

Rivacre Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130270
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	341014
Inspection dates	21–22 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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 of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Aspden
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Lee
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Rivacre Brow Overpool Ellesmere Port CH66 1LE
Telephone number	0151 3552548
Fax number	0151 3512932
Email address	head@rivacrevalley.cheshire.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	21–22 April 2010
Inspection number	341014

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed two assemblies and eleven lessons, or parts of lessons, which were taught by eight different teachers. Pupils were observed at play and in the dining room. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of pupils' work and a range of documentation, particularly that related to safeguarding and pupils' progress. Questionnaires were examined from staff, pupils and from 40 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching and the rate of progress for different groups at Key Stage 2
- whether the school has improved pupils' personal development to the extent suggested in its self-evaluation
- to what extent the school's evaluation of elements of its leadership as outstanding are accurate.

Information about the school

This is a small primary school on the outskirts of Ellesmere Port. Most pupils are of White British origin, with others from a small range of minority ethnic heritages, the largest groups being from Black African or Irish Traveller backgrounds. Very few pupils have a home language other than English. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. A very high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These needs cover a wide range, with the most significant including speech and language problems and emotional and behaviour difficulties. A much higher proportion of pupils than average start or leave the school at other than the usual junctures.

The school has separate classes for each age group, except for pupils in Years 3 and 4 who are taught together. The youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mornings-only Nursery class. Reception age children attend full time. The school has recently gained Healthy Schools status. After the last inspection, the local authority's Infant Assessment Unit moved from the school. However, the pupils who were enrolled stayed at Rivacre and are now integrated into Key Stage 2.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

A key to the school's success is the outstanding provision for care, support and guidance which ensures that all pupils are treated as individuals. Their social, emotional and academic needs are tracked carefully and all staff work together to ensure that these needs are met. This means that pupils' personal development, already good at the last inspection, is now outstanding in several areas. Pupils know that they are valued and cared for. They like and respect the staff so are keen to please them and, as a result, their behaviour is excellent. They feel extremely safe in school. The school's hard work to improve attendance has paid off, and figures are now in line with national averages having been very low in past years. Excellent links with parents and carers has contributed to this improvement and to pupils' personal development. Pupils themselves make a very strong contribution to the harmonious and happy ethos of the school community.

Pupils make good progress because of good teaching. Standards are rising and are broadly in line with national averages. Reading is a strength following a concentration on this by staff in the past. A weakness in mathematics identified last year has been a major focus for improvement work recently, and this is showing in improved progress. Writing is also improving, but standards still lag behind those in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good progress because work is modified to meet their particular needs. Also, the large number of adults in the school ensure that they receive extra help and advice when they need it to succeed. Outstanding links with a wide range of outside agencies help the staff to provide the specific, tailor-made help that some pupils need. The school promotes community cohesion extremely well locally and within the school, but has accurately identified that links beyond the local area, while improving, are at a relatively early stage of development.

The school evaluates its provision and outcomes very rigorously, and all leaders have made an excellent contribution to ensuring that staff and governors work together with a common purpose. This is very effective in driving the school forward and contributes strongly to the excellent work to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils. Major improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection have contributed to pupils' enjoyment, enthusiasm and progress. The improvements in curriculum, standards in mathematics and pupils' attendance and behaviour show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - building on pupils' improved skills in speaking and listening to provide more opportunities to stimulate writing through discussion and drama
 - adopting a more consistent approach to marking, ensuring pupils know how to improve the quality of their writing
 - ensure pupils make an earlier start to learning the skills of joined-up writing
 - giving pupils more frequent opportunities to use word processing in their writing.
- Extend the excellent practice in promoting community cohesion locally to a range of different communities in this country and abroad.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' excellent behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and good collaborative skills underpin their good progress in lessons. Despite their very low attainment when they start the school, they reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. All this stands them in good stead for their future lives both in and out of school. The learning of all groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic heritages and those who have special education needs and/or disabilities, is similarly good. Pupils who start in different year groups are given good support academically by staff, and socially by both staff and pupils. As a result, they settle quickly and soon make the same good progress as their classmates.

Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe, and can explain in detail what the school does to keep them secure, and how they can ensure their own safety both in and out of school. The school's recent award of Healthy Schools status is reflected in pupils' good understanding of healthy eating and hygiene, and by their enthusiastic uptake of opportunities for exercise. Pupils' good social and moral development is shown in their respect for each other and for other people's views, and their concern for those less fortunate than themselves. It is illustrated by the work of the school council to raise money for charities. Pupils' good cultural understanding is reflected in the high quality art on display around the school, such as the clay sculpture based on Australian aboriginal art. Pupils' excellent contribution to the harmonious school community is enhanced by their willingness to take on responsibilities such as peer mentors, prefects, eco-committee members, and by the very positive relationships between boys and girls from different backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good teaching makes the major contribution to pupils' good learning. Teachers manage classes well, based on excellent relationships and high expectations. They make good use of assessment data to match work to pupils' needs. This is particularly effective in mathematics, enhanced by the recent setting arrangements which have helped raise standards. Very occasionally, teachers do not provide an extra level of challenging work for higher attainers. Skilled teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. All staff are good at monitoring pupils' ongoing success, so that they can intervene quickly if pupils are struggling. Teachers make lessons interesting, for example through a varied range of activities or the use of the interactive whiteboards to clarify explanations. Pupils are often involved well by giving them opportunities to discuss their work together. This is leading to significant progress in speaking and listening skills. Marking of pupils' work is thorough, and makes clear what pupils have done well and where they have gone astray. However, it too seldom points out clearly how pupils can raise their standards in the future.

A good curriculum adds to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Increasingly good links have been made between different subjects to make tasks realistic and meaningful for pupils. They have good opportunities to develop their basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a range of subjects. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their writing. A good range of enrichment activities including clubs, visitors and visits out add to pupils' enjoyment. Year 6 pupils particularly value residential visits and are greatly looking forward to staying in London later in the term.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The outstanding pastoral care ensures all pupils feel safe and happy in school. Pupils say the teachers are friendly and they particularly mention how much the learning mentor provides extra help and advice to those who have worries. Those pupils who initially find it difficult to conform to expected standards of behaviour receive extremely good help and guidance from staff and form good relationships with their classmates. As a result, their behaviour improves and lessons are calm and orderly. Staff are quick to spot difficulties and intervene sensitively to head off any problems. The improved attendance is due to a range of measures to promote it, including the innovative use of the school car to collect pupils whose circumstances have led to difficulties in attendance and punctuality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Excellent leadership, particularly from the headteacher and her assistant, has produced a cohesive unit of staff and governors who work together successfully to improve provision. This has underpinned recent major improvements, for example in mathematics progress and the curriculum. The innovative leadership structure consists of five teams; all staff and governors are team members. This has led to a shared purpose and determination to improve outcomes. It has also resulted in a particularly high level of involvement and understanding by governors, which means their challenge and contribution is exceptionally well informed and effective. Governors also take a lead in consulting parents and pupils, and help ensure that the school's engagement with parents is of high quality. This is reflected in parents' overwhelmingly positive response to questionnaires. The close links with all groups of parents, a close monitoring of the progress of different groups and individuals, and the high levels of pastoral care all support the excellent promotion of equal opportunities. The leadership of teaching and learning has led to a high level of consistency despite several changes of staff recently. Lessons are monitored regularly and staff given clear feedback to help them improve practice. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and meet all legal requirements. Staff and governors are vigilant, and consult parents and pupils to ensure high quality. However, some documentation, whilst meeting requirements, is based on local authority models without personalising it fully to this school. The school's work in promoting community cohesion is good overall. The school is a cohesive and harmonious community with excellent links locally, for example with Traveller families. A link with a school in Kenya is extending this further afield, but the school has identified that links

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

with the wider world are still at an early stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The accommodation for both Nursery and Reception is of high quality, and staff provide an excellent variety of interesting activities both indoors and out that foster children's enthusiasm. Teaching is good and all staff form good relationships with the children, ensuring that they feel happy and relaxed in the setting. Staff are skilled in joining in with children's play to help structure activities, as was seen during an energetic game of hide and seek that children thoroughly enjoyed. Good leadership and management ensure that the two teachers work closely together in planning their work so that both classes use the shared outdoor area to maximum benefit. This common approach gives a strong basis for a seamless transition between classes. A good balance is ensured between directed activities and those chosen by children. All staff are involved in monitoring and assessing children's learning, and use the results to plan activities that build well on individuals' prior experiences. As a result, they make good progress, although in most years their standards at the end of Reception still lag behind those expected because of their very low starting points.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Relatively few parents replied to the questionnaire. Those that did are extremely appreciative of all that the school does for their children. They are particularly positive about their children being safe and enjoying school, and the good progress that pupils make because of good teaching.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rivacre Valley Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	68	12	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	68	11	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	79	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	66	12	32	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	61	15	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	53	17	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	63	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	55	17	45	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	47	19	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	61	15	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	76	8	21	0	0	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rivacre Valley Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH66 1LE

Thank you for all your help and your friendly welcome when we came to your school. You told us that you enjoyed school and we could see why. This is what we found out.

Rivacre is a good school. You all make good progress because your teachers are skilful at helping you to learn. You learn a lot about different topics because of the exciting things teachers give you to do. We have agreed that the teachers are going to help you to learn even more about different people, in this country and around the world. Your attendance has improved a lot recently, and this will help you to make better progress because you don't miss so much work. You do not make as much progress in writing as in other subjects, and we have agreed with the headteacher that the staff will concentrate on trying to help you improve this in future.

The adults are extremely good at looking after you and making sure that if anyone needs any extra help then they get it. They make sure that you all feel very safe and happy in school. You make a massive contribution to the school through your excellent behaviour, and by how well you all get along together. I was especially impressed by how sensibly you all take on jobs such as being on the eco committee or helping out as a prefect.

The adults are good at organising the school and are keen to make it even better. You can help by keeping up your improved attendance, and keeping up your hard work, especially with writing.

We hope you all continue to enjoy life at Rivacre Valley.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.