

# Riverside School

Thames Road, Barking, IG11 0HZ

**Inspection dates** 3–4 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher has established an ethos of high expectations of behaviour and achievement across the school.
- The governing body is well informed and governors challenge senior leaders effectively.
- Leaders have established useful links with other schools so that they can check their judgments about the quality of teaching and assessment with other professionals.
- Most teaching is good or better. Expert leadership of teaching by the headteacher results in a consistent approach by most teachers. Students benefit from this and achieve well.
- Literacy is taught well across the curriculum. Students' literacy skills are good and improving.
- Most students, including those who are most able and disadvantaged, make good progress.
- Students' behaviour around school and in the vast majority of lessons is exemplary. They are eager to learn and contribute very well to lessons.
- Attendance is well above average. Students enjoy, and are proud of, going to Riverside School.
- The academy's curriculum offers a good range of opportunities which meet students' needs well.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.
- Students have very good working relationships with teachers. Students are very well looked after and consistently demonstrate good care for each other.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. There are very effective systems in place to protect students and keep them safe. Staff are extremely well trained in child protection procedures. Leaders are tenacious in their support for students who need the school's help.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students are not always required to use high level reasoning skills and develop a deep understanding of key ideas that will prepare them well for the demands and requirements of their GCSE courses.
- Some teachers' marking and feedback to students is not always as effective as the best in the school. This slows the progress of a few students, particularly in science.
- Leaders' plans for improvement do not highlight all actions precisely enough.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 42 lessons or parts of lessons to observe teaching and learning, scrutinise students' work and talk to students. They visited 19 lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of students and had informal discussions with other students around the academy.
- Inspectors met with three members of the governing body, including a representative from the academy trust.
- Inspectors considered the views of 26 parents through the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View. They also considered the views of parents surveyed by the academy.
- Inspectors considered the views of 34 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire.
- The academy's improvement plans, self-evaluation records and the minutes of the academy trust and local governing body meetings were evaluated.
- Inspectors looked at information about students' progress, behaviour and attendance and considered records of teachers' performance management and professional development.
- The inspection team scrutinised the academy's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors conducted a telephone call with a local authority officer. In addition, an inspector spoke to the school's student counsellor on the telephone.
- Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the academy on 24 June 2015 to gather additional evidence and complete the inspection.

## Inspection team

Michael Pennington	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Lamborn	Her Majesty's Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Catherine Anwar	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Taylor-Bennett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vanessa Ward	Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Riverside School opened as an academy free school in September 2013. The academy is part of The Partnership Learning Trust.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The planned age-range of students is 11–19. Currently, students have been admitted to Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The academy is temporarily accommodated in a new primary school building and will remain there until it moves into permanent buildings in September 2017.
- The academy takes students from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds including Black African, White British, other White and other mixed ethnicities. A little over half of the students speak English as an additional language, which is much higher than seen nationally.
- Just over half the students at the academy are eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding to support students who receive free school meals and students who are looked after). This is much higher than seen nationally.
- About one in ten students are disabled or have special educational needs. This is slightly lower than that seen nationally.
- The academy is supported by the headteacher of Sydney Russell School in Barking and Dagenham, who is a National Leader of Education (NLE).
- There are no public examination results by which to measure the academy's performance against the government's current floor standards.
- A very few students occasionally attend the Barking and Dagenham Tuition Centre.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers focus more effectively on developing students' understanding and reasoning skills so that they are well-prepared for the demands and requirements of their GCSE courses.
- Make sure that all teachers give effective feedback and challenge to students so that they all make very good progress.
- Sharpen improvement plans so that all actions are precisely linked to the areas that need to get better and that the impact is closely monitored by leaders and governors.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has created a very positive ethos which encourages all members of the academy community to strive for the highest standards. As a result, students achieve well.
- Senior and middle leaders have established a culture where students respond positively to the opportunities they are given. High aspiration is an expectation for everybody at Riverside School. Leaders give careful attention to equality of opportunity. Students appreciate the good range of subjects and pathways tailored to meet their needs. They speak highly of guidance they are given to help them prepare to choose which academic or vocational subjects to take.
- Leaders' self-evaluation takes into account a wide range of information about the quality of teaching and students' achievement. This is reinforced by a programme of robust reviews by external education professionals. The headteacher is candid about the range of strengths across different departments and recognises that there are many strengths, but there is work to do to ensure that all are as strong as the best.
- The academy has a rigorous system for tracking the progress of students towards their predicted outcomes at GCSE. The headteacher has deliberately set ambitious targets to boost the aspirations of students and their teachers. Teachers' assessments are checked in the academy and also through visits to several other schools in the area to make sure they are accurate. Nevertheless, work in students' books shows that they do not always acquire a firm grasp of all of the important ideas in topics, and therefore current achievements do not always match assessments. Leaders have plans in place to address this.
- The leadership of teaching by the headteacher is very effective. Shared training with Sydney Russell School as well as individual development for teachers at Riverside School provides staff with very good opportunities to improve their teaching. Teachers are encouraged to work together to look continually for ways to teach more effectively and to share good practice. This results in a growing degree of consistency across classrooms that helps students to learn well.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are frequent and are helping to identify areas where teachers can develop their practice. Appraisal systems are tightly linked to senior leaders' regular visits to lessons and their checking of students' progress. Teachers receive good support when weaknesses are identified. As a result, teaching is good and improving. However, some weaknesses in teaching have not been identified by leaders' checks. For example, not all teachers focus strongly enough on developing students' skills in reasoning and understanding.
- Leaders have ensured that all necessary safeguarding checks and child protection procedures are now in place. Staff are well-trained and knowledgeable about the academy's procedures. The academy uses creative ways of teaching students about risks. For example, students learn through visits from theatre groups which tackle sensitive issues such as child sexual exploitation. Leaders have created an ethos where students feel safe and able to talk openly to relevant staff about any personal concerns they may have. Senior leaders are tenacious in the way they follow up referrals made to external agencies about students who are at risk.
- Plans for improvement sometimes lack enough detail. Leaders ensure that it is clear what actions need taking in the light of their own evaluations but plans do not always ensure leaders are clear about when and who will check how successful their actions have been.
- Leaders' spending of pupil premium and catch-up funding is supporting good progress for disadvantaged students; gaps between their achievement and that of their peers are small and are shrinking, as a result.
- Leaders ensure that provision for students who are disabled or have special educational needs meets current statutory requirements. The special educational needs co-ordinator has ensured that there have been some rapid improvements in students' progress in a short time. Leaders recognise that there is still more to do. For example, systems for tracking the progress of students are less effective for students with more complex needs.
- Middle leaders have a good understanding of their roles. They have actively sought opportunities to learn from more experienced practitioners in other schools. This has helped them to develop their skills and to be more innovative in their work.
- There are a good range of opportunities offered through the curriculum. Leaders ensure that teachers in all subjects take responsibility for developing students' literacy and mathematical skills. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a priority for all teachers. Students explore the opportunities and responsibilities of life in modern Britain through regular 'civics' lessons, assemblies and carefully selected guest speakers.
- The academy offers a range of after-school opportunities to all students such as sport, homework clubs or

'stretch and challenge' in some subjects. Leaders monitor the participation of students in these activities, but less attention is given to tracking what skills and attributes students are developing as a result.

- Leaders' commitment to equality of opportunity is clear. It translates into actions to support the achievement and welfare of all students. Leaders' use of opportunities to engage with parents and their high expectations of students' social behaviours ensure that good relations are evident across all groups at the academy.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The Partnership Learning Trust established a local governing body for Riverside School in September 2014. The local governing body has a broad range of expertise, and this ensures an increasingly good level of challenge for leaders.
- Governors are regularly informed about leaders' views of the quality of teaching and students' achievement, attendance and behaviour. However, records of meetings indicate that occasionally leaders' views about teaching and achievement have been accepted by governors without enough challenge. This was also identified in the academy's latest external review.
- Governors' challenge of safeguarding procedures has, in the past, not been fully effective. However, safeguarding responsibilities between the academy trust and the local governing body are now clear. The academy's safeguarding practices are extremely robust.
- The local governing body has recently appointed link governors to challenge pupil premium spending and the provision for students who are disabled or have special educational needs. Governors' recent work in these areas has identified key actions necessary to ensure that provision continues to improve quickly.
- Governors have a detailed understanding of how teachers' performance is monitored. The academy trust's executive headteacher works closely with governors to ensure that the headteacher's performance management is robust. Governors have clear processes to link information about teachers' performance to decisions about pay awards.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they manage their own conduct extremely well. Students are eager to engage well with their teachers and peers during discussions in class and they are keen to reach the highest standards. Teachers manage students' behaviour extremely well because they all adhere to the academy system and have very high expectations.
- Students' conduct around the academy is excellent. Consistently good staff supervision has helped to establish a calm, orderly and well-disciplined environment. For example, staff stand at the classroom door to greet students and monitor the corridors during lesson changes. Consequently, students are very rarely late to lessons.
- Bullying is rare at Riverside. This is because students have a good sense of how to look after each other. They do not accept unkind behaviour towards one another and they let teachers know if they have a concern. Teachers and leaders respond quickly when required, to ensure that incidents do not re-occur.
- Academy records confirm that students' behaviour over time is excellent. Detentions and isolation are used effectively when standards occasionally fall below leaders' expectations. As a result, fixed-term exclusions are rare and no students have been permanently excluded.
- Students' overall attendance is much higher than the national average. Absence is followed up swiftly. Leaders' proportionate use of incentives and formal powers has ensured the attendance of the vast majority of students is very high. Leaders are now focused on a very small number of students whose attendance or punctuality to the academy is not as high as it should be.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Senior leaders ensure that all staff are well-trained in safeguarding procedures and that students are well-informed about how to keep themselves safe. Any referrals to external agencies are followed up relentlessly by the academy to ensure that students at risk are well-supported. In addition the academy employs a highly qualified student counsellor to offer help to students as required. Records of support are diligently kept.
- In their temporary accommodation, leaders have established good practices to ensure the safety of students around the academy site. For example, the space used for physical education lessons has been

assessed to establish which activities are safe to be undertaken.

- Students have a thorough knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. The academy ensures that students have a good understanding of e-safety and how to keep themselves and others safe. Students also know what they can do to stay safe when they are away from the academy because leaders use local events to inform assembly themes well.
- Students feel very safe in the academy and parents agree.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers make good use of information about students' progress to track how well they are doing and to plan challenging activities in lessons. Teachers' very effective questioning helps to gauge students' knowledge and ensure that they learn well.
- Relationships between students and staff are highly positive and, in the best lessons, contribute to student's outstanding attitudes to learning. Students are engaged by interesting tasks and most make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and helps to inspire the interest of the students.
- Teachers use effective methods of assessment to identify what students can and cannot do. Students are regularly tested to check how much they know and they use teachers' feedback to improve their work. For example, in English assessment folders, inspectors saw students re-drafting work two or three times in response to effective feedback from teachers which meant that their work improved significantly.
- Nevertheless, teachers' feedback to students varies in quality. Many teachers give students high quality feedback which makes them think more about a problem or topic. In these cases, students' responses show that they are deepening their understanding. However, some feedback simply asks pupils to try something again, with no further guidance, or gives very closed instructions which do not seek to strengthen students' understanding effectively. This hampers the progress of some students.
- Students' written work is sometimes poorly presented. For some students, this has a negative impact on their progress over time. Not all teachers challenge this enough.
- Many teachers carefully ensure that activities match the abilities of students well. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, students were able to develop their skills of sourcing information about autism spectrum disorder irrespective of their starting point. This is not consistently the case. Sometimes teachers ask students to identify what they should do next and do not spot that they are not setting themselves challenging enough goals.
- Students are offered a wide range of challenging work in lessons and many acquire good subject knowledge. This is not always underpinned by an equally high emphasis on students acquiring a deep understanding of all key concepts, and opportunities to reason and reflect in an appropriately sophisticated way. For example, in one mathematics lesson students learned how to reduce ratios to their simplest form, and could do so reliably. Few, however, could explain the real point of doing this, or why the method used gave the correct answer. Some students' science books contain some difficult scientific content, such as balancing equations representing chemical reactions and different kinds of electrical circuits. However, there are too few signs of students grappling successfully with the important abstract ideas underpinning such work.
- Teachers promote literacy consistently well. Students enjoy taking part in discussions and teachers use good quality questioning to develop confidence in students' oracy. In the best cases, well-chosen activities provide students with opportunities to apply their reading and decoding skills to subject-specific contexts.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour. They use a variety of approaches to engage students, which have contributed to positive attitudes and good progress over time for many students. Students are resilient learners and extremely eager to help each other. This is because teachers consistently promote social and moral development when students work together.
- Teaching assistants support students actively. They work closely with teachers so that they are well briefed on what students should learn next. Careful questioning by teaching assistants ensures that students, including some of those with special educational needs, are supported to take responsibility for their learning.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- The academy currently has no published external examination data.
- The academy sets deliberately high targets for students' achievement at GCSE to encourage students to aim high from the beginning of Year 7. Teachers expect that students will, and believe that they can, meet these targets. Regular assessment and monitoring of student progress results in effective support being given to those students who need additional help.
- Students' work and assessments, and academy progress data, show that most students are making good or better progress.
- The academy checks the validity and reliability of its assessment of students' current achievement against a range of internal and external measures. However, these measures are against projected performance at GCSE. The assessment of Key Stage 3 students currently focuses more on what they know, and too little on how well they grasp key concepts firmly and confidently. This is reflected in students' books, where, for example in science, demanding content was not underpinned strongly enough by an understanding of the key concepts. This is why achievement is not yet outstanding.
- On average, students join the academy with lower starting points than those seen nationally. About one in five students start with low or very low prior attainment. Inspectors' scrutiny of work over time indicates that most of these students are making good progress but a small proportion is not. Furthermore, a few of these students are not catching up with their peers by making rapid progress. Despite this, the achievement of students who are disabled or those who have special educational needs is good overall. Many of these students are making rapid progress and achieving well over time because of the very responsive care given to their needs. In some cases, however, it is clear that students with more complex needs are not ready to be assessed on GCSE scales and their progress is much slower.
- Inspectors' work scrutiny indicated that most disadvantaged students are making good progress. However, in some cases, the development of students' English and mathematical skills is still at a very early stage, despite their average starting points.
- The most able students are making good progress in English, mathematics and science. These students are developing a good balance of oral and written skills over time.
- The academy will make use of early examination entry in science this year for students who have been identified as making the most progress. Leaders have appropriate plans to ensure that these students continue to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding. At this stage, it is too early to evaluate the impact.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139791
<b>Local authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	449794

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	366
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Alan Lazell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Roberts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	02082706981
<b>Email address</b>	anro@riverside.bardaglea.org.uk

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