

Inspection of Riverside Education

2 Riverside Drive, Stechford, Birmingham, West Midlands B33 9BF

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created a culture where everyone is respected, valued and encouraged to be the very best they can be. Pupils thrive. They appreciate that staff believe in them. Pupils and staff say that the school is 'like one big family'. The values of respect, honesty and integrity permeate all aspects of the school's work.

The school's broad curriculum is rich and purposeful. Leaders continually develop opportunities to support pupils to gain meaningful qualifications. Pupils access a range of core, vocational and therapeutic options. They learn and achieve well because they are taught content in a logical order by skilled staff who understand their individual needs. This, combined with high-quality careers guidance, means pupils are well prepared for their future steps.

High expectations and strong relationships support pupils to behave exceptionally well. They show respect for adults and their peers. Incidents of unkindness or bullying are rare and they are dealt with promptly. Pupils feel safe within their school community.

All staff work hard to support pupils' social and emotional development. For example, they provide opportunities to work with animals. This teaches pupils about care and responsibility. Pupils learn about safe, healthy relationships. They gain the necessary skills to get on with others and make friends.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and all adults know pupils well, and are aspirational for them. Leaders want pupils to achieve the best that they possibly can, and they do. An ambitious curriculum with academic, vocational and therapeutic opportunities means pupils experience and gain from a rich, broad set of learning experiences. Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed a strong vocational offer and introduced therapeutic opportunities at a school farm.

Staff demonstrate expertise in their subject areas. This enables them to plan learning in a logical order, aimed towards ambitious end points. Basic skills in English and mathematics are taught well. Teachers think carefully about the content they deliver in order to make sure pupils gain the right knowledge and skills in the correct sequence. They repeat important content regularly so that pupils learn and remember it. Leaders frequently review the curriculum. Appropriate changes to the science curriculum, for example, ensure that pupils who have missed significant content are able to access learning that meets their needs. Assessment information is used well.

Opportunities in the vocational curriculum have been deliberately chosen to support pupils' employability. Pupils learn skills specific to industries, including brickwork and construction, catering and digger driving. The farm provides experiences in animal

care and land-based learning. Pupils thrive in these practical settings, supported by highly skilled staff who help to prepare them well for future success.

Many pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and a high proportion have not accessed school for a considerable time. Adults take this into careful consideration. They know pupils well and identify and understand their needs. Staff make sure that learning is adapted well so that pupils can learn effectively. Learning is accessible to all.

Pupils read often. They study a range of texts, including fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils read aloud in class with fluency and confidence. Teachers use skilful questioning to check that pupils understand what they have read, and to ensure they keep up.

Behaviour is exemplary. This is because leaders and all staff set high expectations. Pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. They engage well with adults and respond to requests quickly. Relationships among adults and pupils support the school's respectful ethos. Pupils make friends. They support one another in learning, and socialise appropriately outside of lesson times.

The curriculum for personal, health, social and economic education is carefully planned. Pupils learn about identity, respect, tolerance and relationships. The programme for relationships and sex education is delivered well. The planned content is appropriate to the needs of pupils.

The wider curriculum is well planned to develop pupils' character and social skills. Leaders promote the importance of employability. Pupils run a school tuck shop, where they serve customers, handle cash and operate a cash register. They also operate an online shop, where they process and post out orders. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and benefit from learning skills they use at different times and in different ways. They access a range of trips, including to places of worship and for recreational purposes. Pupils play an active part in their community and support local people who have disabilities. They speak about these experiences with pride.

The staff team is fully committed to the success of pupils. Staff value opportunities for training and development. They are well supported by leaders who are considerate of their well-being and workload. Parents and carers rightly sing the praises of the school. They report that their children have achieved more than they felt would be possible, and that this is because of the dedicated staff team.

The proprietor and governors place pupils at the heart of their work. They continually consider how pupils' experiences can be improved. They focus sharply and effectively on curriculum development and the provision of high-quality resources that successfully support learning. Sharp oversight on all aspects of the school's performance means that the school meets its statutory safeguarding responsibilities and complies with the independent school standards. Leaders' detailed accessibility plan meets the requirements of The Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and available on request. It is written with regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and outlines what to do if there are concerns about a pupil.

Leaders and all staff know pupils well. They are appropriately trained and know how to recognise if a pupil may be at risk of harm. When concerns arise, staff know the processes to follow. They take swift and appropriate action, engaging external agencies when necessary.

Child protection is given the highest of priorities. Nothing is left to chance when it comes to the safety of pupils.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	142338
DfE registration number	330/6019
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10267676
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	40
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietors	Abide Zenenga Anthony Copeland
Chair	Anthony Maguire
Headteacher	Abide Zenenga
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,834 to £45,000
Telephone number	0121 678 2942
Website	https://riversideeducation.co.uk
Email address	info@riverside-education.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 to 28 November 2019

Information about this school

- Riverside Education is an independent day school. It operates across three sites located in Birmingham. Since the previous inspection, leaders have expanded the school's facilities to include a working farm.
- The school offers places to pupils who have special educational needs and social and emotional difficulties. Pupils are referred to the school by a number of local authorities, including Birmingham and Sandwell.
- The school was last inspected in November 2019, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. Meetings were also held with the proprietor and the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, science and vocational learning. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, considered curriculum design, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. This took place across all three sites. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads and examined the school's processes for identifying, reporting and managing concerns. Inspectors spoke to all staff to check their knowledge of safeguarding and the school's procedures. The school's single central record was also checked.
- A number of key policies were scrutinised, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety and complaints. Inspectors visited all three sites and toured the premises to check for compliance with the independent school standards. They also reviewed a selection of risk assessments.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Gwen Onyon Ofsted Inspector

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