

Riverbank Primary School

Unit 2 Ripponden Mill, Ripponden, Halifax HX6 4DH

Inspection dates	1–2 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The head of education has a strong vision and understanding of what is needed to move the school forward. This is shared by the close and dedicated staff team, who work very hard to ensure good outcomes for pupils.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff work very closely together in this small school. They carefully assess pupils' needs when they arrive at the school and use this data effectively to plan the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils joining the school often have large gaps in their learning because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Once they settle into its caring and nurturing environment, they re-engage with learning and make good progress from a range of different starting points.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. The strong focus on academic subjects ensures that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. A wide range of enrichment activities enable pupils to rediscover a love of learning.
- The school's prospectus states that 'every child who attends should experience success in their life'. This is clearly reflected in the school's strong focus on ensuring that all pupils become self-confident and successful learners. This they successfully achieve by supporting pupils to overcome the barriers they face and engendering within them a feeling of self-worth and improved self-esteem.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Despite very high levels of need, pupils learn to control their emotions and develop positive and successful attitudes to learning. These are reflected in their good academic progress and in levels of attendance above the national average.
- The proprietor is very supportive of the work of the leadership team and ensures that all the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values. Through lessons in personal, social and health education, they learn to respect others and the rule of law. This gives them the building blocks to become good citizens in the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Most-able pupils' progress in English is slower than in mathematics. This is because they have few opportunities to practise writing longer pieces of work.
- The proprietor does not offer school leaders sufficient challenge in further improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of the most-able pupils in English by increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills by undertaking longer pieces of work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by increasing training opportunities for the proprietor in order to offer a greater challenge to school leaders to further improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The head of education has a very clear vision of how to move the school forward. In the short time the school has been open, she has put in place well-thought-out systems and structures. These have contributed directly to the good levels of organisation within the school as well as the school's full compliance with independent school standards.
- The head of education has been effective in sharing her vision. As a result, staff form a cohesive and enthusiastic team who ensure that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics from a range of different starting points.
- The lead teacher, pastoral care manager and the staff team have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, both socially, emotionally and academically. They are very successful at communicating this to pupils. As a result, despite their often very high level of need, pupils settle into school routines and start to enjoy learning, sometimes for the first time.
- Staff performance is managed effectively. Although performance-related pay is not yet in place, teachers have their performance regularly appraised by the head of education, who gives them clear feedback on how to improve their practice. This effective advice has contributed directly to the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with low self-esteem, which is reflected in their previously poor attitudes to learning and low rates of attendance. School staff are skilled at understanding their needs and provide a diverse curriculum that engages them and builds their confidence in their own abilities. The impact this has on their learning and behaviour is reflected in their excellent behaviour and very good levels of attendance. One pupil commented, 'I love coming to school now even more than playing on my computer.' Another said, 'This school is brilliant, I wish I could come during the holidays.'
- The school's well-organised curriculum has a clear focus on ensuring that pupils make as much academic progress as possible during the time they attend school. All the required areas of learning for independent schools are covered and there is a particular emphasis on developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills.
- A wide range of enrichment activities, such as swimming, horse riding, boxing and climbing, together with trips to the Bronte village of Haworth and den building in forest school, enable pupils to gain new skills and experiences. These help to broaden their horizons and build their self-esteem.
- Pupils develop an understanding of British values through activities such as learning about the structure of government and the rule of law. By talking to others from different faiths and undertaking visits to places of worship, such as the local church, pupils are helped to develop good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Parents have very positive views of the school. They feel that their children are nurtured and cared for. They comment on how staff often go the extra mile to support them as well as their children. A parent described how pleasurable it was, for the first time, to receive positive feedback about their child's progress and behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The proprietor of the school shows great interest and enthusiasm in all aspects of the school. She is passionate about delivering a high quality of education and bringing about change to pupils' lives.
 - The proprietor has a good level of understanding of the financial aspects of the school and has provided a well-appointed building which meets pupils' needs.
 - While offering senior leaders much support and a good level of budgetary challenge, the proprietor does not offer school leaders sufficient challenge on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The head of education and staff ensure that safeguarding is a key priority within the school. They strive to ensure that safeguarding processes and procedures are of the highest quality.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- School leaders and staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve despite their high levels of need. Once pupils join the school, their academic and social and emotional needs are assessed. This

helps staff to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to put in place an individual timetable which enables them to catch up on missed learning.

- Teachers are skilled at using questions to find out how much pupils have understood and using this information to tailor further learning.
- Reading is well promoted across the school. Pupils take their reading books home to read with parents. Pupils choose their own books and read these to staff at the start of each day. This helps develop pupils' love of reading and improves their reading skills.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) are taught to younger pupils, enabling them to make accelerated progress in developing their reading skills.
- Pupils, particularly those who are more able, make slightly less good progress in writing than in reading. This is because pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to practise the skills they have learned through writing longer pieces of work. This slows their progress.
- Mathematics is taught well and pupils make good progress because the work set matches pupils' needs accurately. School data show that pupils make their best progress in number work. Teachers have recognised this and are now concentrating on developing pupils' skills in other areas of mathematics. Developing a mastery approach (in which pupils' mathematical learning is deepened) to teaching mathematics is at an early stage. However, staff have already started to give pupils the opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum, for example in weighing and measuring ingredients in cookery classes.
- The school is one of three run by the company. Teaching staff in all three schools often work together to share expertise. For example, an art teacher in one of the schools helped staff plan an art project in which pupils produced gargoyles made from clay. The finished results were impressive and delighted pupils enthusiastically showed them to the inspector.
- All the pupils who attend the school have a statement of special education needs or an education, health and care plan (EHC). Support for their needs is clearly identified and is provided by all staff who work within the school, ensuring that they make good progress.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils say how much they appreciate the work staff do for them. These strong relationships contribute to pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They feel that staff understand them and 'everyone matters'.
- Staff and pupils are proud of their school. The importance school leaders place on promoting each individual's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the care and concern shown for the welfare of all pupils and their families.
- Pupils typically start school with low expectations and low self-esteem. School staff are particularly successful in engaging pupils and improving their self-esteem by restoring their faith in their own abilities.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting and musical activities, such as swimming and drumming, which successfully promote their physical and emotional well-being.
- The school effectively promotes the British values of respect for the rule of law, democracy, tolerance and respect of other groups of people through personal, social and health education lessons. These values are integral to the school's ethos. Pupils show respect and courtesy for visitors, staff and each other, demonstrating their understanding that everyone should be respected.
- Such values are also reflected in opportunities for pupils to show a sense of responsibility, for example through raising money by baking cakes and biscuits to sell as part of an enterprise project.
- Pupils are aware that discrimination and bullying can take many different forms, including online bullying. They feel safe in school and the work they do in school helps them to keep safe outside school.
- Through learning about other faiths, including Judaism and Islam, pupils learn tolerance, understanding and respect for the beliefs of others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Despite their very high level of need, pupils' behaviour is excellent. They show exceptionally caring and considerate attitudes, both inside and outside the classroom.

- When the start at the school, pupils often demonstrate very challenging behaviour. For example, they often find it hard to sit down and listen. However, once they have settled into the caring atmosphere created within the school, they learn how to better control their feelings and behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent. On the day of the inspection, pupils' attendance was 100% and this is by no means the exception. Overall attendance is higher than the national average for primary schools. This represents a huge improvement for many pupils who have previously attended for as little as 30% of the time.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good and sometimes excellent progress in mathematics and English from a range of different starting points. School data and work in pupils' books confirm a similarly good level of progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers, in conjunction with pupils, set challenging targets which motivate pupils to improve. One pupil said, 'I am much better at maths than I thought I was.' Another volunteered, 'I am going to try to get even better at writing.'
- Staff recognise that learning to read is exceptionally important in enabling pupils to access the curriculum. The recent purchase of an innovative selection of books has captured the imagination of pupils and has accelerated their progress in reading. All pupils are expected to do homework, which helps them to consolidate learning in the classroom and speeds up progress.
- The school identifies pupils with additional needs and checks that they make equally good progress to others. The most-able pupils make better progress in mathematics than in writing. They make good gains in reading and work in their books shows they make good progress in developing spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. However, planned work does not give pupils sufficient opportunity to use and further develop these skills by writing longer pieces of work. This slows their progress.

School details

Unique reference number	141608
Inspection number	10006311
DfE registration number	381/6015

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Janet Lumb
Chair	Janet Lumb
Headteacher	Jan Edge
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,000
Telephone number	01422 810520
Website	www.timeouthomes.co.uk/education/riverbank-primary-school
Email address	jan.edge@timeouthomes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Riverbank Primary School is an independent special school which caters for the needs of up to 12 pupils, between the ages of 7 and 11.
- Pupils who attend the school all have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHC).
- The school is situated in the village of Ripponden, in the Calder Valley close to Halifax.
- Currently there are three children on roll at the school all of whom are boys.
- The school was registered by the Department of Education on the 28 November 2014.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector scrutinised all policies and procedures required in order to establish the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Pupils' learning was observed in a range of curriculum areas across the school. The head of education accompanied the inspector during all of these observations.
- Meetings were held with the head of education, staff and individual pupils as well as the proprietor. The inspector took into account the views of four staff members who returned inspection questionnaires.
- The lead inspector spoke to a parent by telephone and took into account comments left by a parent on Parent View (Ofsted's online survey). Three parents responded on Parent View, which was an insufficient number to generate a full report.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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