



# Radcliffe Riverside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 134361  
 Local Authority Bury  
 Inspection number 300480  
 Inspection dates 14–15 March 2007  
 Reporting inspector Mr John Coleman HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Abden Street
School category	Community		Radcliffe
Age range of pupils	11–16		Manchester
			M26 3AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 723 3110
Number on roll	805	Fax number	0161 723 1880
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr C E Jones
Date of previous school inspection	January 2006	Headteacher	Mrs D Morton

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
11–16	14–15 March 2007	300480

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Radcliffe Riverside School opened in September 2004 following the amalgamation of two local high schools. The school is on two sites. There is an executive headteacher based primarily on the Key Stage 4 site and an associate headteacher located mainly on the Key Stage 3 site. Several staffing changes have taken place since the last inspection, including some to senior posts. There are high numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is higher than average. The school makes special provision for students with physical disabilities in a designated resource base. An above average number of students are eligible for free school meals. The social deprivation of the surrounding area is high. Most students are White British. The school was inspected in January 2006 and given a Notice to Improve.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 3**

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been remedied successfully. Outcomes for students are improving, including the standards they achieve in tests and examinations. The school's senior leadership team is successfully building confidence amongst staff, students and parents through a rigorous programme for school improvement. Teaching and learning has improved because of the action taken by the school's leaders, including better training and some staff changes. However, there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching. The school's leaders are not complacent and are aware of the need to ensure that further improvements are made. The school's plans identify appropriate priorities and secure monitoring systems to promote this.

Standards remain below average but are now rising, as is shown by the most recent GCSE results. Given students' low starting points, they make satisfactory progress by the time they leave school. In Key Stage 4, students progress well due to firmly focused teaching. This takes good account of what students already know and can do in planning for the next steps in students' learning. This good practice is less strong in Key Stage 3 where students' progress is more variable. Staffing instability has been a barrier to raising standards in some subjects: this is most notable in science where standards reached by students are exceptionally low. However, a new head of science is now in post and students recognise the improvements in their lessons.

Governors are knowledgeable about their school. They bring a good range of expertise, are strongly committed to improving the quality of education and make prompt and appropriate decisions with regard to staffing. For example, in the recruitment of staff they have allocated responsibilities in line with the school's needs, as seen in the strong appointment of an associate headteacher for the lower school, whose impact can be clearly seen in the calm, purposeful environment for learning in the Key Stage 3 site. Together with the executive Headteacher, the governors are determined to eradicate any inadequate practice and are prepared to take challenging action where it is needed. They have acted decisively to support the school's leadership in its development of middle leadership skills. Although still variable, these skills are contributing to the school's improvement. For example, departmental monitoring and evaluation is now more rigorous.

Students behave well in school and relationships between students and the staff are good. Attendance is improving rapidly due to the school's endeavours to encourage students. However, punctuality to lessons is poor: many students dawdle to class and show a lack of interest in their education. The legacy of underachievement, brought about by the difficulties which the school has faced

in recent times, results in some apathy from students which hinders progress in their learning. Students' expectations of their own achievement are not high enough. Teachers are raising the level of challenge offered to students in lessons, but students' responses are often disappointing.

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum which is suitably broad and balanced. There are a range of vocational and academic options open to students including good partnerships with local colleges and further education providers. Extra activities are appreciated by students, especially the variety of sporting opportunities. However, there is insufficient provision for religious education and the school does not meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They develop as well rounded and increasingly mature young people thanks to a range of responsibilities such as those on the school council and the prefect system.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that the standards of attainment in science are raised.
- Improve the consistency of students' achievement in Key Stage 3.
- Ensure that the statutory requirements for curriculum religious education and collective worship are met.

### **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

Many students enter the school with standards of attainment which are well below average in English, mathematics and science. Standards are below average by Year 11, but given their starting points, students' achievement by Year 11 is satisfactory. Results in GCSE examinations improved significantly in many subjects in 2006 when the figure achieving five or more A\* to C grades jumped 12% to 47%. Notably, students achieved 61% A\* to C grades in English, which is a little above the national average. However, their results in science are exceptionally low. Students' progress in science is variable across the school and is unsatisfactory overall. There are variations in the level of attainment across the different subjects. In Key Stage 3 students make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, though the lowest attaining girls do less well in mathematics. In Key Stage 4 students make satisfactory progress in most subjects and good progress in English and mathematics. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade 3**

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. Students are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff. Bullying is dealt with effectively. Exclusions are falling and attendance is improving. Students make positive contributions to school life as seen by inspectors who were greeted by polite and courteous students acting as door monitors.

Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles as they take part in and enjoy a range of sporting activities. This is also supported through healthy options available in the school canteen from which students make good choices. They also have an understanding of how to recognise and deal with stress such as through 'time out' where they are given space to de-stress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students' appreciation of cultural diversity has improved because the school is monitoring it more carefully. Many students go onto further education as a result of good careers and course guidance.

While most students tell inspectors that they enjoy their learning, levels of punctuality to lessons are poor and attitudes in lessons are predominately passive. Sometimes students quietly switch off. Most students know how to behave satisfactorily in lessons and around the school. Behaviour is better in the lower school than in the upper school. Some parents have also raised concern about behaviour.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

Most teaching is satisfactory, but the quality of teaching varies significantly across the school and between subjects. Teaching is improving: there is some outstanding teaching, but some is still inadequate. When teaching is satisfactory or better, it is characterised by good planning and preparation to a whole school format. Lessons are clearly focused on objectives for students' learning and a wide range of activities engage students' interest and challenge their understanding. Behaviour in classes is satisfactory and relationships between staff and students are good. However, the quality of planning lacks consistency and often the objectives are too vague to enable teachers to assess securely the level of students' learning. Teachers mark students' work regularly, but the feedback does not always indicate clearly to students what they have to do to improve. Students' attitudes to learning in lessons are mixed and the level of interest and concentration is not always sufficiently sustained. The support

for students with behavioural and/or learning needs is often well targeted and serves these students well. However, some teaching assistants are not sure about students' specific learning needs because they lack the opportunity to share knowledge about students' progress. Learning mentors in Year 7 are helping to increase the rate of students' learning. The school has initiated a strategy to improve boys' performance in English by using male teachers to deliver lessons to boys' only groups. This is showing very positive results.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

The school offers a satisfactory, broad and balanced curriculum. It provides appropriate opportunities for most students to enjoy their learning, including those with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. For older students, the links with further education colleges have increased the number and variety of courses offered to students in Years 10 and 11. This strong provision of vocational opportunities has increased examination success and, with strong careers advice, smoothed the way for the transition of the large majority into full-time further education courses. This is a positive step towards them achieving their future economic well-being. Currently, the range of work related learning is an acknowledged area for development by the school.

Sensitive grouping of students, into teaching sets that match students' capabilities, means that work can be planned to cater effectively for all their needs. This is especially the case in English and mathematics. Gifted students have opportunities to learn effectively by, for example, the Aim Higher initiatives that have given them the chance to learn through mathematics and science challenges at local universities. The school does not meet the requirement for teaching religious education in Years 10 and 11 and this affects the quality of the pupils' spiritual and moral education. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and booster classes which, generally, are popular and well attended. The school's regularly updated website gives detailed information about all aspects of the school's provision and gives opportunities for students to learn 'online'. This widens students' learning experiences and develops their computer skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good and contribute positively to students' progress, enjoyment and well-being. This is especially evident through the provision of learning mentors for all students in Year 7 and by the use of support strategies in Key Stage 4 that promote achievement. Students particularly benefit from the practical advice they are given through individual targets. The school is not complacent and is tackling the inconsistencies that currently exist in the management of tracking and recording of all students' progress. A rigorous timetable for assessment is starting to provide teachers with accurate information about what students need to do to improve. Teaching

assistants are deployed effectively to meet students' learning needs. Students and parents agree that students are looked after well. Careful attention is paid to health and safety issues and child protection. Good support is provided for students at risk of exclusion through the calm, secure and well resourced Pupil Learning Centre. Good arrangements for transition into the school at age 11, and into further education when students leave, make movement across the stages of education smooth and free from unfamiliarity. There are effective links with parents and a range of local agencies that safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students with physical disabilities are welcomed into the school and are well supported by staff and students alike. Most staff praise students' achievements. One pupil commented, 'You want to let others see you get the rewards for doing well.'

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides effective leadership and gives clear direction. She is very well supported by a highly effective senior management team. The governors undertake their role very effectively. They are kept well informed and are closely involved in the work of subject departments. Consequently, they are able to support the school and set it challenging targets. Working together, governors and staff are rectifying the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection. The way the school assesses what it does is well focussed. Because of this, the new development plan is relevant and realistic. Careful management has brought the two halves of this amalgamated school closer together. Year groups are fully combined. Senior leaders have taken robust action to address inadequacies in subject leadership and teaching. Such developments demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. The school acknowledges that there is more to do. Achievement in Key Stage 3 is not high enough, especially in science. The quality of teaching and learning is improving but is not uniformly or consistently good. The contribution of middle managers is variable but improving.

Financial procedures are rigorous. Appropriate arrangements are in place to meet the current requirements for the safeguarding of children. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>3</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>3</b>
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>2</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>3</b>
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	<b>3</b>
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>3</b>
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	<b>3</b>

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>3</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>3</b>
The behaviour of learners	<b>3</b>
The attendance of learners	<b>3</b>
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>3</b>
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>3</b>
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>2</b>
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>2</b>
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>3</b>

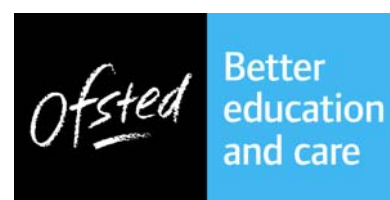
<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

### Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



The Students  
Radcliffe Riverside School  
Abden Street  
Radcliffe  
Manchester  
M26 3AT

16 March 2007

Dear Students

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

- Your school is improving and no longer gives cause for concern.
- Standards are below average but rising. Students are gaining higher grades in examinations.
- The headteacher, governors and staff are improving many parts of your school.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving.
- Achievement needs to improve in Key Stage 3.
- Standards in science need to be quickly improved.
- Students are polite, well mannered and behaviour is satisfactory.
- Some students do not show enough interest in lessons.
- The school knows it needs to make some lessons more interesting and students should expect more of themselves.
- The time given to religious education and collective worship does not meet the government's requirements.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on working with your teachers to make Radcliffe Riverside School an even better school.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman HMI  
Lead inspector

Andrew Stafford  
Team inspector

Clarice Nelson-Rowe  
Team inspector

John Webster  
Team inspector