



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Riverston School

April 2022

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School's Details

School	Riverston School			
DfE number	203/6169			
Early Years registration number	2637080			
Address	Riverston School 63 to 69 Eltham Road London SE12 8UF			
Telephone number	020 8318 4327			
Email address	office@riverstonschool.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr David Ward			
Proprietor	Chatsworth Schools Group			
Age range	9 months to 4 and 11 to 21			
Number of pupils on roll	168			
	Nursery and Early Years	46	Senior School	95
	Riverston College (Sixth Form)	27		
Inspection dates	26 to 29 April 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Riverston School is an independent co-educational day school catering for the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It is organised in three sections: the Nursery and Early years, for children aged 9 months to 4 years, Senior School, for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, and Riverston College, for pupils aged 16 to 21 years.
- 1.2 In March 2021 the school became part of the Chatsworth School Group, who form the governing body.
- 1.3 The current headmaster and chair of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection, who took up their posts in September 2021. Additional facilities have been added in food technology and the senior and nursery playgrounds have been resurfaced.
- 1.4 The Ofsted registered early years provision was not included in this inspection.
- 1.5 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.6 The school aims to provide a safe, warm, caring and stimulating environment that enables pupils to develop their skills, talents, resilience and self-confidence in order to live worthwhile and independent lives.

About the pupils

- 1.7 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds and most live within a 20-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils is below average compared with those taking the same tests nationally. The large majority of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mainly autism, and receive additional specialist support. One hundred and sixteen pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 17 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The school identifies 24 pupils as the most able and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 Pupils take GCSE/A-level examinations in their final year at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages, but inspection evidence confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships and sex education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' attitudes to their learning and achievement are excellent.
- Pupils of all abilities, including EYFS children, make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are resilient in overcoming individual barriers to learning.
- Pupils across the school develop excellent study skills from an early age.
- Pupils achieve well in a broad range of activities beyond the classroom, particularly in art, music and sports.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils are extremely caring and respectful. They develop positive relationships with each other and with the staff.
- Pupils feel safe and understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils are extremely tolerant of each other and celebrate the diversity of others.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They understand and deal positively with their emotional responses to life's challenges and accept responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils' life skills are not always developed and applied as strongly as possible.

Recommendation

3.3 The school should make the following improvement.

- Strengthen pupils' development and application of life skills such as telling the time and using money, in a range of real-life situations.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Across the school and in a range of subjects, pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND and EAL as well as those in the EYFS, make excellent progress in relation to their individual starting points. Activities and resources challenge and interest pupils and are well matched to their individual needs and abilities. School leaders and governors promote the school's ethos by ensuring that all pupils develop their skills and talents so that they achieve well in their academic and vocational

studies. In Year 11, pupils are able to complete entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics, as well as GCSE subjects, including computer science, English language and literature, fine art, food preparation, French, mathematics and science. In the sixth form, pupils are able to complete vocational courses in financial capability, hospitality, travel and tourism, science and sports leadership. Pupils also complete successfully A-levels in fine art, computer science, English literature, media studies and music. The number of pupils in the school is too small for comparison of its GCSE and A-level results with national averages to be meaningful. Comparison of the number and range of qualifications shows a trend of increasing success in the last two years. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress. Inspection evidence supports this view.

- 3.6 Individual levels of success vary but outcomes generally indicate that pupils, including those who are disaffected learners at the time they start at the school, overcome their difficulties. Pupils are resilient in overcoming individual barriers to learning. This is because of the effective learning approaches that the teaching, support and therapy staff teams have helped them to develop. For example, individual support, strategies to organise their writing and the use of sensory resources have helped pupils to improve their memory, concentration and speed in processing information.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate an extensive range of skills, knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning. For example, EYFS children could describe readily how fruits are used in making kebabs. They were also keen to explain that pineapples grow on bushes rather than on trees. Similarly in a science lesson on ecosystems, senior pupils were able to explain confidently what a biome is, and how different landscapes have such different features but still remain in the same category. Pupils have well-developed physical skills as a result of governors' investment in improving sports facilities and specialist coaching. For example, younger senior pupils demonstrated excellent co-ordination when honing their javelin techniques. Pupils do not always develop and apply life skills, such as telling the time and using money, in a range of real-life situations, or negotiating and resolving disagreements, as strongly as possible.
- 3.8 During their time at Riverston, pupils become confident and clear communicators. They develop effective strategies for improving oracy as a result of help from teaching and therapy staff. For example, children in the EYFS were able to express themselves orally using single words and two-word phrases such as 'water bottles'. Pupils develop proficiency in writing because of highly effective teaching. Scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrated, for example, that they are able to make use of different writing genres for different purposes. For instance, senior pupils used clear and detailed persuasive writing and negotiating techniques to convince a potential employer of their suitability for a job. As pupils move through the school, they instinctively choose challenging texts to read for pleasure and to broaden their knowledge of different subjects. For example, in a computer science lesson, senior pupils were able to read accurately a piece of text summarising the plot of *Wicked*, which they had seen the previous week.
- 3.9 Pupils' progress in developing understanding of numeracy is excellent. For example, in their home cookery workbooks, Year 11 pupils demonstrated that they were able to use their numeracy skills to weigh accurately different ingredients. In early years, most children could successfully recall their previous mathematical knowledge to explain that a square has four sides and a triangle has three. Sixth form pupils were able to identify the basic angles in shapes and then successfully apply this knowledge to irregular triangles. More able pupils are given more demanding work and provided with more challenging resources. As a result, they extend their learning successfully.
- 3.10 Pupils apply their understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) proficiently in lessons. For instance, in a financial capability lesson, senior pupils were able to successfully navigate the software to identify risks involved in online gambling and scams, and then consider the appropriate responses to purchasing scams. In a computer science lesson, pupils successfully created a web page with a heading title. Pupils understood the tags, 'head', 'body', 'html' and 'title'. They

could explain the impact of using Code 1 followed by Code 2 inside the body tag to write the dialogue and then align it accurately.

- 3.11 Pupils develop excellent study skills and increasing independence in their learning as they progress through the school. In the early years, children demonstrated high levels of concentration, determination and perseverance when carefully colouring a detailed picture. In a lesson about the fermentation process, senior pupils created an effective visual revision tool to analyse and synthesise a range of sources. This helped them to suggest a well-founded hypothesis about why the world needs to preserve food in order to meet people's shopping habits. Pupils choose and use resources extremely productively. This was seen in a Year 9 English lesson, where pupils used a range of interesting devices, including well-chosen atmospheric mood music, quotations, and pictures to inform better their understanding of the evolving relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. By utilising these different approaches to learning, staff were able ensure that all pupils were engaged and developing their understanding in the ways best suited to them individually. Pupils skillfully examined and analysed the resources, concentrated fully and were secure in asking penetrating questions about how the characters might be feeling towards each other.
- 3.12 Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning can be seen in classrooms and beyond. They are seen particularly in pupils' perseverance and readiness to collaborate productively with their peers, which is supported by consistent staff attention to pupils' individual needs. In a mathematics lesson, sixth form pupils were able to work independently when carrying out simple assessment tasks, using specialist geometric software to work out the angles of triangles. Their interest was facilitated well by knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching and by the warm working relationships between adults and pupils, as well as between the pupils. Children in the EYFS demonstrated considerable initiative and independence in their selection of outdoor activities such as finding bugs, watching snails and cooking on an imaginary open fire, using natural ingredients. Pupils are successful and enjoy their academic work. This is because the therapy and counselling teams provide them with suitable strategies that help them maintain their concentration for learning. Their confidence and resilience in believing that they can overcome barriers to learning are further boosted by the knowledge that the senior team and staff are always very interested in their success. Pupils stated that adults are always on hand to provide support and reassurance.
- 3.13 Pupils enjoy success in a range of areas both within and beyond the school. They are keen to push themselves to achieve well in art, music and sport. They enjoy preparing and taking part in national competitions in art, athletics and mathematics. Pupils told inspectors that they regularly take part in productions, including 'Riverston's got Talent'. The experience of performing in public helps pupils to become more confident and assured. In their responses to the questionnaire, a minority of parents did not think that the school provided a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. However, inspectors found that pupils had many opportunities to develop new interests and skills by taking part in extra-curricular activities, ranging from boxing and origami to eco gardening clubs. They achieve well in these areas because leaders, teachers and support staff provide a positive environment in which all pupils receive the help they need to support their learning. Pupils are very much encouraged to adopt a 'can do' attitude by school leaders and governors. They drive the school's ethos by ensuring that all pupils develop their skills, talents, resilience and self-assurance. Leaders promote successfully the school's values of 'humanity, humility, humour, happiness, health and help' to enable pupils to live worthwhile and independent lives. In 2021, all pupils who left the school went into further education, training or employment, with many proceeding to university.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 From the early years to the sixth form, pupils demonstrate excellent levels of self-knowledge and self-assurance and feel valued as individuals. For example, in form time, senior pupils responded very

positively and respectfully to the 'calm' session. They joined in with the breathing instructions to prepare themselves mentally for the next activity and the day ahead. Pupils value the understanding and support given to them by staff, which provide a springboard to their success. Personal, social, health and education (PSHE) makes a substantial contribution to pupils' personal development. In the questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school encourages their children to be more self-assured and independent. Inspection evidence supports this view.

- 3.16 Pupils make wise and sensible decisions. They understand that key choices made in school will affect their future lives. For example, pupils demonstrate the ability to make balanced decisions about everyday life by organising themselves well during the school day. In interviews with pupils, inspectors found that those in Years 11 and the sixth form had made very clear decisions about the next stages of their education. A very large majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school offers helpful advice about subject choices and careers. Inspection evidence indicates that provision for careers guidance is well organised and matched to pupils' differing needs, thus supporting the pupils to make sensible choices. Within and beyond the classroom, pupils approach their tasks with perseverance, encouraged by the pervading 'can do' ethos. For example, pupils learn how to act decisively when faced with physical or mental challenges when completing tasks for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 3.17 Pupils' knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe is excellent. This is because leaders place a high priority on helping them to stay safe. For example, in a portfolio on health, sixth form pupils considered sensibly the causes of poor health, such as alcohol abuse, drug abuse and obesity, as well as the importance of physical fitness. In the EYFS, children brush their teeth after lunch, showing developing understanding of the benefits of good oral hygiene. They were also able to explain that if a person were to eat too many pancakes he or she would probably suffer from stomach ache. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they know how to stay safe online. Inspectors found that pupils could identify potential risks well. For example, in a financial capability lesson, senior pupils could identify the safest way to purchase an app on a smartphone, being mindful of the risks of online gambling. In the questionnaire, all parents agreed that the school ensures that their children learn in a safe environment. Scrutiny of sixth form pupils' workbooks in PSHE showed that most were able to identify the main symptoms of mental ill-health. For example, they were able to explain the meaning of terms such as 'bipolar,' 'dementia' and 'anxiety'. Their responses reflect an excellent understanding of the issues and the teaching provides them with strategies for promoting strong mental health. Pupils develop an age-appropriate awareness about themes relating to personal safety, including consent, social boundaries and keeping safe in personal relationships.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of spiritual awareness. For example, while moving from one lesson to another, a few senior pupils were given the opportunity to handle the school's guinea pigs. The pupils commented on how the relaxed and friendly nature of the animals made them feel calm and happy. In a financial capability lesson, senior pupils reflected on the rising cost of living. Here they displayed excellent empathy and sensitivity for those people less fortunate than themselves by considering the most frugal ways in which economies could be made causing the least disruption. During an outdoor learning lesson, EYFS children were completely absorbed in locating and identifying woodland birds and animals, showing their appreciation of the natural world.
- 3.19 Pupils' moral understanding and responsibility for their behaviour towards others are excellent. They show considerable respect and care for one another. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of right and wrong. For example, during their circle time on minibeasts, EYFS children listened to each other respectfully, sat in good order and shared the models. Their knowledge of the class rules was excellent and they displayed understanding of the impact of their own behaviour on the group. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Inspection evidence supports this view. In a PSHE lesson on personal space, senior pupils made careful use of hula hoops to maintain appropriate distances between themselves. The pupils could then confidently visualise and express what a suitable social distance for friends would be. Pupils

show courtesy and respect towards staff and their peers. They display a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour. For example, scrutiny of PSHE workbooks demonstrated that sixth form pupils have an excellent understanding of the nature of consent and sexual boundaries. The more able pupils are able write in depth on the consequences of not obeying the social and moral rules.

- 3.20 Pupils have outstanding levels of social development and work productively with others to solve difficulties. They collaborate well and are very supportive of one another. This was observed in all the lessons seen and as pupils moved around the site. For instance, in the EYFS children demonstrated excellent social awareness towards each other, as when children gave water bottles to friends, cuddling the friends and sharing. During a form tutor session on diversity, senior pupils discussed sensitively gender issues and sexual orientation in relation to Alan Turing and his contribution to society. Here pupils appreciated the impact that social prejudices had on him, and how he was let down by the society he served as a result of his sexuality.
- 3.21 Pupils display appreciation of diversity and cultures other than their own. For example, in a diversity lesson, senior pupils increased their knowledge about 'iconography' and how it applies to religion. Pupils then discussed in some depth how the wearing of a hijab can make an individual feel closer to her faith. Pupils develop a mature appreciation of British culture by gaining knowledge about the historical development of literature, visual arts, crafts, heritage and music. During a tutor group discussion on the concept that there are nine characteristics that make us special, pupils explained with clarity the differences between gender identity and biological gender. They discussed empathetically why some people choose to alter their original status and impact of social influences on such choices. The senior pupils who are active in the LGBTQ+ societies are highly articulate and influential role models for the school. Pupils are extremely tolerant of each other's differences, respectful of diversity within the community and prepared to have open discussions about religion, ethnicity, gender, and disability. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Inspection evidence supports this view.
- 3.22 Pupils' work on behalf of others, the school and the community is excellent. They take much pride in choosing several charities, some based in the United Kingdom and some overseas, and raising money for them. Their support for a number of charities demonstrates much thoughtfulness and empathy. Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of duty and service, for example when celebrating Harvest by collecting and donating produce to the local foodbank. Involvement in these community activities helps to develop their empathy with others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils willingly take on posts of responsibility, acting as school counsellors and ambassadors. They do well in an environment that inspires them to make a positive contribution to their community and to their own personal development. For example, during visits to classrooms and in discussion with inspectors, pupils demonstrated how well they remain engaged and motivated by the school's rewards system.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and form meetings. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr David Scott	Reporting inspector
Mr David Thompson	Compliance team inspector (Chief operating officer, HMC and GSA schools)
Ms Carolyn Moss	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Justin Spanswick	Team inspector (Executive headteacher, ISA school)