

Inspection of Rivers Primary Academy

Livingstone Road, Blakenall, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 1LY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Rivers Primary Academy. Leaders have set high expectations for the education that pupils receive. Pupils value their education and enjoy the broad range of subjects that they learn. They listen carefully in lessons, and are keen to join in with class discussions.

Pupils have well-established morning routines that help them settle into the school day quickly. Many make their way to the school library, where they choose reading books to take home. Others get straight into morning tasks. Adults greet children with warm welcomes. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe.

Most pupils behave very well. Pupils trust adults and talk to them about friendship issues and worries. Pupils said that if bullying happens or children are unkind to each other, staff sort things out quickly.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of activities that enrich their school experiences. Leaders have made a pledge to pupils that sets out planned opportunities for all pupils to take part in before they leave the school. Some pupils, for instance, recently went to see a pantomime. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about after-school clubs where they sing, play games or compete in sports events.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, well supported by the trust's executive and those responsible for governance, have worked hard to improve the quality of the school's curriculum. They have refined planning in a number of subjects, and have adopted new approaches to teaching mathematics and reading. This means that the curriculum is now planned well. Curriculum leaders have set out the important knowledge, vocabulary and skills that they expect pupils to know and remember. Pupils learn this information in a logical order. This ensures that all pupils build their knowledge over time.

Leaders prioritise developing teachers' subject knowledge. This has boosted teachers' confidence. Adults present new information clearly to pupils. They provide useful examples and explanations. They help all pupils to understand their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support. For example, some pupils with SEND learn about new information in advance of lessons. This pre-tutoring helps them to take part in lessons and keep up with learning.

Teachers check that pupils understand key concepts in lessons. They ask questions, review pupils' work and encourage class discussions. These checks provide teachers with useful information. Staff use this information to identify pupils who need extra support. This approach to assessment in lessons is effective. However, in some subjects, leaders do not accurately assess how well pupils know and remember the

planned content over time. This limits leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of the curriculum in these subjects.

Leaders make reading a high priority. A large number of adults ably teach younger pupils how to read each morning. Children learn in small groups and work is well matched to their abilities. Adults carefully select appropriate books for pupils to practise reading with. Pupils read these books regularly and build fluency. The school's approach is working well. Pupils are becoming better readers, and are enthusiastic about the books and stories that they read.

The curriculum promotes pupils' appreciation of different cultures. Pupils learn about the importance of tolerance and respect for others. They debate current affairs and express their opinions. These sessions deepen pupils' understanding of the democratic process.

Leaders have recently refined the school's approach to managing behaviour. They monitor behaviour incidents closely, and take firm action when necessary. Pupils express positive views about behaviour in the school. They appreciate the praise that staff give them for doing the right things. Pupils concentrate in lessons, and put effort into their work.

Leaders are determined that all pupils attend school regularly. They challenge poor attendance, and work with families to provide the support that is needed. This is making a difference. However, a number of pupils still do not attend school regularly enough.

Leaders' plans to work with families were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have now started to reintroduce parent workshops to share information about the curriculum. The majority of parents expressed positive opinions of the school. Some parents did not share this view. Leaders intend to continue their work to strengthen community relationships. For example, they are working with parents to organise a summer fayre.

There have been significant changes in staffing since the previous inspection. Leaders are aware of their role in promoting the staff's well-being. They have taken steps to reduce teachers' workload. They have provided training to develop the staff's expertise. The majority of staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils very well. They are quick to spot any signs that a child needs help. They understand their role in reporting concerns, and do this straight away. Leaders take the necessary action, and respond quickly to put support in place.

Leaders carry out the necessary checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. These checks are recorded accurately on the school's single central record.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum helps them learn about healthy lives and healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to assessing what pupils know and remember is not yet fully developed in some subjects. This means that staff do not accurately check the progress that pupils make through all of the curriculum. Leaders should put systems in place to check that pupils know and remember the planned curriculum content in all subjects.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This limits their learning. Leaders should continue to work with families to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140196
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10212254
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne Haigh
Headteacher	Lucy Wright
Website	www.riversprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school moved into a new building in September 2020.
- The number of classes in each year group has increased year by year for a period of time. Since September 2021, there have been two classes in each year group from Reception Year to Year 6. There is one class in Nursery.
- The school operates a before-school breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. The lead inspector also met with executive leaders of the trust, a representative of the trustees and a representative of the local advisory body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and French. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with 'curriculum contributors', visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy and single central record. The lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and looked at records of safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors considered responses on Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors visited the before-school provision, and spoke to pupils who attend.

Inspection team

Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rob Hackfath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gill Turner	Ofsted Inspector

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