



Riverside Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134011
LEA Medway
Inspection number 282419
Inspection dates 5 December 2005 to 6 December 2005
Reporting inspector Selwyn Ward AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Edmund's Way
School category	Community		Rainham
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Gillingham, Kent ME8 8ET
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 338700
Number on roll	237	Fax number	01634 267 295
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Pat Wozencroft
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Frame

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size primary school was formed in September 2003 following the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools. It has not previously been inspected. The school has specialist provision for up to 12 visually impaired pupils who are all taught in class alongside the other pupils. Because of this special provision, the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is very high, although the overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. Most pupils are White British, with very small numbers of pupils from other ethnic groups. Many pupils come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, as is reflected in the above average number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school has a nursery that caters for up to 52 children who attend part time from the age of three. Around two thirds of these children remain at the school at the end of the nursery year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) 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 in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards and achievement of the pupils.

The school evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory. Inspectors find this to be an improving school but one where the quality of education is still inadequate because there has been significant previous underachievement. The school does not currently provide satisfactory value for money. The quality of education is best in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception), where children are helped to get off to a good start. The leadership and management of the school have been successful in establishing an environment where pupils feel safe, behave well and want to learn. It has tackled most of the weaknesses identified in teaching that were at the root of pupils' underachievement. As a result, teaching is satisfactory and pupils are now making sound progress in lessons. However, the teaching and learning need to improve still further if pupils are to catch up on lost ground. Pupils are not given enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Visually impaired pupils do well because the support they receive is well focused. The same cannot always be said for pupils with other learning difficulties, many of whose needs have not been identified early enough. The improvements made over the past year or so in teaching and in creating a positive ethos for learning are recognised and appreciated by parents. They indicate that the headteacher, leadership team and governors have the capacity to move the school forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement.
- Ensure that all teachers make full use of assessment information to set challenging work that meets the needs of individual pupils.
- Assess the individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties at an early stage so that they all get appropriate help in lessons.
- Give clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to do better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Although children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, they do not do well enough in the rest of the school. Because of this, achievement and standards are inadequate. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been significantly below average. Although Year 2 test scores improved in 2005, they are still too low.

Pupils last year did better in mathematics at the end of Year 2 than they did in reading and writing. Test results in Year 6, which were low in 2004, fell further in 2005. They

also fell well short of the targets that the school set itself and which had been appropriately based on pupils' capabilities. These pupils did particularly poorly in mathematics. Given that their attainment was average when they were in Year 2 in their previous schools, this represents inadequate progress. This significant underachievement, which the school recognises, arises from major weaknesses in teaching. These have been identified by the school and successfully tackled. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress in lessons, although standards remain low because pupils have not yet caught up where they have fallen behind in the past. The underachievement has affected boys and girls of all abilities. The exception is the visually impaired pupils. These pupils do well because they benefit from good, well focused individual support throughout the school.

Children join the school with a wide range of abilities, but their language and social skills are generally below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage because the work is most closely matched to their individual needs and they are helped to build on what they have learned before. The children are on track to reach the early learning goals expected for the end of the reception year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school has been successful in establishing an environment where pupils behave well, get on well with one another and are increasingly keen to learn. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils enjoy school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies are used well to share understanding and respect for others' beliefs. Pupils take an interest in school life, for example through the school council, and respond positively when their views are sought. They work and play well together, sharing the extensive equipment provided in the playground. Visually impaired pupils participate fully in all activities. Throughout the school, pupils feel safe and know where and how to get help if needed. They show a growing awareness of the need to make healthy eating choices and take an interest in the wider community, for example by supporting a range of charities. Pupils are less well prepared for the next stage of their education, however, because their basic skills in literacy and numeracy are lower than they should be. They also remain too dependant on the many adults in the school, so that even some of the most able pupils are reluctant to use their initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has identified that there has been too much unsatisfactory teaching in some classes and this has been a significant factor in the underachievement. As a result of monitoring by the headteacher and leadership team, and following further guidance, training and support, teaching has improved so that it is now satisfactory, and pupils

are making sound progress in lessons. The most effective lessons involve work that is well matched to pupils' different abilities and helps them to build on what they have learned before. Relatively less effective lessons, although satisfactory, involve pupils mostly doing similar work that is too difficult for some and not challenging enough for others. In these lessons, pupils are often working at a pedestrian pace. The school has a generous number of teaching assistants, and at times there are as many as four adults in the class. The school does not get best value from this high level of support because the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties are not clearly enough identified.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has focused appropriately on the need to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, including through the development of productive teaching links with local secondary schools. This has not been done, however, to the exclusion of other subjects. The curriculum is appropriately broad and the pupils generally find their lessons interesting. Pupils benefit from regular 'circle time', when they sit together to discuss their news and raise any concerns. These sessions are helping to develop pupils' confidence and their speaking and listening skills. Younger pupils also benefit from the opportunity to earn 'golden time', when they can choose their own activities as a reward for their hard work and good behaviour. This has, in turn, contributed to the improvements reported by parents in their children's personal development. The curriculum is enriched through a good range of clubs and other extra curricular opportunities. These are well attended by pupils. The breakfast club, run by a team of dedicated volunteers, is especially popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The school provides a caring and supportive environment where pupils are made to feel safe. Effective child protection arrangements are in place as are other appropriate arrangements for safeguarding pupils. From the start of the Foundation Stage, children are taught the need for orderly routines that help them learn, and these are similarly reinforced throughout the school.

Pupils do not always know exactly what they need to do to improve their work, as they do not receive enough guidance from their teachers. They do not generally know what their individual learning targets are.

Visually impaired pupils are consistently supported well but the same is not true for other pupils with learning difficulties. Some have not had their individual learning needs identified until they reached the older classes and not all have individual education plans that clearly identify what they need to focus on in order to make the best progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and leadership team have been successful in tackling the many difficulties involved in establishing a new school from two separate schools that were acknowledged to have had very different cultures. They have been particularly successful in establishing a school with a positive ethos where pupils now behave well and are keen to learn. Parents and pupils confirm that they are consulted and given a voice in developing school policies and procedures.

Through careful monitoring, the leadership of the school has accurately identified where teaching and learning needed to be improved. The school's own monitoring records show a steady improvement in the quality of teaching, and this is confirmed by the inspection. The headteacher acknowledges, however, that good and better teaching is needed if pupils are to fully make up ground after their previous underachievement. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Several of the staff with subject leadership responsibilities are quite new to their roles, and some have been slow to extend their remit beyond the key stage with which they were previously most familiar.

Many governors too are new to their responsibilities, but they are ably led by a very experienced chairman. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and of those areas that need to be improved. They have a good appreciation of the improvements that have already been secured and of what still remains to be tackled. The headteacher, governors and leadership team have demonstrated that together they have the capacity to drive forward the further improvements needed in order to raise standards.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

Riverside Primary School St Edmund's Way Rainham Gillingham Kent ME8 8ET

7 December 2005

Dear Pupils

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us.

Here are the important things that we want you to know

- You are proud of your school and you enjoy coming.
- You behave well and you get on well with each other.
- Your teachers look after you well and help you when you have problems.
- Your headteacher knows what to do to make your school even better.

These are the things that we think could be better

- We think that some of your teachers could be helping you to do better in all your subjects.
- You are not always told what you need to do to improve your work.
- Those of you who need extra help in lessons are not always getting it soon enough.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector