

Riverside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108575
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	309727
Inspection date	12 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Neil HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Val White
Headteacher	Dame Mary Macdonald
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Minton Lane
	North Shields
	Tyne and Wear
	NE29 6DQ
Telephone number	0191 2005037
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, pupils' personal development and well-being, the curriculum, and the school's use of self-evaluation. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with staff and pupils; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Riverside is a small school situated in the Riverside ward of North Tyneside, an area of considerable social disadvantage.

The skills of pupils when they start in the Nursery is improving each year, reflecting social changes locally, but until recently it has been very low. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who do not use English as their first language is above average. The school has a unit for up to eight pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. It has won many awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, the Sports Activemark and, most recently, Artsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an excellent school. Its most salient characteristic is the high achievement of its pupils. Its success is due to the emphasis it gives to teaching basic skills, its systematic checking on pupils' progress, the high expectations it has for the children and the frequency with which it rewards success. Pupils and parents recognise the school's quality. Pupils interviewed by the inspector were unanimous that 'this is the best school in the world.' A typical comment from parents was, 'I wouldn't want my child to go to anywhere else.'

Pupils make very good progress throughout the school. By the time they are seven their standards are about average in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics. By the time they are eleven, standards are consistently well above average in English, mathematics and science. Given their starting points, this represents outstanding achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language do very well. It is not uncommon for children who arrive at the school with no English to attain above-average levels in national tests. The small number of pupils placed in the unit progress well, particularly in their social skills. For example, on returning after a year to his usual school one pupil prompted his headteacher to write: 'there has been a huge change in his behaviour and attitudes...he is now able to communicate and approach relationships in a mature manner.'

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school. They behave very well in class and around the buildings. Because of the school's valiant efforts pupils' attendance has risen over the years from well below average to an unprecedented high last year: unvalidated figures indicate that attendance was considerably higher than in most schools. This is partly because of the school's tough line in not authorising absence for holidays; although a minority of parents are unhappy with this policy the inspector found that it was having a good effect.

Pupils understand what they must do to be healthy: a very high number take the school's healthy lunches, for example, and many are involved in sporting activities after school. They feel safe and appreciate the security measures around the building. Bullying is very rare and pupils are confident staff will deal with it effectively should it occur. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities; several apply for the role of 'buddy' to help younger pupils at playtime, for example, and the school council has initiated and organised events such as fund-raising and discos. Pupils are prepared well for adult life. They have a good command of basic skills, including information and communication technology. They have high aspirations; many are already thinking of continuing into higher education. They understand the value of academic success; when asked for their best memories of school, several pupils listed their results in the national tests.

Teaching and learning are of a very high quality. Lessons are lively and include a lot of practical activities. Teachers plan very well to meet the needs of individuals and groups because of the comprehensive information they collect on pupils' progress. Staff work very hard to support pupils and parents; as one parent wrote, 'staff here give 100%.' Parents of pupils who have come to the school from elsewhere report that they settle quickly and make good progress. Pupils get excellent support for their academic work. The extremely thorough assessment system enables staff to set ambitious targets for each pupil and measure the progress towards them. Pupils know their targets well, and in Key Stage 2 they know what they need to work on next. A few of the younger pupils do not understand what their targets mean.

The curriculum has many distinctive strengths. First, its emphasis on basic skills ensures pupils have the essential tools to succeed. Second, well planned links between different subjects enable pupils to reinforce their learning by applying their knowledge in new contexts. Third, the imaginative range of creative activities gives pupils opportunities to develop their artistic talents. A further strength is the clear focus on developing pupils' appreciation of other cultures and nationalities; they spontaneously spoke French to each other, for example, while moving between classrooms for a modern languages lesson. Finally, the curriculum is organised very effectively so that pupils are often taught in small groups; in Key Stage 2, for instance, morning lessons are taught in discrete year groups of fewer than 20 pupils. All pupils participate in at least one of an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The school calendar is further enriched by an exciting variety of visits, the most popular being the annual fun day at the beach and visitors to the school, including the Newcastle Eagles basketball team.

The headteacher's outstanding leadership has propelled the school to this great success. Fundamental to this drive is a comprehensive system for monitoring, evaluating and improving the school's performance. Despite doing well, staff are always striving to do more. An inspector investigating good management practice there recently wrote: 'the school is in no way complacent.' Although a small number of parents feel the school does not heed their views, the inspector found this was not so; an extra parents' evening, for example, has been added in response to parents' requests. The well established management structures and the strong team spirit have minimised the impact of the deputy headteacher's absence this term.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the foundation stage is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- No significant areas for improvement were identified of which the school was not aware.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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?	No

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

16 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Riverside Primary School, North Tyneside, NE29 6DQ

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly into your school. I enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what I thought.

Riverside is an outstanding school. Here are some of the many things I liked about it.

- You told me you like coming to school and feel safe there.
- I saw that you were clearly enjoying your lessons.
- Your behaviour is extremely good. You listen carefully to the teacher in class, you try hard when you are given work to do, and you walk around the school in a sensible way, showing consideration and respect for others. You should be very proud of this.
- Your teachers and other staff take good care of you while you are at school. They work very hard to help you with your work.
- You do lots of exciting things during the day and after school. Many of you especially like the annual fun day the beach.
- You know how important it is to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise.
- You do very well in subjects like English and mathematics. Some of you told me of your ambitious plans for the future, such as going to university, and you understand the importance of succeeding at school in order to achieve this.
- Many of you are very grown up and help with the running of the school; the school council, for instance, has done valuable work organising fund-raising and discos.

You are very fortunate to be pupils at Riverside. Some of you say, 'it's the best school in the world!'

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil

Her Majesty's Inspector