



Riverhead Infants' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118453
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280319
Inspection dates 31 January 2006 to 1 February 2006
Reporting inspector Sheena MacDonald HMI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Worships Hill
School category	Community		London Road Riverhead
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2AS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 452475
Number on roll	270	Fax number	01732 457 592
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Jenna Leight
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Christine Dyer

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Riverhead is a popular three-form entry infants' school situated in a relatively prosperous area. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is very low, as is the proportion of children with special educational needs. Very few children are from minority ethnic communities and almost all have English as their first language. The school was awarded a Certificate of Excellence by the Department for Education and Skills in 1998 and Beacon status in 1998 and 2001. Since the last inspection, the school has moved into a new, award-winning building.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Riverhead Infants is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. This is a higher judgement than the school's cautious and modest view of itself. Children told inspectors that they love coming to school, they love learning new things and they think their teachers are doing a very good job; the inspectors agree.

High standards, excellent achievement and outstanding provision have been maintained since the last inspection.

Staff know the pupils very well and meet their individual needs to a very high level. Excellent assessment systems are in place for English and mathematics and the school acts quickly both to support learners at risk of underachievement and to stretch the more able. Assessment of other subjects is less well developed. Because of the excellent provision for personal development and well-being and the exemplary care and guidance, all children thrive and enjoy learning. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Teaching and learning are consistently good, with much that is outstanding. Imaginatively planned lessons and a rich programme of activities in and out of the classrooms stimulate the children's curiosity and contribute to the excitement and enjoyment in learning. There is some good provision for outdoor learning in the youngest classes but this is less well developed for the older children.

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and very effective governors, the school has sustained its success over time. There is a strong sense of purpose, underpinned by rigorous self-evaluation and a shared understanding of those areas which can be improved even more.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the outstanding teaching practice to increase further the percentage of good and excellent lessons.
- Improve the opportunities for learning by developing the outdoor classrooms.
- Extend the good use of assessment of English and mathematics to track and challenge achievement in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children achieve outstandingly well at Riverhead Infants. Children are excited by learning and there is the expectation that all children will achieve their potential.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. When they enter the school, most children are reaching standards that are above those expected for their age and social skills are very well developed. Children make excellent progress in Reception and by the end of the year many reach all the Early Learning Goals and begin to work within the National Curriculum.

This excellent progress continues and, by the end of Year 2, most achieve exceptionally high standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards in other subjects, including history, music and art, are also high.

Assessment and target setting which focus on the needs of individual children have helped to maintain these standards. All groups of pupils make equally good progress. The needs of the more able children are met very well; during the inspection some excellent work was seen with more able writers and there were examples of very high standards reached in the arts. Early identification and very good additional, targeted support ensure children with special educational needs make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of the children are outstanding. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to school and there is a real buzz in learning. Attendance rates are very high. Children behave very sensibly and get on well with adults and fellow children alike. Relationships are excellent. Children show concern for other people, for example, by initiating and involving themselves in raising money for disaster relief. Many children are very keen to suggest improvements through the school council because they know that their views are important. They have a good awareness of how people live in other countries, although their first-hand experience of multicultural Britain is not as strong.

Children are very good at keeping themselves safe because the school is thorough in giving them a very good grounding through personal, social and health education. It is notable that all the Year 2 children have had first aid training. They know what to eat to keep healthy and they take plenty of exercise. Many participate in a wide range of sporting activities and an impressive number of children walk to and from school.

Even at this young age children are preparing very well for the world of work through their confidence in language and mathematics and their ability to work well in a range of situations. They show high levels of independence and initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Overall, teaching and learning are outstanding. The high quality of much of the teaching, allied to very good teamwork and a determination to provide the best education possible, leads to the excellent outcomes achieved by the school. Teachers' detailed planning caters for children's wide-ranging abilities and their very effective deployment of skilled teaching assistants ensures that children's learning is very successful. It is very clear that children enjoy lessons and take delight in learning. Their lively responses to teachers' skilful questioning show that they know their efforts will be respected by all.

Staff continue to update their skills and less experienced staff are well supported. Increasing the proportion of excellent teaching even further is a priority. The school has effective systems in place to share its outstanding practice, although these have not yet led to equally high quality teaching in all classes and subjects.

Able children have work which challenges them and those needing extra help get very effective support. Analysis of assessment information has led the school to raise standards in writing and improve the achievement of boys.

Assessment is used rigorously to set clear targets in English and mathematics. Consequently, children know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Assessment procedures in other subjects are less well developed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it is exciting, vibrant and very successful in promoting both high standards and a real love of learning. A recent push at improving writing by threading it into many other subjects has reaped rewards. Themed weeks are very popular and ensure the children have opportunities to experience subjects in depth. Frequent visits and visitors bring the curriculum to life and there is a very good range of extra-curricular clubs. The outside areas are well used for the youngest children, but there is further scope to extend the learning beyond the classroom for all ages.

The curriculum is extremely well matched to the needs of each and every pupil and the school is quick to adapt provision for different groups, whether to stretch the more able or give added assistance to children who need to learn at a different rate.

The attractive, stimulating environment helps children both to enjoy and achieve.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and support of children are outstanding. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are in safe hands because the care and security of the children is uppermost in all activities. First aid and child protection systems are up to date and carefully reviewed. Close communication with home ensures the school works very effectively with parents to give the right care and attention to each individual. The school is well organised in giving effective and sensitive support to vulnerable children or those with special educational needs. It has strong links with external agencies to provide expert advice and support.

Teachers provide very strong academic guidance to children. They are precise about the children's levels of ability and fit work accurately to their individual needs. Targets in English and mathematics give the children a clear steer on how they could do even better. Children are very well prepared for moving on to junior school and they leave Riverhead as very confident and well-rounded individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Over the years, the headteacher has demonstrated the capacity to sustain success and continuous improvement. She has developed a very effective senior leadership team which provides the school with a clear strategic vision towards which it is moving purposefully. Leaders and managers at all levels are very able and work well together to ensure that children enjoy an outstanding quality of education and an exceptionally high standard of care.

Rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating performance and progress are very good and subsequent improvement planning is specific and effective.

The recently acquired Investors in People award rightly recognises the school's commitment to staff development. Areas of strength, as well as areas for development, are recognised and good systems are implemented to share and develop good practice across all classes.

The opinions of parents, children and staff are sought and acted upon. There are very good links with a range of other schools and organisations, to provide a rich quality of education, and the quality of induction and onward transition arrangements is excellent.

Governors provide a wide range of useful skills, are well organised and very effective in their role as critical friends to the school. They were particularly influential in managing the building of the new school.

Everyone involved with the school has a valuable part in moving the school forward and striving for excellence. The first-rate quality of teamwork and high aspirations are important factors which are enabling the school to sustain success over time without any hint of complacency.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited Riverhead. We enjoyed talking to so many of you and finding out about all the things you enjoy about your school. We especially enjoyed seeing your assembly about the Chinese New Year and your wonderful self portraits.

We think your school is excellent and here are some of the good things we found out

- You enjoy coming to school, behave very well and are thoughtful and kind to one another.
- Your teachers take very good care of you.
- Your teachers plan lots of interesting and exciting activities which help you enjoy yourselves and do very good work.
- Your teachers keep a close eye on your progress, especially in English and mathematics, to make sure that everyone does as well as they possibly can.
- Your headteacher and governors try to involve everyone, including you and your parents, to help to make your school even better.

No wonder everyone we met, including the teachers and other staff, your parents and the children, are very proud to belong to such an excellent school.

We know that Mrs Dyer is always trying to find ways to make the school even better, so here are some suggestions which we think will help:

- Your teachers should share some of their good ideas so that even more of the lessons are brilliant.
- The areas outside your classrooms should be organised so that they become really good places for learning.
- The teachers should keep closer track of how well you are doing in other subjects, as well as English and mathematics, and how you might do even better.

If we were children again we would love coming to your school because everyone enjoys learning so much and gets on so well.