

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Riverside School

Main Road, St Paul's Cray, Orpington, Kent BR5 3HS

---

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

## **Outcome**

Riverside School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff have high expectations and place pupils' well-being at the centre of all decisions made. Each pupil has a personalised 'happiness passport' which intricately details what staff need to know and be able to do, to ensure each pupil is happy, safe and can participate in their learning. Consequently, pupils' behaviour and regulation are well managed and they achieve well. Pupils said they are happy and feel safe at school.

The school builds positive working relationships with parents and carers. Staff work with and alongside parents to understand priorities for their children and co-produce personalised learning plans. This enables parents to reinforce at home the messages that pupils receive at school. One parent, typical of many, said, 'Staff not only focus on the academic and developmental needs, but also actively support our whole family, offering resources, guidance, and regular check-ins to ensure we are all well supported.'

The school's work to develop pupils' character is carefully and deliberately thought through. Staff take time to understand the wider experiences pupils have had when they enter the school in order to help broaden their horizons further. They incorporate this into curriculum thinking, so that each pupil can see themselves in what they are learning and celebrate the differences within the school community.

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

The school's commitment to personalising each pupil's learning journey at the school is ambitious. This is realised through staff knowing the pupils exceptionally well. Staff understand and know what pupils know and can do. This enables staff to develop carefully personalised programmes of study that support pupils to develop key academic,

self-help and social skills. Consequentially, pupils learn new knowledge and skills in the right order, as well as develop their confidence and resilience.

The school has established a culture focused on pupils' enjoyment and the purposefulness of reading. Staff across the school, from Nursery to sixth form, maximise opportunities to share and experience reading and books. Pupils are read to often and careful consideration is taken to bring stories to life through multi-sensory adaptations. For those pupils who are early readers they learn the foundations of reading needed to become fluent. Staff regularly check the sounds pupil know. They personalise interventions to help those falling behind to keep up. The books they read are matched to their stage of learning.

The school, and the multi-agency team of therapists and health professionals, has developed an extensive programme of high-quality training. This provides all staff with the knowledge and expertise needed to carry out their roles, and they apply their training effectively.

The school's work is underpinned by the determination to enable pupils to communicate and to be understood. Staff ensure all pupils have the necessary means needed to be able to communicate. They take every opportunity to develop pupils' ability to communicate. As a result, pupils' interaction and communication skills improve over time. Pupils learn to understand and share their feelings and emotions. Staff ensure that pupils are listened to carefully. Consequentially, pupils contribute meaningfully in lessons, and behaviour in and outside of classrooms is mostly calm and orderly.

The school has a sharp focus on preparing pupils for adulthood. This begins from when the children join the school in Nursery. They are supported to build their independence, make choices and to participate in their school and local community. This continues and builds in complexity as pupils move through the school. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are taught important employment skills for a number of potential roles such as in retail, hospitality and procurement. They practice what they have learned in one of the school's Happy or Riverside Lounge Cafés and in other work experience placements such as at a local vet.

The school broadens pupils' development further through a range of opportunities. These opportunities include volunteering in local river cleans, taking part in and experiencing a range of expressive art performances, and overnight stays on the Isle of Wight. These experiences encourage pupils to have high self-esteem and foster a sense of pride in their achievements.

The school monitors pupils' attendance robustly. Leaders work with families to know the reasons behind any absences. They then act swiftly to find solutions to improve attendance when necessary. This includes remote learning for pupils with specific medical needs, or home visits to offer advice and guidance on morning routines. As a result, most pupils attend school regularly.

Governors provide the school with the necessary scrutiny and challenge to deliver its ambitious vision. They regularly review development priorities to ensure the school maintains its high standards.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135232
<b>Local authority</b>	Bromley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345904
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	357
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	George Christian
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Solomons
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.riversideschool.org.uk">www.riversideschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	30 April and 1 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates across four campuses: Riverside St. Paul's Cray provision at Main Road, Orpington, Kent, BR5 3HS; Riverside Beckenham, which operates from Hayne Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 4HY; Riverside West Wickham provision, at Hawes Lane, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9AE; and Riverside Phoenix provision, located at Masons Hill, Bromley, Kent, BR2 9JG.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers and the wider school team.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and other members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the local authority.
- They also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff, and spoke with pupils.

## Inspection team

Kieran Bird, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jacque Fairhurst

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024