

Linden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120068
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	373126
Inspection dates	6–7 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Weston HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Raffiq Mohammed
Headteacher	Rob Campbell (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2010
School address	Headland Road Evington, Leicester LE5 6AD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Ten lessons and seven parts of lessons were observed, taught by 15 different teachers. Inspectors held a meeting which 34 staff attended and another with 45 parents and carers. A number of telephone conversations were also held with parents and carers and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, governors, representatives of the local authority and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the full range of the school's work, including a sample of pupils' books and safeguarding procedures in detail. They examined internal assessment and tracking data, planning, and special educational needs and inclusion documentation. They also scrutinised governing body minutes and a wide range of additional correspondence from parents and carers, governors and the local authority.

The decision to inspect Linden Primary School was made following receipt of three qualifying complaints and in light of the evidence supplied in the warning notice issued by the local authority. These raised wider concerns about the overall effectiveness of the school. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether or not the school is providing an adequate standard of education for its pupils.
- Whether or not the safeguarding of pupils is adequate.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management, particularly that of the governing body, in securing school improvement.

Information about the school

Linden is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the large majority are of Indian heritage. Only a very few pupils are from White British backgrounds. Just over 75% of pupils speak English as an additional language with about five per cent at an early stage of learning English. Gujarati and Punjabi are the most common first languages spoken. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school holds a number of awards including Activemark and Healthy School status. The school was inspected in September 2010 and judged to be providing a satisfactory quality of education.

The headteacher was suspended by the governing body in November 2010. At the time of this inspection, an acting headteacher was leading the school.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

During the last five months, following the suspension of the headteacher by the governing body, escalating tensions became evident both in school and in relationships with the local community. These have led to low staff morale. The appointment of an inexperienced leadership team, a lack of focus by the governing body on school improvement and the insufficient impact of the support provided by the local authority for senior leaders have led to a rapid decline in the standard of education being provided for pupils.

Currently, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. There is no significant difference in attainment between girls and boys or between different groups. However, the school's data and inspection evidence show that pupils' progress is inadequate. This is especially the case for the most-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Work set for the most-able pupils does not challenge them enough, and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities does not meet their needs. Too much teaching is inadequate. Assessment is not always used to match work precisely to pupils' differing abilities. Lessons are too often dominated by the teacher, with too few opportunities planned and provided for pupils to be active participants in their learning. Marking is variable in quality and does not help pupils know how well they have done or what they need to do next to improve. Additional adults used in the classroom are often not well deployed or prepared for the lesson. The inadequate curriculum does not enable pupils to apply and develop their skills progressively or build on previous learning.

Most aspects of pupils' personal development have declined since the last inspection, although pupils still show a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy. Behaviour is now satisfactory, although there is some inappropriate activity at playtimes. Increasingly, the time spent by teachers dealing with playtime incidents has a detrimental impact on pupils' learning. As a result, lessons often start late, reducing valuable teaching time. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons, but when teaching does not meet their needs or sustain their interest they disengage and become passive learners. Attendance is low. Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough, which has a negative impact on their learning and consequently their progress.

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have worked hard to lead the school forward. However, they have been faced with many challenging and complex events and problems, including instability at strategic leadership level. Dealing with these

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has proved difficult and in some instances impossible to resolve. The governing body does not fulfil all its statutory responsibilities. For instance, although safeguarding procedures and policies have been reviewed, the governing body has not checked that they are working in practice. Pupils say they feel safe but the school has not ensured that all parents and carers comply with school procedures, despite repeated requests for them to do so. Lack of effective communication and consultation has led to increasing tension with and amongst the school community. Some parents and carers feel they have no say in influencing the vision and direction of the school and that there is a lack of transparency in the way decisions which affect the school are made and shared.

The school has inadequate capacity for sustained improvement. Self-evaluation is weak. Although a number of strategies such as those for improving planning, assessment and marking have recently been introduced, some staff are selective about which parts they use and how they use them. This is leading to variability of provision. A lack of effective monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders means that they do not have an accurate understanding of the impact the strategies are having, or what further improvement is required. The lack of focus on school improvement by the governing body means it does not have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are doing. Nor does it adequately hold school leaders to account for the standard of education currently provided for pupils at Linden.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that procedures for making the school a safe place to learn are implemented urgently and rigorously.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - establishing a shared vision that focuses on raising pupils' attainment and increasing their rates of progress
 - developing robust management systems, rigorous self-evaluation and effective improvement planning
 - ensuring that whole-school strategies are implemented fully by all and evaluated carefully to check for their effectiveness
 - establishing effective engagement and communication systems between the governing body, staff, and parents and carers
 - ensuring that all statutory procedures and regulations are fully implemented and suitably recorded and reported.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that 100% is at least satisfactory and 50% is at least good by December 2011, by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to challenge the most-able pupils
 - ensuring that all pupils have suitable opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning
 - using marking consistently to inform pupils of their next steps in learning
 - improving pupils' language skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to talk to each other and participate actively in their learning

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- implementing a curriculum that caters for the needs of all pupils.
- Work more effectively with parents and carers to promote good attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Analysis of the school's tracking data, lesson observations and work scrutiny confirm that pupils make inadequate progress overall because progress is uneven through the school. In too many year groups, particularly in Key Stage 2, significant proportions of pupils underachieve and too many fail to reach their targets. This is because there is great variability in the quality of teaching from class to class. There are pockets of strength where good teaching and learning enable pupils to close the gap with their peers nationally. However, this is not sustained. The most-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the slowest progress because work is not tailored closely enough to their needs. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson on adding fractions, all pupils were set the same problems. Many of the most-able pupils solved the problems quickly, but started to fidget and lose interest while waiting for other pupils to finish before they were allowed to move on to the next question.

When work is interesting and requires pupils to be active, they enjoy their learning. For instance, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on ratio, the teacher set a brisk pace which helped ensure motivation and effective learning. Pupils were very keen to talk through different methods and strategies for solving problems, and were excited to find new and alternative solutions. High levels of cooperation led to good engagement. The pupils enjoyed the lesson so much that they applauded when told that they could continue later on in the day. Regrettably, this experience is not commonplace throughout the school.

Healthy lifestyles are adopted well by pupils and they know how to stay fit and healthy. A good range of sporting activities such as girls' football, karate and activity clubs are well attended. Pupils satisfactorily contribute to the school and wider community. They enjoy taking on additional responsibilities around the school and say they are pleased that the school council has been reconstituted. They support various charities such as the Red Nose day for Comic Relief. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance, however, is low. It has declined significantly in recent years. Even allowing for the recent sickness bug, too many pupils are not attending school regularly enough. This, coupled with pupils' inadequate academic progress, means that they are inadequately prepared for the next stage of their education and later life.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

While there is some good teaching, it is not sufficiently widespread or embedded. As a result, significant numbers of pupils make inadequate progress. Where lessons are carefully planned and work is well directed and managed, pupils make clear gains in their learning. However, imprecise use of assessment information and limited focus on learning result in work that is not accurately matched to the needs of all groups. Many activities do not build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Although teachers use a variety of questioning techniques, they do not sufficiently challenge or extend pupils' thinking. Teaching methods are not always engaging and pupils spend too much time listening passively to the teacher. This reduces the time they have to practise and use their skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. In other lessons, pupils are not fully involved in their learning. Consequently, behaviour deteriorates as some pupils start to lose concentration, chatter and fidget. This disrupts the learning of others.

In some classes, teachers do not sufficiently emphasise the importance of presentation and quality of pupils' work. Some books show a lack of pride. For instance, work is marred by untidy crossings out and graffiti. Marking is generally of poor quality. Despite some good examples, which give pupils good advice about how to improve, too much marking indicates merely that work has been seen by the teacher or contains brief comments. Several examples of unmarked work were seen. Some pupils know their targets for improvement, but these are too general and not focused on their learning. Pupils are

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beginning to be involved in assessing their own work and progress, but this also varies from class to class.

The curriculum has insufficient breadth and balance, with no planned progression of pupils' skills and knowledge. In some classes, it does not meet statutory requirements. For instance, in Year 6 too much time is spent practising for the national tests in English and mathematics, at the expense of other subjects. Throughout the school, there is very little recorded work in subjects other than English and mathematics, and what does exist relies heavily on printed worksheets. Consequently, inadequate opportunities are provided for promoting basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. Enrichment activities and well-attended after-school clubs provide pupils with a range of opportunities to develop new skills and interests.

Case studies confirm that liaison with outside agencies is adequate and transition arrangements are appropriate. However, shortcomings in care and guidance mean that some pupils do not thrive in their learning. Discussions with staff and the acting headteacher indicate that too frequently, senior leaders respond to incidents rather than ensuring they are prevented or their impact is minimised in a systematic and planned way. There is insufficient specialist additional support or specific training for teaching assistants to meet the needs of some pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

Relationships between the governing body, leaders and managers, staff and the parent and carer community are strained. This was very apparent during various meetings, telephone conversations and a wide range of other correspondence during the inspection. Views are polarised. While some staff and parents and carers think there have been some improvements since the last inspection, notably in the development of reading and homework clubs, others think there has been a significant decline.

Although the school has a suitable community cohesion policy, no audit or evaluation of context has been undertaken, either within or beyond the school, and no community cohesion plan has been produced. In addition, no evaluation of the impact of work with partner schools has been undertaken. Safeguarding arrangements are inadequate. Procedures for ensuring safety in school are ad hoc. Risk assessments are not carried out regularly or evaluated appropriately. For instance, although the premises officer carries out his own risk assessments, they are not evaluated by the governing body. Fire drills are not carried out routinely or often enough. Around the school there are examples of trip

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hazards, broken or dirty equipment and uncovered drains that have not been attended to. The governing body is unaware of the extent of the inadequacies.

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have implemented a number of strategies since the start of 2011. These include the introduction of a whole-school lesson planning format and the partial implementation of an 'Assessing Pupil Progress' process of assessment throughout the school. Senior leaders have insufficient capacity to effectively monitor and evaluate their implementation because the team is a member short and they are too stretched by responding to day-to-day events. When they have found time to evaluate, it has not been undertaken with sufficient rigour. For instance, where staff have not been following school policies, this has not been tackled robustly enough. Recently introduced meetings to discuss pupils' progress are beginning to hold the staff to account for rates of progress. The governing body has not kept a sufficiently close eye on the performance of pupils. There is an unclear demarcation between the responsibilities of the governing body and those of the headteacher. Some governors have increasingly become involved in the day-to-day management of the school rather than focusing on their strategic responsibilities, this is inappropriate.

Given that many pupils make insufficient progress, the school tackles discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity inadequately. Some parents and carers feel the management of complaints by the governing body is ineffective which is a source of frustration. Despite a number of requests, the acting headteacher has not been provided with adequate leadership and management support or training to enable him to fulfil his roles and responsibilities effectively. Although he has received support for one day a week, this is insufficient in such a demanding and complex school situation. The school currently provides inadequate value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The school's data show only children's development in language, literacy and communication and their personal development. This means that senior leaders and the governing body have insufficient information about their progress in all the other areas of learning. The data available and inspection evidence indicate that from low starting points children make satisfactory progress in their early literacy and personal development.

In recent years, there has been a high turnover of staff. As a result of temporary cover and new staffing arrangements, a cohesive approach to curriculum development and planning has been lost through ineffective leadership. Currently, curriculum planning is not underpinned by a secure understanding of how young children learn best. As a result, some activities are inappropriate because they do not promote children's experimentation, independence and enjoyment. Adults are kindly and well-intentioned, but activities do not encourage children to think independently. Language is modelled appropriately and adults have suitable relationships with the children.

Welfare requirements are not fully met. For example, medication is not secured appropriately and risk assessments of outdoor play equipment are not undertaken routinely. This puts children's welfare and safety at risk. Behaviour is managed satisfactorily, but children become either passive or restless when activities are insufficiently engaging. The area for the Early Years Foundation Stage lacks organisation and sufficient aesthetic quality to enhance children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

All registered parents and carers were invited to attend a meeting held in the school hall on the morning of the second day of the inspection. The 45 people who attended were divided on all the issues raised, most with strong feelings. Many recognised the impact that low morale and instability of leadership were having on the community and ultimately their children. One said, 'Previously we were unified and now we are split.' Another commented, 'This fragmentation is having an impact on our children... it is affecting their ability to enjoy school.'

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Some parents and carers felt that the standard of education had improved since the last inspection. Others felt standards were declining because of the focus on tensions within school rather than on teaching and learning. Some contributors expressed strong feelings of support for homework clubs because they found them beneficial for their children. However, while some knew about them, others said they were unaware of them.

Some parents and carers said they felt the school was very secure but said that the procedures made them feel unwelcome. Others felt that as a result of improved security measures, pupils were now much safer. However, most agreed that the application of safety policies was inconsistent. A high proportion expressed their concerns about unsafe parking on the zigzag and double yellow lines outside school when dropping children off and picking them up. Inspectors share these concerns.

Most parents and carers felt they were not involved in decision-making. However, some felt that engagement between home and school had improved and they were more involved. Parents and carers were most vocal about the role of the governing body. Some felt the governing body communicated well, while others thought it did not. Several indicated that governors did not respond to their complaints. Some parents and carers applauded when one expressed 'no faith in the board of governors', but others disagreed with this view. The inspection found governance to be inadequate.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



8 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linden Primary School, Leicester, LE5 6AD

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We were impressed by your friendliness. We really enjoyed talking to you, listening to your opinions and seeing your work. These are the things that impressed us most.

In the good lessons, you get involved, enjoy your work and make really good progress.

You have good relationships with your teachers and you are keen to help them whenever you can.

You understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep fit. A special 'well done' to the girls' football team who won the tournament while we were visiting the school.

We agree that the school does some things well, but we have also told the school there are some important things that need to be improved. Here is what we have asked the school to do.

Make sure the school is a safe place for you by checking more regularly and more carefully.

Improve the weaker teaching so that you can all learn well in every lesson.

Make sure that you make better progress as you move up the school so that you achieve the standards that you should at the end of each year.

Improve the way that the school is led and managed so that it can check its work more carefully and plan improvements.

Make sure everyone knows about the importance of coming to school each day.

The school has been told that it requires 'special measures'. This means that it will receive help to make the changes needed. Inspectors will visit the school regularly to check how well you are doing. The next visit will be in about six months. In the meantime, you all have an important part to play by getting to school on time, attending regularly and working hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector

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