

Inspection of River Bank Primary School

Bath Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 1ES

Inspection dates: 1–2 October 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and well cared for. They describe the school as a 'joyful' place to be. There are opportunities for families to engage in school life and to understand how to support their children's learning. Pupils, staff and the majority of parents and carers say that the school has got better since the previous inspection. We agree.

Many pupils have substantial barriers to learning, including joining the school with very little understanding of English. Leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils are successful, both academically and with their personal development. Pupils listen to their teachers because they want to learn, and staff check pupils' work to make sure that their needs are met. In some subjects, teachers do not make sure that the most able pupils have work that challenges them sufficiently.

Leaders and staff have high expectations that pupils will try their best and be considerate to others. Staff lead by example and encourage positive behaviours throughout the school. Pupils respond well. They are respectful to others and work well together.

Pupils feel safe in the school because staff 'keep a good eye' on them. Pupils understand what bullying is and say that it hardly ever happens. We agree that if any bullying does occur, staff deal with it quickly and it is stopped.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum that appropriately considers pupils' backgrounds and needs. Many pupils join the school from other countries and quickly learn about life in Luton. In particular, pupils learn about the benefits and challenges of their local area, how they can contribute, and how to be thoughtful citizens.

Many pupils join the school at different times throughout the year. Leaders and staff plan experiences for pupils that help them quickly belong to 'team River Bank', such as trips within the local area and opportunities to work with pupils in other schools and various community groups. Leaders also provide pupils with events to broaden their experiences, like visiting the seaside and residential trips.

The teaching of reading is important in this school. Phonics teaching is strong. Teachers ensure that any pupils falling behind get the help they need so that they can catch up quickly. As a result, most pupils read with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Reading, writing and mathematics are well planned and skilfully taught. Standards across the school are improving. Leaders have identified the skills pupils need to learn and what pupils need to know. As a result, teachers plan lessons that enable most pupils to know more and use this knowledge well. The curriculum in most subjects is equally as strong as in reading, writing and mathematics, for example in physical education (PE) and computing. Leaders are taking action to make sure that

the curriculum plans for music and modern foreign languages set out, step by step, the order in which pupils will learn new knowledge and skills.

For those who speak English as an additional language, leaders rightly ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' vocabulary and use of language. However, in some subjects, for example science and geography, pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, are introduced to too much subject-specific vocabulary too quickly. This overload means that sometimes pupils forget the meaning of words, and this hinders their ability to understand and remember what they have learned.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are happy to come to school and they enjoy their lessons. Teachers support pupils to have a go and explain that it is all right to make mistakes. In this encouraging environment, pupils answer questions and offer their opinions readily.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-structured and personalised support to help them achieve well. Leaders ensure that teachers know what pupils need.

Children enter the early years with skills below those typical for their age. Staff develop children's language well through modelling words and sentence construction. Children settle quickly because of the good quality of care and the well-planned routines. The environment is bright and welcoming. Most children reach a good level of development at the end of Reception and are ready for the curriculum in Year 1.

Leaders and governors make sure staff receive appropriate training. Leaders encourage staff to find out about new ways to make their teaching even better. Staff have regular opportunities to share ideas and use them in lessons, which is helping teachers to meet pupils' needs effectively. Staff feel very supported and appreciate that leaders and governors manage staff workload effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance throughout the school. Staff are well trained and understand what to do should they feel a pupil is unsafe. Leaders make sure that vulnerable pupils, and those who are facing additional barriers in their lives, are supported so that they thrive in school. Staff know their pupils well and leaders work with external agencies to make sure that pupils get the help and protection they need. The school's record-keeping system is effective. All appropriate checks are carried out on adults who work with pupils. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is sufficiently well planned and sequenced in reading, writing, mathematics and most foundation subjects. Leaders are in the process of improving the curriculum plans of subjects such as music and modern foreign languages, where the sequence of knowledge and skills for pupils to learn is not as clearly in place.
- Curriculum leaders need to identify the most important subject-specific vocabulary to be taught in foundation subjects. Teachers need to make sure they do not overload pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, with too many words. Instead, pupils need to learn the most important vocabulary, understand what the words mean and use them appropriately in their work.
- Teachers need to make sure that, when the most able pupils have secure knowledge and understanding, lessons provide work that is suitably demanding.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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	139782
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10110205
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	680
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jon Williets
Headteacher	David Sansom
Website	www.riverbankprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	6–7 July 2017

Information about this school

- River Bank Primary School opened in September 2013 and is sponsored by Active Luton, which established the Active Education Trust through which the school operates.
- The school opened with children in the Reception classes only. Year groups have been added year on year. In September 2019, the school's first cohort of pupils moved into Year 6.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils come from a diverse range of educational experiences and backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English is well above the national average.
- A monitoring inspection took place in September 2018 because the school had received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The monitoring inspection judged that senior leaders and governors were taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the school's section 5 inspection in July 2017.
- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2017.

- The school receives support from the local authority and a national leader of education.

Information about this inspection

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

- As part of this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the two assistant headteachers, one of whom is also the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding leader. Inspectors also met with the English, mathematics, science, PE, design and technology, computing and geography leaders; the business and operations administrator; and a group of newly qualified and trainee teachers to discuss the impact of the support they receive from leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, the vice-chair and two other governors. Additionally, the lead inspector met with a local authority adviser to discuss their work with the school.
- The subjects of reading, mathematics, science, PE, design and technology, computing and geography were considered as part of this inspection. Inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. Inspectors also observed some pupils reading to staff and talked to pupils about their reading habits.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes to seek their views about the school. Inspectors attended the school's breakfast club and two assemblies.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 64 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 64 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. Inspectors also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and had phone conversations with some parents. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 48 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The transition arrangements for quality of education apply to this inspection.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Templeton	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Daniel	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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