

# Riverside Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104996
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	308732
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eithne Proffitt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	264
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs M Allen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G Lahive
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	Brighton Street Wallasey Merseyside CH44 6QW
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 639 9787
<b>Fax number</b>	-

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large primary school situated in Seacombe on the Wirral. The majority of its pupils live locally in an area of severe social and economic challenge. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage with a very small number from minority ethnic groups. An extremely high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the percentage of children identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above national averages. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status and the Activemark for its provision for sports. Riverside School provides eight places for vulnerable pupils from Riverside and surrounding schools. These pupils, aged between 5 and 8, have emotional or behavioural difficulties and significant barriers to their learning. They attend the Willows Class for up to four terms.

## 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, HMCI 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 the quality of leadership and management. Whilst Riverside Primary School provides an acceptable standard of education on a day-to-day basis, there are significant weaknesses in leadership and management at the highest level. These weaknesses are adversely affecting pupils' standards and achievement, aspects of their personal development and well-being, and the teaching and curriculum provided for them. This means that the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. However, the school does demonstrate its satisfactory capacity to improve through the effective work of assistant headteachers, middle managers, teachers and support staff.

The school's leaders consider standards and levels of pupils' achievement across the school to be good. However, recent national test results at the end of both key stages and the school's own data on the performance and progress of current pupils show that standards are below average overall, and achievement, whilst currently satisfactory overall, has declined over recent years. Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should in writing. This area of concern is not given sufficient prominence or priority in whole-school improvement planning by the headteacher. Consequently, writing has remained the lowest performing subject throughout the school for a number of years. The school gathers a wide range of information about each pupil's performance in different subjects and in skills development. However, this information is not analysed frequently or rigorously enough to provide an accurate picture of how well pupils are progressing each term in each year group.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are generally promoted well across the school. Pupils have a good appreciation of how to live healthily (although they do not always apply this knowledge to their daily diet) and are well versed in how to stay out of harm's way. However, pupils' below average attendance is at an all-time low and strategies for improvement are not yet reaping benefits. Pupils' progress in the basic skills they need to support them in adult life, including writing, is held back by the headteacher's failure to provide the drive and direction that will promote improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although the school judges it to be good. Whilst there is good teaching in some lessons, the impact of this over time on pupils' achievement and standards, especially in writing, is satisfactory. Class teachers are not always informed of priorities for whole-school improvement. Teaching, therefore, is not always sharply focused on the need to raise standards and achievement, particularly in writing. Teachers are not held sufficiently to account for the progress of their pupils. The curriculum and enrichment activities provided by the school are planned well to widen pupils' experiences. Nonetheless, the curriculum is satisfactory overall rather than good, as indicated in the school's self-evaluation, because the standard of writing in all subjects is below expectations. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is well promoted, helping them to deal with the choices that will be open to them in the future. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are much improved since the previous inspection.

The pastoral care provided for pupils is very good. Pupils love being in school, have positive attitudes to learning and are encouraged to be responsible members of the community. They

behave well and work well together. Parents regard the school highly, confident that their children are in safe hands. The academic guidance provided for pupils is less strong. Whilst the guidance towards academic success is promoted well in some classes through small-step, measurable targets, this is not consistent across the school.

The quality of leadership and management of the school at the highest level is inadequate. Whilst senior and middle leaders are increasingly diligent, sharply focused and passionate about the strategies that will move the school forward, the lack of clear, prioritised, measurable approaches from the top of the leadership ladder has proved a barrier to the school's success. The school's evaluation of its performance and effectiveness is inaccurate in many areas: it is much too positive and is not firmly rooted in gathering the views of all school leaders and managers. Consequently, current priorities targeted for improvement from this evaluation are inappropriate to the immediate needs of the school and its pupils. As a result, the school provides inadequate value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

When children start Nursery, their skills and understanding are typically below those expected of children of their age, especially in language, communication and personal and social development. They make satisfactory progress in Nursery and this is accelerated through Reception but many children enter Year 1 not yet skilled to cope with the National Curriculum. With encouragement, the children settle into the routines of the Foundation Stage and adults patiently teach the required personal and social skills necessary for learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall but stronger in Reception, as is the provision within the learning environment. Teachers assess children's skills at set points throughout the year. However, step-by-step planning for individual children based on rigorous day-to-day observations is not well established. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory but, particularly in Nursery, the use of the outdoor area is not sufficiently developed or employed to assure the children's full entitlement to a varied curriculum. The Foundation Stage leader has a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the provision. For example, the school is in the process of investing in training for all Foundation Stage staff with a view to improving the curriculum.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the strategic direction of the school is firmly rooted in accurate evaluations of pupils' performance and resolutely focused on raising standards and achievement.
- Use data analysis regularly and rigorously to establish and target priorities for improvement and enable teachers consistently to set pupils clear learning targets and focus closely on raising standards and achievement.
- Raise standards and achievement in writing throughout the school.
- Improve attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage, entering Year 1 socially ready for school but with some ground still to make up in their learning. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 showed that pupils reached standards in reading and mathematics that were a little below average. School data on current pupils reflect this picture of attainment. In Key Stage 2, progress

continues to be satisfactory in reading, mathematics and science as pupils gain standards that are slightly below national averages in these subjects. However, this is not the case in writing. Significantly low standards in writing in both key stages are a cause for concern. Currently, the school leadership monitors pupils' performance at the end of each year, using this information to plan support and intervention. This does not pick up swiftly enough on pupils who are failing to make sufficient progress. Consequently, when the end-of-year analysis is carried out, it is often too late for some pupils to catch up.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils at Riverside are positive about their school. They enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn and take part in all activities. Behaviour is good and the playground is a very active and 'fun place to be', as one pupil described it. Pupils work well together, actively encouraging each other to do their best. They develop self-esteem and confidence because their different achievements are valued and rewarded in class and in the weekly Awards Assembly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Older pupils are aware of the need to work hard and to be tolerant and respectful of others' differences.

The school promotes the health and well-being of its pupils and they respond well to the many opportunities to take part in physical exercise through a wide range of both curricular and extra-curricular activities. This commitment has been recognised in the school's achievement of the Activemark. Pupils are aware of the dangers of drugs and why it is important to keep fit but they do not always make informed choices about healthy eating and drinking. Attendance is a persistent weakness. While many strategies are in place to support parents and pupils to improve attendance, the school's leaders do not engage fully in detailed profiling and support for vulnerable groups. As a result, they fail to take the necessary actions that would halt the decline in attendance and lead to improvement.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

In the lessons observed, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge; clear planning; recognition of the varying abilities of their pupils and imaginative approaches to engage pupils in their learning. The focus of teaching upon raising standards and achievement, however, is not clearly evident and pupils are not all actively involved in setting their own targets for learning. The levels that pupils attain and the gains that they make in basic skills are carefully recorded by teachers. However, analysis of these outcomes is not carried out often enough by senior leaders to enable teachers to ensure that all pupils are consistently making expected or better progress. Progress in learning for all pupils is sometimes less effective because teachers do not always set individual, small-step targets for pupils to achieve. In addition, teachers' marking and the feedback given to pupils about their work do not consistently give clear pointers for improvement. Teaching assistants provide an effective further layer of teaching. Intensive training and support, led by the subject coordinator for literacy, has ensured that these staff provide effective support and care for the pupils with whom they work. Monitoring of teaching has improved and the more frequent evaluations by the assistant headteachers are well focused, picking up on valid areas for improvement.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Curriculum provision for Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory, although the school judges it to be good. The curriculum has a suitable emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Some links are beginning to be made between subjects to help to develop pupils' skills in a range of different contexts and bring their learning to life. However, pupils' writing in different subjects across the curriculum is not evaluated with the necessary rigour to improve writing standards overall. Pupils' skills in the use of ICT have improved but teaching of this subject is limited in its effectiveness as the school is slow to incorporate new technology that would make learning truly interactive. The teaching of Spanish across the school adds a cultural dimension to pupils' learning that broadens their horizons. Pupils greatly enjoy the opportunities to visit places of interest that spark their enthusiasm for learning. A good range of additional activities, particularly sports, during lunchtime and after school adds extra interest for pupils and extends their skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is satisfactory overall, with some very good elements of pastoral care. Adults know the pupils and their families well. Pupils feel safe and happy in school and they express high levels of trust in the adults who care for them. Pupils know there is always someone to whom they can take their worries. These features make a crucial contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. Induction procedures for pupils starting this school are supportive and family-friendly. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. The personal and learning needs of the most vulnerable pupils are very well understood. Teachers and support staff, in partnership with parents and other professionals, work hard towards removing any barriers to learning and raising pupils' self-esteem. The care and support for the pupils in the inclusion base (Willows Class) are outstanding. Confidence in the levels of care is voiced clearly by a number of parents of vulnerable pupils who attend this class. 'I cannot put into words how much I appreciate the hard work and sensitivity of the Willows team,' reflected the views of many parents. Whilst pastoral care for all pupils is good, the academic guidance provided through individual target-setting, marking and feedback does not consistently inform pupils about how well they are doing, where to focus their efforts in order to improve their work and how to achieve the next steps in their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

The headteacher has too positive a view of the school's effectiveness. School self-evaluation that excluded other levels of management and governance and did not pick up on anomalies in judgements about pupils' achievements, resulted in the school being given priorities by the headteacher that were not suitably relevant to whole-school performance or the improvements required. This, in turn, allowed some major issues such as pupils' standards and achievement, particularly in writing, to go unchallenged and others such as the quality and presentation of handwriting in the school to take unnecessary precedence. The subsequent lack of urgency related to improving pupils' performance and progress has resulted in standards, especially in writing, being lower than they should be for a further year. This slow reaction to possible

underachievement is reflected in the analysis of the information that the school gathers on pupils' attainment in end-of-year tests. Pupils' progress against measurable targets is not monitored at regular intervals throughout the year. This means that the school cannot guarantee that the most appropriate support and intervention are speedily put into place. Governors are committed to the school's success but have not always been provided with sufficiently detailed or accurate information about the school's performance to provide the level of challenge required to hold the school to account.

Senior managers, notably the assistant headteachers, and to an increasing degree middle managers, have a clear understanding of what is required to drive this school forward. Their focus on pupils' writing has resulted in revised systems for the organisation, delivery and assessment of the writing curriculum. This has taken some time to implement and, whilst it is still too early to judge any direct impact upon standards and achievement, pupils' writing is now regularly assessed. Their vision, based securely on past achievements, reflection and commitment to change, demonstrates that the school has the capacity for further improvement.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Riverside Primary School, Wallasey, CH44 6QW

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and are very grateful to all of you who chatted to us - I know you are proud to be part of Riverside. We would like to share with you some of those things we thought were good about your school and those things that we felt it could do better.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

- You are very polite, friendly and obviously enjoy coming to school.
- You get on really well with your teachers and your friends.
- You feel safe in school and your teachers, teaching assistants and all your other helpers look after you really well.
- You work hard in lessons, especially when your teachers give you fun and challenging activities to complete.
- You know a great deal about keeping fit and safe.
- Your school gives you lots of exciting activities outside lessons.

There are also some very important improvements the staff need to make and so your school has been given a Notice to Improve. This means that other inspectors will visit in the next six to eight months to check on how well it is improving. To help you to do even better in your work, I have asked your school leaders and governors to make sure that:

- they know exactly what is needed to improve your school and how to make that happen
- the school subject leaders keep a careful check on the progress you are making throughout the school year. This will help you to do better in all your work
- they especially help you to reach higher standards in writing
- they do everything they can to make sure you come to school every day and don't miss out on important learning.

You can help by coming to school, on time, every day and by continuing to work hard in your lessons. You can also try to eat more healthily.

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly. I really enjoyed watching you at work and play!