

Inspection of River Mill Primary School

Central Road, Dartford DA1 5XR

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Suzanne Leader. The school is part of Connect Schools Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrea Carter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Scott Pinder.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this school. They are happy and safe here. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Through the school's well-understood values, pupils are taught to be kind, respectful and a good friend. They treat each other well and value the highly supportive adults in the school.

The school expects pupils to work hard and try their best. Pupils live up to these expectations admirably. Pupils are highly motivated and love learning. This includes the very youngest children in early years, who focus well and listen attentively. Pupils achieve well, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and reading.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They enjoy taking a lead in making school life even better. For example, pupil play leaders make sure that everyone can join in with games at lunchtime. The eco council takes its role of looking after the school environment very seriously. Pupils are rightly proud of the tangible contribution they make to their school.

Pupils love their diverse school community. They are highly respectful of people's different faiths, cultures and ways of life. Everyone is welcome and included here. Pupils have impressively mature attitudes. As one pupil said, 'You have to walk in someone else's shoes before you judge them.'

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

The school, well supported by the trust and those responsible for governance, has established a clear vision for high-quality education and the broader development of the 'River Mill' child. A collaborative and supportive staff culture is firmly in place. Staff receive training which helps them to develop in their roles.

The school's curriculum is ambitious and well considered. Starting in early years, the essential knowledge that pupils should learn is clearly set out. Teachers ensure that pupils' learning carefully builds on what they already know. However, in a couple of subjects, the curriculum is not planned with the same high degree of precision as in the strongest. This means that occasionally, pupils do not develop a consistently deep level of learning. While pupils' achievement is strong across all subjects, in a couple, it could be even better.

Teachers carefully select activities that support pupils' learning well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff understand pupils' individual needs well. They know what works best for pupils with SEND to be successful in their learning. These pupils are well supported to learn the full curriculum.

In early years, children make a great start to their education. They quickly develop confidence in numbers, writing and social skills, cooperating very well with each

other. Regular visits to forest club help to deepen children's understanding of the world around them.

Learning to read well is a priority. Pupils quickly develop a love of reading. This starts in nursery, where children have regular opportunities to share stories and rhymes. Pupils are taught the sounds they need to become independent and fluent readers. Staff are well trained. They focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and comprehension. This means that almost all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, can quickly develop confidence. Older pupils read an impressively wide range of books.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional. The school provides extremely strong welfare and pastoral support. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught very effectively about relationships, growing up and keeping safe. They have a keen understanding of managing risk, including when online. Pupils enjoy attending a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as choir, football and chess. These help to develop pupils' talents and interests very well.

The school ensures that the personal development of disadvantaged pupils is a top priority. For example, many pupils, including those with SEND, learn to play a variety of musical instruments. Pupils' character development is very well considered. The 'I can do' award celebrates pupils' achievements and acts of helpfulness, both inside and outside school. Pupils develop impressive confidence, empathy, respect and understanding. They are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils conduct themselves impeccably. The school has established clear and consistent routines, meaning that even the youngest children know exactly what is expected. Skilled staff support pupils with SEND effectively to make sure that they are ready for learning. Pupils are keen to do well and misbehaviour is very rare.

Almost all parents endorse the work of the school. Many recognise the school's important role in promoting the well-being and safety of their children. One parent, summing up the view of many, commented, 'Teachers take the time to ensure each child develops and has a fantastic, broad learning experience.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a couple of subjects, the curriculum is not as precisely designed as in the strongest. This means that pupils are not always taught the most important knowledge well enough. While pupils achieve well, they could do even better. The

school should ensure that all subjects are planned and delivered with the same high degree of precision.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147083
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296528
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Scott Pinder
Chair of governing body	Matthew Redrup
CEO of the trust	Andrea Carter
Headteacher	Suzanne Leader
Website	www.rivermillprimaryschool.co.uk

Information about this school

- River Mill opened in temporary accommodation in 2019 and moved to its new building in 2020.
- The school is part of Connect Schools Academy Trust. The trust oversees six primaries in Bromley and Kent.
- The headteacher has been in post since the school opened.
- The school has its own nursery.
- The school has grown each year, with the oldest pupils currently in Year 5.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the trust's chief education officer.
- The lead inspector talked to two members of the local governing body and three trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard pupils read aloud to a known adult. Inspectors also looked more broadly at pupils' work in other subjects, including mathematics.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive safeguarding culture that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- The inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and staff about their experience in the school.
- The inspectors considered the responses and free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kirstine Boon

Ofsted Inspector

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