

Riverside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135903
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	381956
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Beck

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	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Lucking
Headteacher	Megan Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	2–3 November 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 21 parts of lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body. Discussions were held with a small number of parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for safeguarding and the school's improvement plan. In addition, inspectors looked at a report from the local authority, pupils' work, and attendance records. Inspectors analysed 195 responses to questionnaires from parents and carers. They also analysed questionnaires completed by pupils and members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas summarised in the following questions.

- How effectively have leaders and managers established the primary school since the amalgamation?
- Are procedures for self-evaluation rigorous enough to drive improvement?
- What action is the school taking to raise attainment as pupils move through the school?
- Is teaching sufficiently challenging to increase the rate of pupils' progress, especially in mixed-age classes?
- What has the school done to improve teachers' assessments and their impact on pupils' outcomes?

Information about the school

Riverside Primary School came into being in September 2010 when the infant and junior schools on the same site were amalgamated. This is the school's first inspection. It is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils live in the immediate locality. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small number come from minority ethnic groups and, of these, a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than that found in most schools nationally. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, although it is above average for pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Their needs relate mostly to general learning, behavioural, emotional, physical, speech and language difficulties. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2 are taught in single-age classes. Older pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

The Willows Children's Centre on the same site is inspected separately.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Leaders and managers have not yet established Riverside as a successful primary school. Its aims and motto, 'Where everyone matters and every day counts', are not carried through consistently into practice. The long-term strategic plan lacks clarity and does not illustrate leaders' ambitions for the school well enough. There is also no short-term development plan that can be used to check progress or to help drive rapid improvement. This is because the school's leaders have an idealistic view of the school's effectiveness. Procedures for self-evaluation lack rigour and do not consider sufficiently the impact of provision on pupils' outcomes. As a result, leaders do not hold staff to account. Challenges made by the governing body about the school's performance have not generated sufficiently precise information to allow clear changes to be made. Monitoring of the school's safeguarding arrangements to ensure full compliance with statutory requirements is weak. Consequently the school's capacity to improve is inadequate.

Attendance is high, but the overall attainment in mathematics and English, especially writing, is exceptionally low. Progress is very slow because expectations of what pupils know and can do are too low. Staff do not have sufficient guidance across the curriculum, but especially in English and mathematics, to enable them to build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding year-on-year. This limits opportunities for pupils to undertake increasingly challenging work and to learn at a faster rate until they reach Years 5 and 6. Teachers do not make clear to pupils what they are learning. Furthermore, they do not use marking or assessment well enough to match work to the needs of more able pupils or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some action has been taken to raise attainment recently. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now taught in single age-classes. More opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length and staff skills in teaching mathematics through purposeful, practical activities have been enhanced. A number of pupils receive additional support in these subjects, but some are removed from lessons to work on programmes to fill gaps in their learning. This means that these pupils miss other important aspects of the curriculum to which they are entitled.

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In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's outcomes are exceptionally low in communication, language and literacy, and in personal, social and emotional development. Staff have too little knowledge of the best ways in which these children learn, indoors and outdoors. They provide few opportunities for them to make decisions independently. Assessments are not used effectively to establish children's starting points. As a result, play activities are not sufficiently challenging and do not provide a firm foundation for later learning in literacy and numeracy or enhance progress.

The choir, orchestra and art work give pupils worthwhile cultural experiences, but overall their understanding of the lifestyles, cultures and religions that represent the diversity of society in the United Kingdom is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that compliance with the school's safeguarding policies is monitored carefully.
- By October 2012 build the school's capacity to improve by:
 - improving the school's long-term strategic vision, including that for the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that the school's priorities are widely shared and all staff are held to account for pupils' outcomes
 - involving leaders and managers at all levels, and the governing body, in drawing up a sharply focused short-term development plan, linked to measurable outcomes in pupils' achievement and with clear lines of accountability
 - ensuring all staff and members of the governing body are clear about what needs to be done to secure rapid improvement
 - implementing a cycle of rigorous self-evaluation to provide clear information about the school's successes and areas for improvement
 - enabling members of the governing body to participate more fully in supporting and challenging the school.
- By October 2012 enhance the rate of pupils' progress and raise attainment, especially in English and mathematics by:
 - providing motivating curriculum experiences that give pupils a clear sense of purpose and enjoyment for writing
 - using extended writing to accurately apply the technical skills of spelling, grammar and the development of a fluent joined script
 - giving clear guidance to staff about the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils should acquire across the curriculum, but especially in English and mathematics as they move through the school
 - reviewing the current arrangements for withdrawing pupils from lessons so they spend more time learning with their class.
- By October 2012 raise the quality of teaching throughout the school by:

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- raising expectations of what pupils can do, and providing more challenging work
 - ensuring pupils are always clear about what they are expected to learn
 - using assessment information frequently to plan and adapt work so that it consistently meets the needs of pupils of differing abilities
 - giving clear feedback in lessons and when marking pupils' work so that they are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- By October 2012 improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
- raising the knowledge and understanding of staff of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework
 - improving the provision for learning, both indoors and outdoors
 - providing a wide range of engaging learning activities that help children acquire a firm foundation for literacy skills
 - presenting challenging play activities that enable children to count and solve problems
 - offering greater opportunities for children to use their initiative and make decisions for themselves
 - using assessment more effectively to plan children's learning.
- Ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of the lifestyles, cultures and religions that represent the diversity of society in the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils attend frequently and say they enjoy school. Their starting points when leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage are much lower than they should be. Teaching in Years 1 to 4 is not strong enough to increase the rate of pupils' progress. This is because staff do not have sufficient guidance about the required development year-on-year of basic skills in calculation, spelling, grammar and the use of joined handwriting. These are not established soon enough or built on effectively as pupils move through the school. Gaps in learning widen and in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is mostly good, there is a great deal of catching up to do.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive targeted support, sometimes one-to-one tuition, outside of the classroom. Support staff also provide additional sessions in literacy and numeracy for pupils thought to need a boost to their learning. These skills are taught in isolation to these groups and are not always applied once pupils return to class, limiting their progress. Girls outperform boys in English, while boys outperform girls in mathematics.

Staff are exploring ways to motivate pupils to want to write. Consequently, they have introduced drama into lessons to enable pupils to act out and think through their ideas before writing them down. Younger pupils are not asked to record their ideas

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while still fresh in their mind and their work suffers as a result. Older pupils have insufficient skills to write imaginatively, accurately and at length. Practical activities enable pupils to gain a greater understanding of the importance of mathematics in daily life. Information and communication technology resources are very new and have yet to be used fully to support pupils’ progress.

Within lessons, there are few opportunities for pupils to engage in group work or to use their initiative. While they take on some roles responsibly, such as play leaders and school council membership, there are not enough opportunities for them to take on leadership roles. These factors, together with their levels of attainment, that overall are significantly below national levels, mean they are insufficiently prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils, parents and carers indicate in their responses to questionnaire that they believe that pupils are safe in school, although a small minority believe that behaviour and bullying are not managed well. Lack of monitoring by senior staff and the governing body of the school’s arrangements for safeguarding means pupils have an inaccurate perspective of their safety. Behaviour in lessons allows learning to proceed appropriately and movement around the school is orderly. School leaders encourage pupils to engage in healthy activities and to learn about the main threats to their health. However, the take-up of sporting activities and pupils’ involvement in health promotion activities is limited. Studies of French culture provide some insight into a different lifestyle, but there are no links with schools beyond the locality. Consequently pupils, have little awareness of how children in diverse communities, nationally and internationally, live and learn.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	4
Pupils’ behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1

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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The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

4

How effective is the provision?

During the inspection some good teaching was observed, but too much was inadequate. Except in mathematics in the older classes, teachers’ planning and assessments do not ensure that provision matches precisely the needs of pupils of all abilities. Few staff make clear to pupils what they are to learn and achieve in each lesson. Low expectations result in tasks that are too easy for pupils. On other occasions expectations are too high and limit what pupils can achieve. For example, pupils in Year 2 were expected to remember all their ideas for a story, its development and its characters for a week before writing it. Assessments, feedback in lessons and marking lack consistency. In a good lesson observed, pupils’ progress was monitored carefully and the work of individuals amended to offer more challenging tasks. Too often, though, pupils do not receive sufficient information about what they do well and what they must do to improve their work and achieve more.

Within the curriculum more time is allocated to literacy than to any other subject. This time is not used rigorously enough to develop pupils’ skills as they move through the school, and is not leading to rapid progress and high standards. Activities do not stimulate pupils’ enthusiasm for learning sufficiently or engage them so that they express their ideas accurately and confidently. A range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum. The personal development of older pupils is enhanced by a residential visit to Norfolk.

School leaders have appropriate arrangements to help children transfer smoothly into the school, and when it is time to transfer from ‘Red Building’ to ‘Blue Building’ and to secondary school. Steps taken to secure pupils’ high level of attendance have been successful. Some parents and carers expressed concerns in their written responses to questionnaires. They do not believe that their children always receive rapid and appropriate support for their individual needs, especially with regard to those with special educational needs or the more able pupils. A few parents consider that school leaders do not listen well enough. Inspection evidence, including the tone of letters from the school to parents, confirms these concerns. Insufficient attention to safeguarding arrangements means care, guidance and support are inadequate.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

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How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to drive their ambitions for the school. Deficiencies in long-term planning, short-term planning and self-evaluation procedures indicate the lack of a coherent sense of direction. There is too little rigour and urgency in driving and securing improvement throughout the school. Two senior leaders monitor lessons, but do not have a strong enough focus on the impact of what the teacher is doing on pupils’ learning. As a result, their view is that the quality of teaching is good, when pupils’ learning overall is inadequate. The removal of pupils from lessons for additional support and the imprecise use of data to measure pupils’ progress mean some pupils do not receive their full entitlement. Discrimination is tackled appropriately, but overall the school does not promote equal opportunities adequately.

The governing body is ineffective. Considerable time was taken up ensuring that the correct procedures for the amalgamation of the two schools were followed. Since then members of the governing body have asked challenging questions about the reasons for low attainment and parents’ concerns about bullying. However, members of the governing body have been too ready to accept inaccurate responses from senior leaders. A training programme to enhance the skills of the new governing body has been devised and is due to be implemented shortly. Policies with regard to safeguarding have been drawn up, but practical procedures are not followed robustly, and are not monitored closely enough to ensure that all staff comply with them. Plans to promote community cohesion have not been implemented, and pupils’ awareness of different cultures nationally and abroad is limited.

A new forum is providing a good opportunity for parents and carers to engage with school leaders to air their concerns and contribute to school improvement. Partnerships with the local secondary school, the local authority, the on-site children’s centre and other professionals contribute effectively to the well-being of pupils whose circumstances are thought to make them vulnerable.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are happy, behave well, show a willingness to work together and play safely. Their attainment on entry is similar to that found nationally. Children make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical development. Progress in communication, language, literacy, in learning about the sounds that letters represent and in children’s personal social and emotional development are slow. Data provided by the school show outcomes in these areas are low. There is no long-term improvement plan for the Early Years Foundation Stage to raise standards and this aspect is not addressed adequately in the long-term strategic vision for the school as a whole.

Staff are not fully aware of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Extensive classroom and outdoor play space is poorly organised. Together with over-strict routines and an emphasis on adult-led activities, this hinders opportunities for children to initiate their own play activities, use their imagination, make decisions, and apply their naturally high levels of curiosity. Low expectations of what children can do and insufficient assessment means that activities planned to promote literacy and numeracy lack challenge. They provide little opportunity for children to learn and apply new skills in inspiring ways. Opportunities are frequently missed for adults to engage with children to enhance their spoken and written language or extend their play. Consequently, children are not establishing a firm foundation of knowledge, skills, and understanding or good learning habits that will benefit them in the future.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

The percentage of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was much higher than average. A small number of parents and carers added comments to their questionnaire, wrote letters, or spoke to the inspectors to express their views. While the majority of parents and carers support the school, bullying and the management

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of unsatisfactory behaviour was a concern for some. While no inappropriate behaviour was observed during the inspection, the governing body, following the outcomes of its own questionnaires, has sought advice from the local authority on the action to take to resolve concerns about bullying. Inspection evidence endorses parental disquiet about pupils' progress, the match of work to pupils' needs, and the school's leadership and management. A minority of letters and questionnaires expressed dissatisfaction about the way the school responds to issues raised by parents and carers about their children's welfare and education. Inspection evidence does not support all of the parents' and carers' positive views. It indicates key aspects of the school are inadequate as noted in the text of this report.

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.

The inspection team received 195 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 347 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	56	75	38	7	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	102	52	89	46	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	48	25	114	58	20	10	9	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	29	100	51	24	12	9	5
The teaching is good at this school	69	35	101	52	17	9	5	3
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	63	32	105	54	17	9	6	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	35	113	58	11	6	1	1
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)	66	34	99	51	7	4	5	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	70	36	96	49	21	11	5	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	23	98	50	33	17	12	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	27	104	53	22	11	7	4
The school is led and managed effectively	65	33	98	50	17	9	11	6
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	90	46	80	41	15	8	7	4

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



4 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Riverside Primary School, Hockley, SS5 6ND

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited it recently. Thank you too for showing us to the correct room if we were unsure which way to go. We were pleased to see that many of you attend school almost every day.

In our visit we discovered that you are not doing as well in mathematics and English, especially writing, as you should be. Overall, you are not making enough progress, because not all teaching helps you to build up enough knowledge and skills to do as well as you can. Consequently, we have decided the school needs special measures. Your school will have regular visits from other inspectors to make sure that it is improving.

We have asked the adults who lead and manage your school to:

- draw up plans to help make the changes needed to improve the school quickly and to check that the actions they take help you to do your best
- make sure that everyone keeps you as safe as they possibly can
- make sure that challenging activities help you to learn at a faster rate so that you do not have so much catching up to do in Years 5 and 6
- inspire you to spell and write well, including joining your letters
- make it easier for some of you to spend more time learning with your class
- give the youngest children more challenging and fun activities, indoors and outdoors, that help them to learn to read, write, count, solve problems and become independent
- provide you with a better understanding of different lifestyles, cultures and religions in the United Kingdom.

We are sure that you will all want to do what you can to help your school to be better, as you like coming to school and want to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck
Lead inspector

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