

Linacre Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104853
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	355643
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marie Carney
Headteacher	Miss Caroline Wheatley
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 13 lessons taught by a total of 10 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, its safeguarding policies, the records of monitoring of teaching and information on pupils' progress. Inspectors also took account of the 31 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at the following.

- How effective are the school's strategies in raising the attainment of the most able pupils and in closing the gap between the performance of boys and girls, particularly in writing?
- Does the school use its information on pupils' performance well enough to secure improvement for all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How well is the school improving the pupils' attendance?
- To what extent do leaders and managers at all levels contribute to driving improvements in learning across all year groups?

Information about the school

Linacre Primary School mainly serves families from its immediate locality. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups or have a home language that is not English. The proportion of the pupils, around 40%, known to be eligible for free school meals is well above that found nationally, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These special needs relate to a range of barriers to learning, mainly communication difficulties. More pupils join or leave the school throughout the year than is found in schools nationally. Recently, the school gained International School status. Extensive building work has also been completed within the year. The current headteacher has been in post for 15 months. In that time, the school roll has risen by 31 pupils.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Linacre is a satisfactory and improving school. The school has many strengths, particularly in the way it provides excellent care, guidance and support for its pupils. This it does with the support of outstandingly good partnerships with a wide range of external agencies, from the 'children's university' to social services. It also works exceptionally diligently and effectively in order to engage with all of its parents and carers. It has had real success with family learning but has still to convince a small number of families of the importance of good attendance.

The school has given high priority over recent years to supporting pupils' personal development. In this it has been very effective. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. However, it has not done as well in raising the academic performance of the pupils. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has fluctuated from year to year and at its best it has been average as in 2010. Attainment in mathematics is still weaker than that in English and boys have attained less well than girls in writing. Through procedures for checking progress, established over the last year, the school has recognised that pupils find difficulty in using and applying number skills in a range of contexts, sometimes because they are unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the questions. The curriculum has been adapted to better engage boys in writing, welcomed by all staff, but there has not yet been time to see the impact of these innovations.

The headteacher with her senior team has been relentless in driving improvements in teaching and learning and, for example, in adapting the curriculum to include boys fully in learning. The effects of the year-long efforts are seen already in the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage where teaching is good. It is also evident in the good and outstanding teaching and learning in some years. Nevertheless, there is still work to do to develop all teaching so that it is consistently good. Systems and procedures to identify underachievement early and to match interventions to accelerate pupils' progress have been established successfully. At the same time, the school has maintained its good provision to support the pupils' development. The exceptionally well-kept environment with the stimulating displays illustrates well the good curriculum with its strong international links. The school has clearly demonstrated its good capacity to improve rapidly. Self-evaluation is increasingly accurate. Staff and members of the governing body know the strengths of the school as well as the areas for further development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in mathematics and writing at the end of Year 6, by:
 - ensuring that they have good opportunities to apply their number skills in a wide range of practical contexts

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- extending the range of subject-specific vocabulary that teachers use with pupils
- providing regular opportunities across all subjects for extended writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least good in order to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress by July 2011 through:
 - using consistent strategies across subjects to improve writing skills
 - ensuring that there is sufficient challenge for the most able pupils in all lessons
 - making sure that lessons regularly build on previous learning.
- Raise pupils' rate of attendance by:
 - working even more closely with parents and carers to convince them of the importance of regular schooling.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils really enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning, particularly when through teachers' creative planning they are engaged in lessons. This was particularly evident in a Year 6 lesson, part of the 'assertive girls' project'. The pupils made very fast progress in their oral and writing skills because of the imaginative planning, resources and use of very well targeted questioning to encourage descriptive writing about a space walk. By contrast, however, the progress of some Year 5 pupils in a mathematics lesson was hindered by the inadequate match of the work to previous learning, including that for some more able pupils. Generally, pupils behave well in class because of the warm working relationships with adults and because of the very effective early interventions to help pupils' personal development and enhance their social and communication skills. Pupils who initially display 'delay in language development' or who experience communication difficulties mainly make good progress in their oral skills but much slower progress in their writing skills. Boys, in particular, do less well than they should in writing. More able pupils also make too slow progress in mathematics, partly because there has not been enough emphasis in the mathematics provision on using and applying calculation skills in a wide range of contexts.

From well below average starting points in the Nursery class, pupils make overall satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6. Their performance in English is broadly average but reading outcomes are far stronger than those for writing. Progress in mathematics is just below average with too few more able pupils gaining the highest available levels. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly communication difficulties, also make satisfactory progress. The school's checks on pupils' progress reflect a similar picture for most year groups to that in published test results. Nevertheless, robust efforts over the last year to accelerate pupils' progress are beginning to bear fruit. This is most clearly seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children are now making at least good progress in all areas.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and that any concerns are dealt with rapidly and effectively. In their efforts to help others, Year 5 pupils for example after interviews, act as buddies for younger children. Pupils' awareness of different cultures is strong because

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of the recent development of a wide range of international links, involving both work in school and visits overseas. The majority of pupils attend regularly but there are a small number of families who do not yet fully appreciate that absence usually means a loss of learning. Pupils have a good sense of how to stay healthy and are keen participants in sport. Their vegetable plot produce is included in school menus.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the school's close partnerships with external agencies and the expert care, guidance and support regularly provided for them and their families. These excellent links include a nearby children's centre providing workshops to support children's health and communication skills. The impact is seen on the improvements in the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Linacre's inclusive approach to pupils' needs allows every child to feel at home and to make the transitions from year to year very smoothly. Those new to the school settle quickly. The school is actively seeking ways to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils by working even more closely with their families.

Pupils value highly the opportunities offered by the international links. This recent development, together with the new drive towards a far more creative approach, has caught the imagination of the pupils, including the boys. The impact is beginning to show in the gradual improvements in their writing. The curriculum is well enriched by a modern

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foreign language, Spanish, and by an extensive range of very popular out-of-hours activities.

The rate of classroom learning varies across subject areas and year groups and reflects the inconsistent quality of teaching. Although overall satisfactory, classroom practice ranges from outstanding to inadequate. Major strengths in teaching include the excellent working relationships with pupils and careful assessment of progress in lessons, sometimes by support staff who discuss these with the class teacher. In the less successful lessons, the pace of work is often too slow, the work insufficiently challenging for some or most of the group, and in some classes, work does not build well on earlier learning. As a result, the pupils become restless and lose concentration.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The really important thing that is helping the school to improve rapidly is the way the headteacher has put tracking systems in place so that the progress of the pupils can be clearly identified. This has allowed the school to intervene effectively and make changes to the curriculum to remedy underachievement. Middle leaders and class teachers are beginning to use the information increasingly well to drive forward class action plans and accelerate progress. Efficient systems accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and develop teachers' skills through well-considered training. The results are seen in the emerging good and outstanding classroom practice.

This inclusive school is committed to promoting equal opportunities and to eradicating any discrimination. The realisation of this ambition is currently demonstrated in the way the school promotes a genuine respect for those with traditions different to those of its local community. Strong international links as well as a 'Great Britain' project confirm that community cohesion is well promoted by Linacre. The governing body supports the school well and is rapidly growing in confidence to challenge information robustly.

At the time of the inspection, requirements around the safeguarding of children were in line with recommended practice but the school has yet to formalise arrangements for recording which parents and carers attend activities before morning school. The school has been very successful in forging strong partnerships with a wide range of external agencies to promote the pupils' welfare. It has also been exceptionally effective in developing the way parents and carers engage with the school's work. Family learning is a clear winner, both in the experience and outcomes for parents and carers and children.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with a wide range of skills and understanding but they are nearly always well below the level expected for their age. The most recent cohort to leave the Reception class made much faster progress than previous groups. Their progress was outstanding. This was because of major changes to the way that the Early Years Foundation Stage is managed. The curriculum provision is now exciting and creates a wealth of opportunities to stimulate children's learning. In contrast, in the past children's progress has not been better than satisfactory. By the time the children begin Year 1, their skills typically have been still below the expectations for their age, particularly in their language for communication and thinking. Children make the best progress in their physical and social development. Children are safe, happy and get along well with one another. Warm relationships pervade the Nursery and the Reception classes and the welfare of the children is a high priority. Support for vulnerable children is of very high quality and partnerships with parents and carers and external agencies are used well to provide specialist help when needed.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good with a strong capacity to improve even further. Adults have a thorough knowledge and understanding of this stage. They make very good use of the school's new exciting outdoor environment, an improvement since the last inspection. The provision leader intends to involve parents even more fully in the children's learning, particularly in enhancing their communication skills.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A minority of parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaire. All but one of these returns were very supportive of the school. Parents and carers all agree that their children feel safe and enjoy school. A very few expressed a slight concern about the behaviour of some pupils but agree that behaviour is generally well managed. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour was good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Linacre Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	55	14	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	65	11	35	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	68	10	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	55	14	45	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	55	14	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	55	13	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	55	12	39	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	45	16	52	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	68	9	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	77	7	23	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linacre Primary School, Bootle, L20 5ED

Thank you very much for your welcome to us and your good manners when we visited your school recently. We found that you were well behaved and keen to learn. We were delighted to see that you treat each other with respect both in the playground and around the school. Thank you to those of you who took the time from your busy day to speak to us.

Your teachers have worked really hard to provide you with a sound education. Yours is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly. Above all, staff really care about you and make sure you are well looked after. You make really good progress in developing your personal and social skills because the adults around you do their best to help you become 'international citizens'. Most of you attend well but just a few of you and your families need to understand that you cannot learn if you are not present.

We have asked the staff to do a number of things to help the school improve even further. We would like you to experience good or better teaching all of the time. We also want your school to help you even more to do better in writing and in mathematics. Your school has tried really hard to help you attend regularly. Just a few of you and your families do not always remember the message of the 'empty chair'.

For your part, you can help by keeping up your present efforts in lessons and by making sure you try as hard as possible not to take time off. We hope that you will always show the same very good manners outside of school as we have seen within Linacre.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector

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