

Inspection of River Primary School

Lewisham Road, River, Dover, Kent CT17 0PP

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2013. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their inclusive and friendly school. They appreciate their teachers and know that all staff are there to help them. Pupils are proud to be a part of the River Primary School community. They contribute to the school and wider community with enthusiasm. For example, pupils relish opportunities to take on leadership roles such as school council and eco team representatives.

The school expects pupils to work hard and behave well. Generally, pupils live up to these expectations and, as a result, achieve well. Pupils in some classes find it harder to settle down to work and maintain concentration. They sometimes chat during lessons, which is distracting for others. The school is working to address this. This year, play times have been enriched through carefully planned outdoor play provision.

Pupils enjoy and benefit from the wide range of trips and experiences that the school plans for them. Experiences are carefully organised to enrich the curriculum. They support pupils to develop understanding and empathy around topical issues, such as immigration and migration. Pupils have ongoing opportunities to take part in sporting events and competitions. The school utilises these carefully to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to represent the school.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum for children in Reception has been carefully thought through to ensure that they are well prepared for Year 1. Reading is a top priority from the moment children join the school. Children in Reception and pupils in key stage 1 benefit from daily phonics teaching. Alongside this, pupils have frequent opportunities to read and re-read books that match the letter sounds that they have learned. Pupils who fall behind in reading receive effective support that enables them to catch up.

Staff regularly read to pupils of all ages. Pupils get to know key stories very well. They have regular opportunities to talk about stories and books, sharing their own ideas and listening to others. This helps all pupils, including those who find reading harder, to develop reading preferences and interests. Pupils across the school talk about reading with enthusiasm. Older pupils read widely and confidently. Other areas of the English curriculum are less cohesively planned. For example, the school does not teach handwriting effectively to all pupils. As a result, some older pupils are not able to write down what they want to say with ease and find it harder to keep up with learning.

The school has a strong inclusive ethos. They identify when a pupil might have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Staff engage with external specialists to fully understand and support the needs of pupils. The school is very responsive in meeting pupils' social and emotional needs. Pupils within the specialist resourced provision for speech and language needs are supported to communicate with their peers in lessons and in play. All pupils, including pupils with SEND, feel valued and accepted within the school community. However, while the school is ambitious for all

pupils, their academic ambition for pupils with SEND is not yet being consistently realised. Not all staff are adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of learners with SEND well enough. As a result, these pupils do not consistently get the help they need to learn as much as they could.

Teachers are passionate and determined to provide pupils with an enriching education. They ensure that they teach in a way that is engaging and exciting for pupils. The school provides ongoing training to improve teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of how to teach most effectively. This work has been very successful in a number of subjects. For example, recent work to strengthen the teaching of mathematics has had a very positive impact on pupils' learning.

The school provides very effective support for pupils who struggle to meet behavioural expectations. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, but sometimes some pupils are inattentive in lessons. Staff do not always address this quickly and effectively. When this is the case, it disturbs the learning of those that want to get on. On the playground, pupils enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. The play of some pupils can become boisterous, which is not always comfortable for those around them. The school is working effectively to address this.

School leaders, and governors, are passionate about the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and use this wisely to sustain school improvement. Staff value the support and training that they receive. It ensures that they can help pupils' learning and development effectively. Governors maintain clear oversight of all aspects of the school's performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that all pupils acquire the foundational skills in English that they need. This means that some pupils' writing and transcription slows their thinking and hinders them achieving as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to address gaps in learning quickly and well so that all pupils can share their learning in writing across the curriculum.
- Teachers do not consistently adapt the school's planned curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils are given work that they are not ready for, and which does not help to close key gaps in their learning. The school should ensure that all teachers are able to successfully adapt learning to meet the needs of all learners so that all pupils achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Staff are not consistently as responsive as they might be to pupils' behaviour that does not meet the school's expectations. This means that inattentive behaviour in

classrooms and more boisterous behaviour on the playground are not always quickly noticed and addressed well enough. The school should ensure that the school's behaviour policy and processes are followed to consistently support pupils with their learning and play.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	118393
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341487
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lisa Brown
Headteacher	Victoria Alliston
Website	www.river.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 November 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a federation with one other school. Until this academic year, an executive headteacher had oversight of both schools. Currently, there is no executive headteacher in post. There has been an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher in post since September 2024.
- The chair of governors was appointed in September 2019.
- The school operates a specially resourced provision for pupils with a speech, language or communication needs. The provision is registered for 12 pupils. There are currently five pupils on roll. Pupils in the specially resourced provision learn mathematics and English within the unit and integrate into the school's mainstream classes in the afternoon.
- The school provides before-school care. An external provider provides after-school care.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector discussed the school with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. For the early reading deep dive, the lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils reading. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for early years with leaders. They also reviewed the curriculum in other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection. They discussed the school's analysis of records relating to behaviour and attendance with leaders.
- Inspectors considered personal development through all deep dives. They met with leaders to discuss the school's personal development programme. Inspectors talked to pupils about the school's personal development programme.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the gate and considered the views of parents who responded to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to the online staff surveys.

Inspection team

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