

Riverside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134011
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	341419
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Patricia Wozencroft
Headteacher	Kathryn Frame
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2010
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors looked at a wide range of evidence. All classes were observed, although it was only possible to see nine out of the 11 teachers due to the job share arrangements. Inspectors observed 17 lessons, which included nine shorter visits as part of a 'learning walk' where inspectors only dipped into lessons. Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and evaluated their progress. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and three members of the governing body. Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's improvement planning and safeguarding information. In total, 41 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed, together with pupil and staff questionnaires.

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

- how well children learn and achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in their social, creative and language development
- how well pupils learn and achieve in mathematics and English
- if teachers ensure that lessons are challenging for the most able pupils
- the quality of care and provision for the most vulnerable pupils, especially those with visual impairment and those from Gypsy Roma heritages
- the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation about the work of the school.

Information about the school

Riverside is a small school. Classes often have fewer than 20 pupils. A very high proportion of pupils receive free school meals. The school has a high proportion, just over one third of all pupils, with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very high proportion has a statement of special educational needs. This is because the school has specialist provision for visually impaired pupils and a few pupils also have autistic spectrum disorders. Most children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery or Reception classes. New pupils often join throughout the school year, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The school has a small proportion of pupils from Gypsy Roma heritages and a few pupils speak English as an additional language.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Riverside Primary is a satisfactory school that has faced challenging circumstances since the last inspection due to a significant number of staff changes. As a result of the good leadership by the headteacher and governors, the school now has a stable staff and the pace of improvement is speeding up. The school shows a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Pupils mostly enjoy learning and achieve satisfactorily. They develop a good awareness of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Pupils with visual impairment are well supported. Strong links with outside organisations contribute to the help given to pupils with special educational needs.

The vast majority of pupils behave well but inspectors agree with pupils, and parents and carers that a few pupils show more challenging behaviour and this is why behaviour is judged to be satisfactory. Occasionally, behaviour is not always consistently well managed; this can have an impact on the pace of learning. Plans are well underway to address this weakness but there is still more to do to ensure that learning is not interrupted and improves further.

Since the last inspection, the leadership team has been restructured and its self-evaluation has improved so that it is securely satisfactory. There are suitable development plans and actions to improve the outcomes and provision for pupils. Taking a three-year trend, attainment has improved and is average. However, the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can restrict the school from performing in line with national averages, as was evident in 2009. Leaders know that pupils' attainment in writing is an important area for development. Mathematical problem solving is improving, although the most able pupils are not consistently well challenged.

Inspectors agree with the senior leadership team that teaching and learning are satisfactory, although good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 6. It is ambitious to make teaching good overall. The team regularly checks lessons and gives general feedback to staff about how to improve and this shows satisfactory self-evaluation. Nonetheless, the way that they check lessons is sometimes too general and does not precisely identify ways to improve the quality of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that learning and achievement are at least good

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overall by:

- making sure that lessons are always planned to meet pupils' wide-ranging needs and capabilities
 - ensuring that pupils are always well challenged in lessons, especially the most able in mathematics
 - tightening up the implementation of the behaviour policy so that all staff are clear about how to promote and achieve good behaviour in all lessons
 - sharpening up the way that leaders monitor and check the quality of teaching and learning so that staff are given very precise guidance about how to improve.
- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement in writing by:
- providing more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to write for different purposes
 - giving older pupils more opportunities to do extended writing
 - providing pupils with clearer writing targets which help them to learn how to write more complex sentences, using descriptive vocabulary
 - helping pupils to check and edit their work so that they make faster progress in learning new skills
 - making sure that teachers refer to pupils' targets when marking their work
 - giving pupils time to respond to the marking comments made by teachers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils were keen to tell inspectors that they like school and it was clear that they show respect for different cultures, as evident when Year 6 talked about their recent visits to a mosque, synagogue and gudwara.

From the lessons, work and assessment information seen, attainment is broadly at the expected level for pupils currently in the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is good in some year groups and satisfactory in others. Occasionally, a few pupils do not achieve well enough for their capabilities and it is not unusual for this to have a direct link with their behaviour difficulties. Teachers are working successfully to help pupils develop the skills to tackle real life mathematical problems. This was seen in a lesson when Year 2 explored different ways to find halves, quarters and three quarters of chocolate bars. They enjoyed thinking hard and sharing their ideas. As a result, Year 2 are well on track to do better in 2010 than they have in the past. In Year 6, pupils worked out the formula for the perimeter of different shapes and learnt how to use spreadsheets to help them with this. In this lesson, the most able pupils were given challenging activities. But this is not always consistently the case in other lesson seen. Pupils understand about how to improve their handwriting, grammar and punctuation skills because clear guidance and targets are provided for this. However, targets to help them to edit and re-shape their work are not well enough developed. This, together with

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underdeveloped shared modelling of writing by teachers, means that pupils are unsure about how to write more complex sentences, using exciting and varied vocabulary. This was evident when pupils wrote diary entries in one lesson and character details in another.

Pupils with visual impairment achieve satisfactorily. They are skilfully helped to use Braille so that they are fully involved in learning. Pupils from Gypsy Roma heritages enjoy school and are given the help that they need to make satisfactory progress. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are often keen to share their ideas in lessons and some of these pupils are especially able. They make satisfactory progress but adults sometimes miss the chance to extend their learning and help them to work with other more able pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Overall, almost all teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects being taught. They provide detailed planning but sometimes this lacks information about how well pupils will be challenged. Some teachers use resources well to enable pupils to learn in different

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

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and interesting ways but this is not always the case, as seen when pupils were learning about percentages and fractions. Teachers help pupils to talk about their work and develop their speaking skills well overall. Some teachers are more skilled at managing challenging behaviour than others. Where this is best, teachers and assistants praise pupils for their good behaviour, help them to develop their self-esteem and always ensure that the activities are well matched to their interests and capabilities. Assessment is improving well, including marking. Some marking is of a high standard and clearly guides pupils in how to improve. However, pupils are not acting enough on the comments to hasten their progress, especially in writing.

Links between subjects are developing, as seen in Year 2 work, where pupils enjoyed making perfumes. This combined scientific investigation, measuring and writing. Visits are also increasing, as evident when pupils worked with the Army Royal Engineers to design and make bridges. Pupils are excited about the new allotment area and are keen to get planting! Art is also developing well.

The care given to pupils is generally good, as evident in the good pastoral care for individual pupils and the sensitive inclusion, support and guidance for pupils with visual impairment. Despite these good features, care is judged to be satisfactory rather than good due to the high proportion of parents and pupils who noted that a few pupils do not behave well enough. Parents and pupils feel that this needs to be managed better and inspectors agree. While pupils say they are safe at school overall, they sometimes feel worried about the behaviour of a few.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She is well supported by her senior leadership team that is keenly developing its roles. There are improved assessment systems and regular meetings with staff, who are now more accountable for the progress pupils make. These are helping to ensure that progress and attainment are improving. Pupils who have made slower progress in the past are being targeted for extra support. Leaders are working successfully to improve learning in mathematics and to improve grammar, punctuation and spelling. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils are on track to gain higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2010 than previously.

Leaders are very focused on promoting equal opportunities, especially for pupils with

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visual impairment, those learning English as an additional language and for those from Gypsy Roma heritages. Leaders do not tolerate discrimination. They recognise that, to lift equal opportunities from good towards outstanding, the provision for the most able needs to be more consistent. Leaders appreciate that their monitoring of this is not sharp enough. For example, they look generally at teachers’ planning but they have not focused precisely on how well teachers plan for the most able pupils.

Governors ask very challenging questions about the outcomes and provision for pupils. They have taken firm and sometimes difficult action to bring about improvements in teaching and leadership. Their decision to employ a business manager is a good initiative, which gives the headteacher more time to focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour of pupils. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. The provision has been audited and very clear plans are in place to raise global awareness more.

Many aspects of safeguarding are good; however, safeguarding is judged to be satisfactory overall because aspects of behaviour management, including anti- bullying and the behaviour policy, are currently a focus for review. The school is shortly to receive extra funding to increase the provision and support for pupils with more complex behavioural needs.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery and Reception classes due to good leadership. In almost all areas of their development,

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standards are rising and they reach average levels of attainment by the time that they are ready to join Year 1. Overall, from children’s often lower than expected starting points, they make good progress and learn well because of good teaching.

Staff place a strong emphasis on helping children to develop their speaking and social skills. Improvements have been made in the range of creative activities, but opportunities to develop role play and very large creative art work are underdeveloped. Adults place a good emphasis on learning to count and problem solving. For example, children had to design, measure and make a paper sleeping bag for their clay mouse. Children like to write captions to go with their pictures and models and they enjoy making little books, letters and cards, but such opportunities are underdeveloped. The writing area is satisfactory but lacks attractive resources to capture and enliven children’s enthusiasm.

Children benefit from a spacious inside and outdoor learning area, where they learn much about the world around them and develop physical agility. Staff are caring and form close partnerships with parents and carers, and their children. This means that children settle in well and quickly grow in confidence and enthusiasm. They enjoy school and have plenty of opportunities to select resources and make decisions for themselves, as well as benefiting from more formal teacher-led activities. Assessment procedures are thorough and well organised but not as detailed for writing as other areas of the curriculum.

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

Broadly a quarter of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Overall, they support satisfactory links with parents and carers. They commented that their children enjoy school and that staff are mostly approachable and friendly. They mostly feel that the school keeps their children safe and they are largely supportive about the work of the school. However, a high proportion who returned the questionnaire made reference to incidences of unacceptable behaviour, which was almost wholly in one year group. Where such comments were made, they felt that the school does not deal effectively with this. A smaller, but still significant number of parents, also expressed anxiety that their suggestions and concerns were not always given sufficient attention. The inspectors found that the school is taking these seriously and that work has already begun to address the concerns, although more improvement is needed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Riverside 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.

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Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	37	25	61	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	37	17	41	7	17	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	37	17	41	9	22	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	27	21	51	7	17	2	5
The teaching is good at this school	8	20	24	59	7	17	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	29	19	46	10	24	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	32	24	59	4	10	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)	9	22	24	59	5	12	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	20	24	59	5	12	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	12	12	29	12	29	12	29
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	17	18	44	12	29	3	7
The school is led and managed effectively	10	24	19	46	8	20	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	34	19	46	7	17	1	2

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



12 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Riverside Primary School, Rainham, ME8 8ET

You may remember that three school inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we spoke to you. Your school is a satisfactory school. You make steady progress in learning new things. You mostly enjoy school and do especially well in learning how to be healthy. You understand about the lives of others and their faiths. Although most of you are very well behaved, a few of you find this harder. We are pleased that you are doing more interesting problem solving in mathematics and well done for working hard to improve your handwriting, punctuation and spelling. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes make a good start to learning. We like the way that pupils with visual difficulties are helped to be involved in school life and the way that you all get on together. Your headteacher and governors are working well to make the school better for you. We have asked them to work on the following important things to help with this:

- They should make sure that more lessons are good so that those of you who find learning easy have plenty of challenges and everyone is helped to make good progress.
- They should make sure that everyone knows how to behave well and tries really hard to improve their behaviour so that it is good in all classes.
- They should check very carefully how well you learn in lessons.
- They should help you to do better in writing. This will mean that younger children will be writing about lots of different things. Older pupils will be checking, improving and extending their writing more. Teachers will be giving you clear targets so that you know exactly how to improve. When teachers mark your work, they will tell you how you are doing in reaching your targets. Then, they will give you more time to improve your work.

Good luck in the future and please always work hard and behave well. We hope that you have plenty of successes in growing things in your lovely new allotment area!

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector

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