

Riverside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104996
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	331277
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	237
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Allen
Headteacher	G Lahive
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brighton Street Wallasey Merseyside CH44 6QW
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

When Riverside Primary School was inspected in April 2008, it was subject to a notice to improve and asked to address significant weaknesses in leadership and management. It was subsequently visited in December 2008, when it was judged to be making good progress in addressing these issues.

Description of the school

This average size school is situated in an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are White British with low numbers from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. A much higher than average percentage has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need. Around two-thirds are eligible for a free school meal. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and a Reception class. The school has an inclusion base, 'The Willows', on the site. This provides education and offers support for pupils, particularly those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It also takes pupils who have been excluded from other schools. The school has the Activemark, Healthy School and Family Works Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory and rapidly improving standard of education. It has successfully addressed the significant weaknesses in leadership and management that were identified at the last inspection. This has meant that the school is much better placed to raise pupils' achievement and standards even further.

Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily and, by the time they leave Year 6, reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. Improvements this year in the content and breadth of pupils' writing, linked to a keen focus on promoting their speaking and listening skills, have led to higher standards and better achievement in the subject. However, the lower quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling means that standards in writing are still below average. All pupils do well in science, because of the school's recent emphasis on enabling them to test their predictions through investigation. However, in other subjects the more able pupils underachieve because they are not always sufficiently challenged.

Pupils' personal development is good and they feel cherished and safe. They behave well, have positive attitudes to learning and are open and friendly. Many display a good understanding of the benefits of a balanced diet, regular exercise and they know how to avoid unnecessary risk.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, ranging from satisfactory to good. Where learning is best, pupils play a very active role and are very involved in assessing how well they and their classmates are progressing. Where teaching is good it enables all pupils to progress well by offering effective challenge to different ability groups and by providing interesting and relevant activities to which pupils respond very enthusiastically. Often, where teaching is less effective, there is an imbalance between teachers' input and pupils working independently or cooperatively on appropriate tasks. This hampers pupils' progress.

The curriculum satisfactorily meets pupils' academic needs, offering them many enriching experiences, and promoting their personal development well. Pupils thoroughly enjoy visits and gain socially and culturally from visits linked to their learning. After school and lunchtime clubs promote pupils' physical development well. The curriculum provided for younger pupils who find it difficult to learn in whole-class situations, effectively meets their needs in the school's inclusion base, the Willows.

A strength of the school is the very good quality pastoral care provided for pupils and their families. The sensitive, approachable staff reassure those pupils who have considerable barriers to their learning to settle happily and to take advantage of all that the school offers. Very strong partnerships with external agencies and with most parents ensure that the most vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well looked after and enabled to achieve at least satisfactorily. Academic guidance has improved since the previous inspection and this means that pupils are generally well informed about how to improve their work. Despite rigorous systems to improve attendance, the school continues to find it difficult to persuade a minority of parents of the importance of sending their children to school more regularly. Consequently, attendance is well below average overall.

Leadership and management are now satisfactory and they continue to improve. In partnership with the local authority, the headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body have tightened up systems to check on pupils' performance. They have made themselves and staff more aware of how to track and measure pupils' standards and progress and have put in place effective strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing. They have been less successful in improving overall attendance and still have a too positive view of the school's overall effectiveness and of aspects of its provision and outcomes. Given the improvements made and indications of rising standards, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Many children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below what is typical for their age, but particularly low in their communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. They achieve satisfactorily overall. Children progress more quickly in Reception than in Nursery because provision more effectively meets all their needs, both in the way in which adults are deployed and in the better use of assessment information to set tasks that fully suit all children. Despite the satisfactory progress they make, children enter Year 1 with overall skills below those expected.

Welfare requirements are fully met and the quality of care provided throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. This has a crucial impact on children's good personal and social development. Even the youngest children are aware of the need for good personal hygiene and of eating healthily. Most children relate well to each other, develop independence and share resources amicably. Children are clearly happy playing and learning both indoors and outside in the well equipped outdoor area. Adults are better deployed as regards encouraging children's language skills in Reception than in Nursery. The teaching of letters and sounds is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' early reading and writing skills but children still enter Year 1 needing to catch up in these skills. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work closely with parents to support children's learning. Teamwork is effective and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader is taking steps to improve provision in the Nursery and to use assessment information more effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' handwriting and spelling throughout the school.
- Provide consistently effective challenge for the more able pupils to raise achievement.
- Ensure that all teachers strike the right balance between whole-class teaching and in providing opportunities for pupils to practise, apply and consolidate existing and newly learned skills, so that all pupils make good progress.
- Persuade the parents of those pupils who are frequently absent from school of the importance of sending their children to school regularly.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Throughout the school the progress pupils make ranges from satisfactory to good. How quickly pupils' progress is directly linked to the quality of teaching they receive. In Key Stage 1, pupils' progress is satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, pupils' achievements are patchy with some quicker progress in Year 6.

In the 2008 Year 2 standards were below average overall and significantly below average in reading. Standards have improved this year but are still below average in reading and writing, but average in mathematics. Although the more able pupils attain satisfactorily in mathematics, far fewer than found nationally are attaining the higher Level 3 in reading and writing. While overall standards were broadly average in Year 6 national tests in 2008, they were significantly below average in English, especially in writing. Currently, Year 6 pupils are attaining average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good improvement in English, in writing in particular, despite the fact that standards remain below average in the subject. However, a smaller proportion than nationally is attaining at the higher Level 5 in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language and those who are taught predominantly in the Willows make satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a keen sense of fair play, follow strictly codes of conduct and are aware of the faiths and traditions of other cultures. Relationships are good throughout the school and pupils respect each other and adults, regardless of race or background. The sensitive way in which pupils tolerate and understand the sometimes difficult behaviour of their more emotionally insecure classmates is a credit to them and to the school's determination to provide equality of opportunity and to minimise discrimination. Pupils willingly seek responsibility as play leaders, school councillors and monitors and carry out their duties conscientiously. Pupils contribute to the school and local communities well. They raise funds for charity and at Christmas the school choir entertains local citizens. Pupils enjoy and participate eagerly in sporting activities and, by learning to swim, acquire a skill that benefits their health and promotes their safety. Pupils acquire satisfactory basic literacy and numeracy skills and have positive attitudes to their work. However, too many do not take enough care when writing and spelling. Despite well below average attendance overall pupils thoroughly enjoy school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and improving. Currently, however, there is still too much teaching that is no better than satisfactory to ensure that all pupils learn effectively and make good progress. Where teaching is at its best, pupils achieve well and make good progress. In good lessons, pupils work diligently at well focused tasks which are both challenging and relevant. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils worked in groups designing and pricing the refurbishment of a famous footballer's house. They were engrossed

in the task and applied their mathematics skills well. Good cross-curricular links were subsequently made when the same pupils were required to make a quotation for the work and write a persuasive letter to try to gain the contract.

Where learning is good, pupils practise their language skills consistently. This provides a sound basis for their subsequent writing. When this good practice is combined with a creative activity pupils progress very well. In contrast, in those lessons where pupils are kept too long on the carpet and the tasks set are more mundane and less challenging, their progress is slower, especially that of the more able. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting and spelling. Teaching assistants are deployed satisfactorily and, when actively involved in pupils' learning, provide sensitive and effective support for less confident pupils or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in English in considerable detail, providing pupils with valuable guidance on how to improve their work. Such practice is not so evident in pupils' work in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, it provides pupils with considerable enrichment. Statutory requirements are met and pupils' basic academic skills promoted satisfactorily. The curriculum is organised in such a way as to give relevance to pupils' learning and to enable them to enjoy school. Special theme days and visits out of school promote pupils' better understanding of and involvement in history, geography and the environment. Residential visits develop pupils' self-esteem, team building skills and independence. Visitors to the school provide pupils with opportunities to learn first-hand from artists, musicians and dancers. Pupils learn Spanish, which enriches their cultural development. Regular sessions from specialist coaches enhance pupils' sports skills and physical development. Less well developed, however, are consistent opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, to extend their thinking and, in particular, for the more able pupils to be challenged. Although there are opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills in writing and mathematics these are not planned systematically enough to ensure pupils' consistently good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a strength of the school. With a significant minority of pupils experiencing barriers to their learning, the very good quality care and support they receive enables them to make the expected academic progress and to develop well personally. This is significantly supported by the very strong partnerships with external agencies. Pupils with learning or emotional difficulties are sensitively supported to overcome their uncertainty and at times reluctance to conform. The school's inclusive nature is exemplified by the Willows, which provides very good support for troubled pupils, many of whom have been unable to settle in other schools. Systems to safeguard pupils, for child protection, to ensure pupils' and adults' health and safety, and for assessing risk meet current requirements. Strategies to ensure good behaviour are very successful. Since the last inspection the school has increased its efforts to improve attendance. Most parents respond well to the school's requests and efforts to work with them to ensure their children attend regularly but has so far had limited success with a minority who have yet to respond. Consequently attendance remains well below average. The quality of academic guidance has improved well over the last year. Pupils are now much more aware of how well

they are doing and talk knowledgeably about their learning targets, because teachers are using assessment information much more sharply to direct pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have taken on board the messages from the last inspection, when leadership and management were judged to be inadequate and have effectively improved most of the aspects which were unsatisfactory. This has meant that leaders and managers have a much firmer grasp of what needs to be done to continue improvement and of how to secure pupils' better achievement and higher standards. Pupils' progress is now tracked much more vigilantly, the quality of teaching is checked on more rigorously and systematically, and school improvement planning is more relevant and focused. However, the full impact of these improvements has yet to be seen in all pupils' good achievement or in securing consistently good quality teaching. The school's close partnership with the local authority has contributed significantly to these improvements. Other effective partnerships, for example, with most parents and with local schools, contribute well to pupils' academic and personal skills. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Within the school community it is good, especially in the support provided for the more troubled families and in facilitating adult education. In the wider national community and globally there are currently few opportunities to make relevant links that would enhance pupils' awareness of, for example, the similarities and differences between their own lives and those in different communities.

Governance is satisfactory. Some governors visit the school regularly and some are keenly aware of the school's provision as a result of working as support staff. However, there is, as yet, no systematic cycle of visits that would enable more governors to have an overview of the school's provision and performance. The governing body ensures that resources are used prudently and directed to where they are needed most, for example, to reduce class sizes in those year groups in which pupils' progress has been slowest. Value for money is satisfactory. The school now acknowledges that despite the good improvements made over the last year, these now need to be further embedded and sustained longer for its capacity to improve to be good, rather than satisfactory as it is currently.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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?	No

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

Thank you very much for the extremely friendly welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. You may know that when the school was inspected just over a year ago, not everything was as good as it should have been. Since then, your school has got better and it now gives you a satisfactory and improving education. This means that you are making satisfactory progress in your work.

These are the things that I am impressed with.

- How well you get on together and look out for each other in class and in the playground.
- Your good behaviour and how keen you are to learn.
- The way that some of your teachers make lessons so interesting and such fun, particularly when they involve you in activities.
- How well you are looked after by the adults in school. This is especially good for those of you who find your work more difficult than most or take longer to settle into school routines.
- How well you know your targets, especially in writing.

Part of my job is to ask your headteacher and the other people who run the school to do things that will make it even better. There are two things in this list that I feel you can particularly help with. I have asked the school to:

- make sure that your handwriting and spelling improves
- help those of you who find your work easier than most to reach higher standards
- make sure that all teachers give you enough time to practise your skills on your own or with other children, rather than keeping you all together for too long
- persuade the parents of those pupils who are absent too often to send them to school much more regularly.