pupils' well-being and behaviour. Staff do not ensure that pupils use calm spaces appropriately.
- The new leadership team has taken effective steps to support pupils who experience the greatest difficulty in managing their emotions or behaviour. It is soon to judge whether this work will lead to sustained improvements for these pupils over time.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly similar to other schools nationally. Leaders and staff work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that the majority of pupils attend school as regularly as they should. Few pupils are persistently absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Across the school, pupils' outcomes are poor. Inspection evidence, including work in pupils' books, shows that pupils underachieve considerably.
- Although the school's information suggests that a high proportion of pupils are making at least good progress towards their targets, this is not supported by inspection evidence. The school's information is not meaningful because it is based on targets for pupils that are not up to date, challenging and relevant. Leaders and teachers have not questioned the reliability or validity of what they are measuring.
- Over time, pupils' progress is weak. Serious shortcomings in the curriculum mean that pupils do not typically receive the support they need to learn well and make progress.
- Pupils are not well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. Opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills beyond the classroom, for example through work experience, are too limited.
- At the time of the inspection, the oldest pupils were in Year 10. The school has failed to provide these Year 10 pupils with any pathways that will enable them to have their achievements recognised or accredited externally. Leaders plan to provide these in Year 11, which is too late.
- Pupils make limited progress in their communication and language skills because adults do not use communication strategies consistently. In turn, this impedes the development of pupils' social skills because pupils are unable to voice their wishes or views.
- The most able pupils are not routinely challenged to aim high and produce work at the standard of which they are capable. These pupils are capable of more.
- Some pupils are increasingly able to manage their emotions or behaviour in different situations. However, this positive picture is not replicated across all year groups and classes. Pupils' progress varies too much, depending on which class they are in.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders do not ensure that children get off to a good start in the early years. Teaching and the curriculum are not sufficiently demanding. Sometimes, teachers plan learning without being clear about how they intend to develop or deepen children's knowledge and skills. Children do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers do not expect enough of the most able children. These children often complete the same tasks as their peers, even when they are ready for further challenge. Over time, this limits the progress of the most able children.
- The new early years leadership team has adequate plans to improve the quality of children's learning. It is too soon to evaluate whether these plans will secure the necessary improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- The early years provides children with a safe, nurturing and warm environment. Staff are typically attuned to children's needs. They are quick to spot when children are struggling to manage their emotions or behaviour. They intervene calmly, with well-targeted guidance and reassurance to help children feel secure and follow classroom

routines. As a result, children usually behave well and develop positive attitudes to their learning.

- Children typically make good gains in their social and emotional development. Teaching provides meaningful experiences which help children learn how to play alongside their peers, for instance by taking turns or responding to simple instructions. Staff usually provide effective support to help children increasingly maintain their attention on the resources and activities on offer.
- Classrooms are bright and well-organised spaces. Staff provide a careful balance between resources which stimulate children's thinking and resources that children find soothing when they become overwhelmed.

School details

Unique reference number	142134
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10048388

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter McPartland
Acting headteacher	George Mouskoundi
Telephone number	0203 946 5888
Website	http://www.riversidecampus.com/bridge/
Email address	bridge@riversidecampus.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Riverside Bridge opened in 2015 as an academy sponsored by the Partnership Learning Trust. Governance is provided by a local governing body and a chief executive officer appointed by the multi-academy trust board.
- The school provides education for pupils aged from four to 16. It caters for pupils who have complex SEN and/or disabilities, typically linked to a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Most pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Since opening, the number of pupils on roll has grown substantially. The school's full capacity is 180 pupils.
- The school shares purpose-built premises with Riverside Secondary School and Riverside Primary School, which are mainstream schools within the trust. A small number of pupils attend selected classes at these schools as part of their timetable. The school does not use any other alternative or off-site provision.
- A new leadership team, including an acting headteacher, was appointed in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with leaders, members of the governing body and the trust's chief executive officer to evaluate the quality of education provided. A discussion was also held with an external adviser.
- Inspectors visited classrooms in all key stages. Most visits were made together with senior leaders. Inspectors also held a meeting with a group of pupils and visited the playground and lunch hall.
- Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' work and information about pupils' outcomes, including school assessment information and pupils' EHC plans. Inspectors also considered information on safeguarding and pupils' well-being, including attendance information, behaviour logs and records of the use of physical restraint.
- A meeting was held with a group of staff. Inspectors were unable to draw conclusions from Ofsted's staff survey because only one response was received.
- Inspectors met with parents informally before the start of the school day. Eight responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) were received, which is too few to allow for meaningful analysis. However, inspectors considered the written comments received via Parent View.

Inspection team

Sarah Murphy-Dutton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Diane Rochford	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Pardy	Ofsted Inspector

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