

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Riverside Bridge School

Renwick Road, Barking, Essex IG11 0FU

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

Riverside Bridge School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The acting headteacher of this school is Leila Amri. This school is part of Partnership Learning multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Roger Leighton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Saadat Mubashar.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Riverside Bridge School are happy and kept safe. They grow in confidence and are proud of their achievements, sharing these with parents and carers through reward ceremonies and events such as the Christmas concert.

Teachers and co-educators help pupils to be independent and enthusiastic learners. Starting from early years, children earn certificates and accreditation for what they achieve in independence, life skills, communication and numeracy. Pupils communicate in a range of ways that suit them best. This can be through a mixture of spoken word, gestures, signing and using pictures and symbols. In this way, pupils learn how to express their choices and feelings with increasing confidence.

Pupils actively participate in a range of activities that enrich their lives and develop their independence, interests and talents. For example, they learn how to stay safe and healthy, about fundamental British values and appropriate relationships. Starting in early years, pupils learn to be responsible. They take pride in carrying out roles, such as tidying up, delivering messages, lunches and doing photocopying. Older pupils and students in the sixth form access more formal work experience, such as on a farm or carrying out enterprise projects.

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

The school has established a very well-structured curriculum. It is ambitious, broad and links to the national curriculum as well as the targets outlined in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. The school uses different pathways effectively to ensure teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs and abilities. The curriculum rightly focuses on functional skills such as communication and mathematics across all subjects. For example, pupils learn to follow instructions and measure accurately in cooking and science. Pupils are taught self-care skills, such as brushing their teeth, health eating, tidying up and about how to say safe, including when online. As a result, pupils understand, for example, what to do when someone they do not know tries to befriend them.

The school ensures that the curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn what interests them. This is supplemented by a range of interesting visits, including to museums, galleries, parks, farms and overnight residentials, and workshops in school. The school uses these experiences to help pupils to apply what they have learned in school beyond the classroom.

Teachers are knowledgeable and explain new ideas clearly. They use appropriate resources to help pupils understand and remember what they are learning. Teachers check pupils' understanding and make suitable adaptations when misconceptions arise. The curriculum ensures that topics are revisited so pupils can practise their learning. This helps pupils to secure their knowledge and apply it to more complex learning later on. Occasionally, staff working with pupils intervene too quickly. This means some pupils receive more limited opportunities to tackle more complex learning or complete tasks independently when, given time, they could.

Therapeutic experts, such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, supplement teachers' work in the classroom. These specialists help create plans to better support pupils with their sensory and communication needs. This directly supports pupils' learning as well as their emotional readiness to learn and overall well-being.

There is a sharp focus on helping pupils to learn a range of communication methods. For some pupils this includes learning to read using a systematic approach to phonics. Expertly trained staff deliver this programme confidently. This means pupils who can access reading are helped to make the best possible progress from their starting points.

Behaviour in the school is very good. There is an embedded system that helps pupils to identify and manage their emotions. Well-trained staff support pupils to manage their behaviour with increasing independence. The school continually looks to improve its practice by working with consultants and parents to develop and improve its approach even further. The school places a high priority on pupil attendance. Leaders work effectively with parents and other agencies to identify and help pupils to overcome any barriers they may have in coming to school.

The school has placed pupils' personal development and preparation for adulthood as central to its work. It has a very well-designed approach to personal, social, health and

economic education. The curriculum is designed to help pupils to understand important ideas about safe and respectful relationships as well as to access information about their future education and careers. For example, in early years, children are introduced to different jobs. They learn about people who help them, such as the police force and fire brigade. Children dress up in their uniforms, which helps them to recognise these professionals. In the sixth form, students carry out their own enterprise work through creating, selling and delivering lunches to school staff and visitors.

Leaders are very ambitious for the school and keen to provide pupils with the best possible experience. Leaders in school and across the multi-academy trust have ensured standards are high. They have sought the right support and expertise from within and beyond the trust to make improvements. Their work is having a positive impact in several aspects of the school's work. Staff are very positive about the way leaders support their development, workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff are consistent in providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop their independence. This means that some pupils do not become as independent as they could. The school should ensure that all staff are trained and supported to identify and capitalise on opportunities to develop pupils' independence.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding,

behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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	142134
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10379156
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school special
Age range of pupils	4 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Saadat Mubashar
CEO of the trust	Roger Leighton
Headteacher	Leila Amri (acting headteacher)
Website	www.riversidecampus.com/bridge
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of SEND, including autism, language and communication difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and moderate learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school currently operates from two sites.
- The sixth-form provision started in September 2024 with five students.
- The acting headteacher took up their role in June 2024.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of the 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.
- The inspectors met with school leaders, including the acting headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers. Discussions were also held with a representative of the Partnership Learning multi-academy trust as well as members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, met with pupils and looked at samples of their work. They also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered documentation related to the curriculum and assessment, behaviour and attendance and pupils' EHC plans.
- 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.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions as well as their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and to the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Una Buckley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Watford

Ofsted Inspector

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