

# Rivington Park Independent School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	888/6031
Unique Reference Number	131149
Inspection number	317194
Inspection dates	19-20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Rivington Park Independent School is situated near Horwich in Lancashire. The school was established in 2004, with a commitment to small class sizes, teaching excellence, promoting academic achievement, and providing values to equip young people to thrive in a modern world. The school shares the building with the Nursery and Day Care facility for very young children, which have been inspected separately recently. This is the first inspection of the school. A significant proportion of pupils join the school from other schools at different times of the year. The oldest pupils are currently in Year 10. No pupils have a statement of special educational need.

## Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education provided at Rivington Park is good. The school supports pupils' personal development effectively, which enables them to make good progress academically. The teaching is good and the school is well on the way to meeting its aims. Pupils behave well and enjoy much of their work. The curriculum and the school's attention to health and safety matters are satisfactory. The school has a clear plan for further improvement. It has established a good range of policies and procedures to underpin its work. The school meets the great majority of the regulations for independent schools.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. Under the good leadership of the headteacher and staff the school has reviewed and developed its written planning for all key stages to more closely match the needs of pupils. The Reception curriculum for young children offers the range of activities expected and they make good progress. There is a proper focus on the expected learning outcomes for pupils in the National Curriculum subjects and pupils make good progress. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are promoted effectively across the curriculum. The provision for ICT has improved as a discrete subject and in its use to help learning in other subjects. The ICT suite is a good facility with enough modern computers for each pupil to have one each during lessons.

The school offers a satisfactory range of subjects for older pupils. The provision for music and art has received a recent boost. New teachers have been appointed and the positive impact of increased expertise in art can already be seen. Older pupils now have improved opportunities to develop their creative skills. French teaching is well established and pupils in Year 10 learn to speak complex sentences with good accents. There are growing links with local secondary schools to share facilities for sports, which help to offset the very limited indoor physical education facilities. Personal, social and health education (PHSE) is taught across the school and careers education for older pupils. The school provides appropriate catch up programmes for pupils who find learning difficult or who have arrived from another school lacking some skills.

Teaching is good in all key stages. Pupils' and young children's differing learning styles and abilities are met well. Their frequent good progress in lessons is due to good lesson planning and attention to what pupils might be most interested in, where possible. The amount of work that includes investigative activities has improved. Pupils like this approach. The good teaching means that pupils overall, from their differing starting points, are on course to reach above average standards by the end of the year.

The teaching staff are well qualified, confident practitioners. Marking of pupils' work is consistent in providing an indication of how they can improve. The small class sizes enable each pupil or young child to receive much individual attention. Teachers work well with less able pupils and those who have had several changes of school, rebuilding their self-esteem in some cases. Members of staff are good role models; hence pupils' attitudes to work and their perseverance with tasks are good. These important features are improving pupils' progress.

The characteristics of good teaching include very good relationships, teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations of the quality of work pupils should produce and of behaviour, good pace in lessons and well timed changes of activities to ensure pupils stay well engaged. Where lessons were less effective, teachers expected pupils to remember too much or did not recognise that more teaching was needed before pupils could answer the questions asked at the expected level of detail.

Pupils gain new knowledge and skills well and they enjoy learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are expected to investigate ideas in mathematics. They, for example, compared their estimated answers with actual answers in money problems with enthusiasm. In Year 10, pupils' interests were very well developed in media studies. Pupils compared developments in video presentations over time successfully. This is a good example of how pupils' interests in the world outside school are harnessed. There was amazement amongst pupils in an outstanding science lesson in Years 8 and 9 about the effects of air pressure. The teacher made excellent use of a dramatic experiment to emphasise valuable teaching points.

The lack of recorded base line testing when young children join Reception, or immediately after pupils join the school, limits the school's capacity to judge how much progress they make over time. There are however, adequate records kept of pupils' individual attainments each year, which are reported to parents and are referenced to national standards. Regular monitoring, testing and assessment of their work enable the school to provide additional support where necessary for those who need it, be they more or less able. Pupils have meaningful targets to reach and older pupils know what they have to do to reach the standards necessary to pass GCSE exams at different grades. The school does not have a fully working system for gathering together all pupils' test and assessment results so that their individual progress, or that of groups, can be analysed easily.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and so their attendance is good. Their relationships with one another and staff are very good, hence paired and group activities in lessons are very often successful. They have positive attitudes to their lessons, are keen to learn and their behaviour is good. All know right from wrong. Some pupils arrive at the school with low self-esteem and lack confidence. With support from staff these pupils make good progress in their social relationships and self-confidence.

Teachers' praise and encouragement are used effectively and as a result pupils take pride in their work. Staff know pupils well and in turn pupils trust staff and know who to turn to if they need extra support or to share a confidence. Inspectors agree with older pupils that they should have a stronger voice in decision making, about matters such as the content of school lunches, the need for lockers to store possessions and uniform rules. The school council is not yet having as great an impact as it might because it does not meet often enough.

Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise and they are proud of their sporting and dramatic achievements. Lunch times are good social occasions when pupils have a good choice of healthy foods. Extra curricular activities enhance pupils' personal and social development. Pupils have opportunities to participate in before and after school clubs and in exciting residential experiences, such as the expedition to Scotland. Fencing club is an absolute strength of the school. Several pupils have reached a very high standard.

There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and spiritual awareness when, for example, they study Japanese customs and different religions in Years 8 and 9. Pupils have an increasing knowledge of how government works. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community through charitable events and sponsorships. A highlight of the festive season is the school choral and instrumental production held in a local high street store. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. All the required policies and procedures are in place, but training for staff about child safeguarding has not taken place in the last year to update them. The school undertakes an appropriate risk assessment prior to any out of school visit. There is an effective behaviour policy, clear class and lunchtime rules and a reward system, which positively support pupils.

Evacuation drills take place, and the school has up to date reports on electrical and fire safety. Staff are deployed well throughout the day. Admission and attendance registers fully meet regulations. Accident and incident forms are well completed. Out of school clubs, healthy lunch menus and very good relationships help pupils to live healthy lives and stay safe. The school has an adequate plan to develop the site to accommodate disabled pupils.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures are satisfactory. The school has suitable recruitment procedures in place which ensure that all staff undergo the required checks prior to commencing work at the school. A single central record of these checks has not been created to meet the latest requirements. Although there have been many changes of staff, the headteacher has established a good standard in respect of the qualifications and expertise needed for each teaching post.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are satisfactory. The school has discrete accommodation for science, ICT and music as well as sufficient general teaching rooms and a small dining hall. There are no specialist teaching areas for subjects such as design and technology or physical education. The kitchen is adequate for the size of school and all staff have been trained in the hygienic preparation of food.

The building is adequately maintained and the premises are suitable for the number of pupils attending the school. Outside there is a safe enclosed play area for pupils, as well as an adventure climbing area.

There is a lack of storage, such as lockers, for pupils' bags and valuables. There are sufficient toilets for boys, girls and staff, including disabled toilet facilities. There is a room set aside for pupils who may feel unwell during the school day. The school is reasonably clean and tidy and there is a rolling programme of general maintenance and decoration. Teachers make good efforts to improve the general appearance of their classrooms by good use of displays and pupils' work.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's information for parents and carers is satisfactory. All the information parents need is found in the prospectus, newsletters or on the informative website. Parents know that they can ask for school policies and many are on the website, including those about discipline and exclusions, anti bullying procedures and details about the staff and their qualifications. The short section on the school's philosophy in the prospectus gives an adequate flavour of what the school stands for and is expected of pupils. Reports to parents about their children's progress give adequate detail about how pupils are getting on in comparison with national norms. They are also helpful in that pupils' targets are listed. From their response the questionnaires, parents are generally content with the school.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet requirements.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- implement all written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3 (2)(b))

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the suitability of the proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- create a single central record of all checks made about staff suitability and their qualifications (paragraph 4c)

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop the work of the school council to take greater account of pupils' views
- improve the recording and analysis of the tracking of pupils' attainment and progress.

## School details

Name of school	Rivington Park Independent School		
DfES number	888/6031		
Unique reference number	131149		
Type of school	Primary and secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	17 July 2004		
Age range of pupils	4-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 26	Total: 52
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5151-£5366		
Address of school	Knowle House Rivington Lane Rivington Bolton Lancashire BL6 7RX		
Telephone number	01204 399818		
Email address	info@rivingtonparkschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Michael Ruaux		
Proprietor	Mr Michael Ruaux		
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry AI		
Dates of inspection	19-20 June 2007		