

Riverside Community Special School

Scratchface Lane, Purbrook, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO7 5QD

Inspection dates

11–12 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and lead practitioner have worked tenaciously to improve the school. Together they consistently communicate high expectations. Consequently, there have been rapid improvements since the last inspection, resulting in excellent provision delivered by highly motivated staff.
- Governors are highly analytical. Through their robust challenge and considered support, they hold leaders robustly to account. Together, they have rightly identified the need to include more opportunities for pupils to use practical experiences to embed their learning in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is highly effective. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and so plan tailored learning opportunities for pupils' specific needs.
- Pupils exhibit exemplary attitudes in lessons and around the school. They contribute to the excellent relationships enjoyed by all at the school. Their attendance is much better than is typical.
- Pupils are kept extremely safe. Children and their families are the priority for staff. Their well-being is highly promoted and there are excellent relationships between home and school.
- The promotion of British values is very effective. Every individual is highly valued. Pupils strive to contribute to their local, national and international communities and learn about them through art, music and assemblies. Consequently, pupils make rapid gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The teaching of reading is outstanding. Pupils love books and enjoy learning to read and so make rapid and sustained progress in this area.
- Pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points, particularly in English and communication, as well as their personal development. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well. The excellent use of the pupil premium funding has led to increased rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils. The most able pupils are consistently challenged and so those who are most able and disadvantaged make the same rapid progress as others.
- Provision in the early years is stunning. Staff know the children exceptionally well. This ensures that children make an excellent start to their education, because transitions are managed very effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the curriculum to make even more of opportunities for pupils to use practical experiences to embed their learning in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Under the dynamic, determined and considered leadership of the headteacher, leaders have successfully created a culture of high expectation and the desire to continuously improve. Carefully chosen strategies for improvement, coupled with the headteacher's desire to capitalise on all staff's potential, lead to an exceptionally effective school.
- Leaders know their school extremely well. They make accurate evaluations of the school's effectiveness and so plans for improvement are very well conceived and effective. This is demonstrated in how well leaders have tackled the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. For example, leaders and teachers now make incisive use of assessment information to plan learning opportunities for pupils and to adapt provision.
- The management of staff performance is very effective. Staff benefit from clear targets that focus on their pupils' key learning priorities. This means that all staff are working determinedly to help pupils make the best progress possible. Staff, including support staff, are highly motivated and work exceptionally well together. This is because, alongside the systems of accountability, staff receive appropriate training and professional development opportunities and often advance their careers within the school community.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils exceptionally well. Pupils benefit from personalised programmes of study. These help pupils make rapid and sustained progress in a wide range of areas, and particularly in art, English and communication. Wider opportunities are drawn into the curriculum which broaden and enthuse pupils in their learning. These include a range of clubs, as well as opportunities for pupils to apply their learning outside. For example, pupils spoke positively about a number of the experiences they have enjoyed outside, such as 'exploring bugs' homes' and the 'greenhouse'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is rapid and nurtured particularly well. Pupils benefit from curriculum experiences that directly support their level of development, needs and interests. They enjoy school and benefit from very positive relationships with staff. Consequently, this is a school that enjoys an exceptionally strong sense of community. Pupils make rapid gains socially and emotionally in their time at the school. They learn to recognise and celebrate other's achievements. This was particularly well demonstrated in a key stage 1 assembly, where pupils took pride in the achievements of their peers and enjoyed being recognised for their contribution to their classes.
- Fundamental British values are consistently promoted in a number of ambitious, but carefully chosen, ways. For example, pupils learn about the religions and cultures that are represented in their local community. Visits from the local member of Parliament have helped develop a sense of the importance of democracy and the rule of law. Pupils regularly raise money to support charities that are relevant to their own community. For example, pupils are currently looking to raise money for Canine Partners.

- The pupil premium grant is used extremely well. Leaders have ensured that they have put in place strategies that are consistently and regularly available for the pupils who are eligible for funding. For example, extra time has been commissioned from speech and language therapists so that there is more regular input to support disadvantaged pupils' learning. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils benefit from a range of bespoke and specialised interventions which ensure that they do not get left behind.
- The physical education and sport grant is also used very effectively. Leaders have ensured that staff develop their practice by working alongside specialised coaches. Consequently, pupils benefit from a wide range of physical education experiences, such as yoga. There are also wider opportunities for pupils who might struggle to be active; for example, the offer of horse riding for those who find movement challenging.
- Middle leadership is very effective. These leaders are skilled and know the school well. They work effectively with senior leaders to monitor the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility. They have taken useful action to improve the quality of provision. For example, the leader with responsibility for this has worked on developing the use of precise language in mathematics. There is evidence to show that this is leading to improved outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly effective. They work closely with leaders to set a collective vision for excellence. Governors provide robust challenge to leaders. Leaders provide regular and detailed information about pupils' outcomes and patterns of behaviour. Governors use this information exceptionally well to ask pertinent questions about areas that they feel could be better. This helps leaders to prioritise areas that are in need of attention and bring about rapid improvements. For example, governors have rightly asked why progress is stronger in English than in mathematics.
- Governors ensure that funds are used diligently. They challenge leaders to justify the impact of the use of the pupil premium grant. For example, there are regular discussions about how the fund has improved the progress of disadvantaged pupils across all curriculum areas. Governors regularly visit the school, meeting with key staff and working alongside the classes to which they are linked. This helps ensure that governors have a very clear picture of what is going really well and where improvements could be made.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly developed and effective. The school's safeguarding policy is fully up to date and makes clear reference to the latest statutory guidance from the Department for Education. The policy usefully signposts key personnel, such as the designated safeguarding lead and those who take responsibility in her absence. In particular, the policy recognises the additional expectations of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2016). The rigour with which leaders have implemented their policies has ensured that safeguarding has the highest priority.
- All staff have received appropriate training and so are clear about what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of any pupils. Leaders have close and appropriate links with the local authority designated safeguarding officer.

- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made during recruitment processes and recorded accurately on a centrally kept register. Appropriate references are sought from previous employers. Governors ensure that they have clear oversight during the recruitment of new staff so that policies are implemented effectively.
- The school site is very secure and there are clear systems for signing in and for managing safeguarding for visitors and agency staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers consistently convey the highest expectations for all pupils. They aim to deliver the vision from leaders to provide inclusive, effective lessons that capture pupils' interests and enthusiasm. Assessment is used meticulously by staff to ensure that work is closely aligned to pupils' needs and abilities. Consequently, lessons help pupils make rapid and sustained progress over time.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is excellent. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well through their careful use of assessment and the trusting relationships they foster. Teachers adeptly capitalise on the opportunities that pupils present to help them make progress towards their targets.
- Classes are organised to cater for pupils' differing levels of needs. This means that pupils of all abilities, including the most able, benefit from learning opportunities that are appropriately challenging and precisely focused on their individual needs. The learning environment, both inside and out, is developed exceptionally well to support learning. Staff make excellent use of resources to support and embed learning.
- Pupils benefit from a very comprehensive approach to the teaching of reading. They learn to love books and enjoy reading. Excellent links have been made between home and school so that parents can share in their child's pride in learning to read. Teachers' high expectations and skilled phonics teaching mean that pupils often make very good progress.
- Other adults, such as support staff, make a considerable contribution to pupils' progress. They are often highly skilled and effective, working diligently under the direction of teachers. They use these skills to ask challenging, pertinent questions of pupils, including the most able, to deepen their understanding of concepts and embed learning.
- Therapists add significant value to the learning experience for pupils. They regularly work directly alongside teachers to supplement the progress pupils make in their communication. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, two speech and language therapists worked with the teacher while she taught the lesson, challenging pupils to broaden their emotional literacy and vocabulary in response to different situations.
- Work in pupils' progress books shows that pupils benefit from tasks that are directly related to their specific individual education plan targets. Adults competently assess what pupils can do independently or with support. They use this to plan their next steps carefully and knowledgeably. Consequently, lessons make very good use of time to support pupils' learning.

- Teachers elicit pupils' engagement and enthusiasm with great skill. They make use of every opportunity to promote independence. For example, pupils are expected to use their communication strategies without over-reliance on staff. This helps pupils to develop their self-help skills so that they can access the curriculum on a wider scale.
- The use of intervention to ensure that pupils do not fall behind in their learning is highly effective. For example, the 'Hedgehog' provision, where pupils are given one-to-one support to work on a specific area of their learning, has an excellent track record of helping pupils get back on track and ready to learn in their classes. This helps to ensure that pupils make rapid progress, even on the rare occasions when teaching is less effective.
- Leaders have rightly identified that teachers do not always make as much use of the outside environment and practical experiences in mathematics as they could. Consequently, although progress in mathematics is excellent, it is not as strong as that seen in English. Leaders' plans for developing the curriculum further have rightly focused on strengthening this area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Relationships are at the core of the community at the school. They are, therefore, very strong between pupils and staff, between the pupils themselves and between staff. This is true in lessons, but also at times when pupils are outside playing together.
- Leaders are passionate about making sure that everyone is included equally in the life of the school. They know individual pupils exceptionally well and so ensure that they benefit from carefully planned behaviour support plans. Behaviour policies are consistently applied by staff. Records are kept diligently by staff when physical intervention is needed.
- Pupils speak positively about their experiences at the school. They rightly believe that teachers really care about them. They say that they feel safe. This is a view that is shared by their parents, who also speak very positively about the school.
- Pupils' personal development underpins the curriculum that is on offer at the school. Consequently, pupils make very strong progress in this area. For example, they frequently develop self-awareness that allows them to better understand why they find some things more difficult than others and what can trigger their negative behaviour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff consistently ensure that pupils are encouraged to make 'green choices' so that they learn increasingly how to take ownership of their own behaviour. This means that they are very well prepared to move on to their next stage of education. This is recognised by parents, staff and pupils.

- There are excellent systems and processes to support pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour. These are consistently and considerately applied by staff. Consequently, pupils are very clear about the boundaries within which they are expected to learn and play. Pupils respond very well to this clarity, making significant improvements in their behaviour over time.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to their learning in lessons. Their level of engagement is exceptional and consistently high because teachers make lessons engaging and fun. Activities are focused on these pupils' specific needs and delivered with their individual communication system in mind.
- Attendance has significantly improved and is above the national average for special schools overall. All groups of pupils attend equally well. Current attendance is exceptionally high, building on the increased levels of attendance seen over the past three years.
- Fixed-term exclusions are exceptionally rare, with none in the recent history of the school. There have been no permanent exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils' starting points are typically considerably lower than expected for their age. A large proportion of pupils experience high levels of anxiety and varying degrees of difficulty with verbal communication. However, all pupils make outstanding gains in their learning.
- Pupils make especially rapid progress in communication, reading, mathematics and their personal development. They settle into the routines of the school and, through the skilled work of staff, make excellent progress. For those pupils who are disadvantaged, or in the care of the local authority, similarly outstanding rates of progress are made.
- Pupils make striking progress in reading. This is because of the effective strategies used by leaders to improve how reading is taught. Strong use of assessment, high-quality texts matching pupils' abilities and precisely chosen targets all help to ensure that pupils rapidly gain reading skills and learn to have a love of reading.
- Those who are most-able benefit from being in classes with pupils who have similar strengths in communication. This means that teachers can ensure that the most able pupils, including those who are also disadvantaged, are consistently stretched and have greater opportunities to work and interact with each other. Consequently, they make rapid gains in their English and communication skills.
- Leaders quickly identify pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning. They then ensure that these pupils receive timely and effective support, so very few pupils fall behind. Photographs and daily records of learning towards individual targets clearly demonstrate pupils' achievements and growth in independence.
- Disadvantaged pupils make at least the same levels of progress as their peers in the school. Effective use of assessment information, regular contact with therapists and excellent teaching all help to diminish any differences in attainment.

- Pupils are very well prepared for next stage of their education. This is reflected in the feedback provided by parents, as well as the specific case studies of pupils who have gone on to placements in mainstream education. Pupils make rapid gains in their personal development while at the school.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The leadership of the early years is exceptionally strong. The early years leader has set up excellent systems for planning, assessing and targeting learning opportunities for children. Clear structures and routines to support learning lead to rapid progress being made from individual starting points. The very good implementation of school policies and practices ensures that children are safe and their welfare is promoted effectively.
- Excellent assessment processes establish children's starting points, supported by excellent transition and outreach to nurseries and pre-schools. This means that children make a brisk start to their learning as soon as they arrive at the school. Leaders ensure that strong links are fostered between home and school. This helps to substantiate assessment within the Reception Year and ensures that opportunities for learning are utilised well by parents, as well as the school. Staff build on this good start expertly, so that children make excellent progress in their behavioural, communication and independence skills. Consequently, children are exceptionally well prepared for key stage 1.
- Teaching takes excellent account of children's interests and needs. Staff make exceptional use of opportunities that arise through children's play, to competently guide learning towards independent education plan targets. Children are encouraged to move freely from indoor activities to outdoor play and learning. They enjoy the stimulating environment and the excellent relationships with staff. Where possible, children are encouraged to make choices for themselves. This helps to promote their independence and understanding of how to keep safe. Very good use is made of time, so that no opportunity to extend learning is missed.
- The use of assessment is robust and rigorous. Record-keeping is accurate, supported by evidence, with all members of the early years team involved. There are clearly identified next steps for children that are fed into the provision that is planned. This includes ensuring that, when necessary, children have access to bespoke interventions to ensure that no gaps in progress are seen. Consequently, excellent learning is evidenced in children's learning journals.
- Children thrive because they benefit from well-planned activities and carefully chosen resources that capture their curiosity. Expectations of behaviour are high. Children increase their interest in the world around them because staff deftly stimulate their interest in learning.

School details

Unique reference number	116600
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10003918

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ken Bowen
Headteacher	Miss Catherine Marsh
Telephone number	02392 250138
Website	www.riverside.hants.sch.uk
Email address	office.riverside@riverside.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Riverside is a special school for pupils who have moderate to severe learning difficulties and several are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The majority of the pupils at the school are of White British heritage and there are significantly more boys than girls.
- There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is high and is nearly double the national average.
- All pupils attending Riverside School have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 13 lessons or parts of lessons across all classes, the majority jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons and around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, those who have responsibility for safeguarding, key-stage leaders, staff at the school, a group of governors and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, reports completed by local authority consultants, the school's self-evaluation, and tracking information about pupils' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures were scrutinised. Records linked to work with other agencies were reviewed, as well as those relating to how the school records and follows up its own concerns.
- Inspectors considered 11 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and met with some parents at the end of the first day of the inspection. They also analysed 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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