

# Links Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	102635
<b>Local authority</b>	Merton
<b>Inspection number</b>	376747
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Penny Spencer

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	516
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Justyn Herbert
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6–7 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Frinton Road London SW17 9EH
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8769 4587
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8677 7860
<b>Email address</b>	office@links.merton.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	19–20 June 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	376747



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Penny Spencer

Additional inspector

Brian Netto

Additional inspector

Desmond Dunne

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 29 whole or part lessons seeing all teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, curriculum coordinators and the school council. They observed the school's work, looked at work in pupils' books, the school's analysis of data, the school development plan, school self-evaluation and records of monitoring of teachers' performance. Inspectors also analysed the 190 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

Links Primary School is larger than the average primary school. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups with 80% speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. A high proportion of pupils arrive or leave the school at times other than the usual admission times. The school has a breakfast club and after-school club managed by the governing body. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Since the last inspection, the school has had a new headteacher, new deputy headteacher and there have been new appointments to the senior leadership team. The school has the Artsmark Gold award, Healthy Schools status and Basic Skills award.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

### Key findings

- Links Primary is a good school because pupils make good progress in a safe, happy and inclusive environment that is well led and managed. As several parents commented, 'Links is a warm and nurturing neighbourhood school that makes everyone feel welcome.' The school is not yet outstanding because, while teaching is good overall, it is not yet good enough to ensure outstanding achievement.
- Pupils achieve well during their time in the school. From low starting points they reach broadly average levels of attainment by the age of 11. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is low and pupils have not always made consistently good progress in the past. The rate of progress has picked up this year.
- Good teaching overall is the foundation for good achievement and lessons are lively and stimulating. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a positive start because teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because the interventions they receive are carefully tailored to their needs. Teachers' marking and their use of targets are inconsistent and are not always clear enough for pupils to understand how they might improve their work.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They are motivated and enthusiastic and create a very harmonious atmosphere which supports learning. Parents and carers fully support the view that the school keeps their children safe.
- The school has improved rapidly over the past year and the headteacher is ably supported by her ambitious and enthusiastic senior leadership team, curriculum leaders and the experienced governing body. Teaching and staff performance are well managed. The systematic evaluation and use of pupil performance data by phase leaders to raise achievement is still in the early stages of development.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, so that pupils make rapid and sustained progress, by:
  - sharing current outstanding practice across the school
  - ensuring marking gives pupils a clearer indication of exactly what they need to do to improve their work
  - making pupils' targets more specific and linked to levels of attainment, with clear time frames for their achievement.
  
- Develop the role of the recently appointed phase leaders in using performance data to raise achievement for all pupils.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are often well below expected levels for their age, with a particularly low level of language skills. The emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills, coupled with structured approaches to the linking of letters and sounds, is ensuring that these skills, alongside the development of skills in all areas of learning, are improving year on year.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was low for several years, including in reading. However, the school's focus on writing, the introduction of a very effective reading project and a revitalised approach to the teaching of letters and sounds, are having a positive impact on achievement. Consequently, pupils' attainment has risen and is now at least in line with the national average, for most groups, in all subjects.

Progress in Key Stage 2 accelerates and, by the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average. This was evident in the scrutiny of books and the lessons observed. This endorses the views of the majority of parents and carers who consider their children are making good progress.

Pupils who read to the inspectors had positive attitudes to reading, which was further evident during observations. Younger pupils show developing reading skills, especially in the linking of sounds to letters. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 is now average. By the end of Year 6, pupils are showing more sophistication in their reading ability and attainment is also average, ensuring they are well placed to move on to the next stage of their education.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, pupils who speak English as an additional language, pupils who join the school at unusual times and those

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pupils who may be eligible for free school meals make good progress from their starting points enabling most of them to attain at least as well as their peers nationally by the end of Key Stage 2.

## **Quality of teaching**

The inspection confirms the view of almost all parents and carers that their children are taught well. Pupils also feel that teaching is good with many commenting on the way that teachers 'really help you learn'.

Children have a stimulating start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because good, well-organised teaching creates exciting learning opportunities. The learning environment allows children to develop good independent learning skills and the pace of learning is fully maximised by excellent adult intervention. Children rapidly extended their mathematical vocabulary when they excitedly joined in a game of hiding toys, initiated by the teacher.

Throughout the school, teachers generally plan activities that are appropriately challenging for different groups of learners. The teaching of literacy, especially writing, has been a focus for the school and teachers have a clear understanding of the well-established systems and procedures. In one lesson observed, outstanding teaching of literacy skills enabled pupils to read and recite, eloquently, poems they had written themselves.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, do well because tasks are carefully matched to their needs and teachers effectively deploy support staff to maximise learning. Very well-taught interventions support pupils' good progress.

Teachers set targets and mark work regularly but until recently there has been no consistent approach across the school. As a result, marking does not always make pupils' next steps clear to them. Targets are sometimes not specific enough or linked sufficiently to levels of attainment, and timescales for the completion of targets can be unclear to pupils.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils from diverse backgrounds get on extremely well together. They are courteous, polite and support one another exceptionally well. Consistency in managing behaviour allows pupils to retain their vibrant character while fostering respect for each other. Behaviour in lessons is good and the consistent approach to behaviour management means lessons are very rarely disrupted. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show this is the case over time.

Pupils make a very good contribution to their own learning. They respond enthusiastically to opportunities to work collaboratively on group tasks. Observation

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of a Year 5 drama lesson where teaching was outstanding showed pupils working well together, in a very small space, quickly taking on roles from a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to create powerful still-life pictures. Pupils from all year groups take on responsibilities and 'mini mentors' take on a variety of jobs around the school to support good behaviour.

As a result of concerted efforts by the school and strong links with the local authority, attendance has been rising steadily over time and is now above average. The school still has a small core of pupils who are persistently absent but this proportion is also declining. The school aims to improve attendance further through the appointment of a dedicated parent support worker and provide support those families with whom the school finds it difficult to engage .

Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of how to identify risks and keep safe, including on the internet. Pupils say that bullying in any form, including cyber-bullying, is rare and any such incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Records of any incidents are detailed and support the views expressed by pupils. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is good.

### **Leadership and management**

Following a period of instability in staffing at senior level, leaders and managers have now established a clear vision for future development. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs good quality strategic planning that provides a clear path for the successful implementation of its aims. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is regular and the evaluation is consistent with the view of inspectors. The recently appointed headteacher has established effective systems for managing teaching and learning, including opportunities for staff training, leading to improvements in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Leaders recognise that there is now potential to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by sharing best practice more widely across the school.

New appointments to the leadership team, including the appointment of a deputy headteacher and three new phase leaders, have given further impetus to the speed of change. This is especially evident in the recent introduction of whole-school policies to ensure consistent approaches to marking and target setting and in the refinement of pupil progress meetings to evaluate the performance of pupils over a period of time. Senior leaders now make better use of data analysis to ensure teachers are more accountable for the progress of individual pupils. However, while these changes have had positive initial impact, they have yet to become fully embedded in practice, particularly for phase leaders.

The experienced governing body provides effective strategic direction and is committed to the school's improvement. It provides a good level of challenge to school leaders, regularly monitoring improvement. These features, and the track record of improvements since the previous inspection, underpin the school's good

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capacity for further improvement.

The good curriculum is broad, with well-developed provision which meets the needs of all pupils. Good use of technology enhances learning. Take-up of extra-curricular activities is high and parents and carers are appreciative of the opportunities available for their children, including the provision of both breakfast and after-school clubs. Parents are also appreciative of the evening youth club for former pupils, which has been set up by the extended services manager to allow young people to have fun in a safe environment. The school has a strong focus on the arts and pupils in Year 5 enthusiastically performed, for the whole school, songs they had written as part of an opera project. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 were observed rehearsing for a production, acting and singing with consummate confidence and obvious enjoyment.

The impact of all staff on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very positive. They promote a strong climate for pupils to work and play together harmoniously, which was seen by all inspectors during the inspection. This reflects the school's rigorous attention to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

There are strong partnerships with local universities, schools and colleges, and placements are successfully managed. There is a thriving mother and toddler group and links with the local children's centre, which supports transition into school. School leaders work effectively to engage with parents and carers. The majority of parents and carers say that their views are sought and acted upon, and they are kept very well informed of the progress of their children.

The school site is well maintained and arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good; staff have a robust knowledge of procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare and safety.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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 June 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Links Primary School, London SW17 9EH**

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to you about what it is like to be a pupil in your school, hearing you read and coming to see your lessons. It was lovely to hear some of you sing your own songs in assembly and to see you rehearsing for your summer production. Your parents and carers are very pleased with the school. This letter is to tell you that we found that Links Primary School is a good school. Some of the things that make it good are that:

- you all get along with each other and behave well
- you work hard and you make good progress to achieve well
- you are taught well and enjoy your lessons, and your curriculum topics are interesting and exciting
- you have good school leaders and teachers who make sure you feel very safe.

To help your school to be even better we have asked your headteacher and senior leaders to:

- help you achieve even more highly by making more teaching as good as the very best
- make sure your teachers mark your work and set targets so you can always see exactly how well you have done and what you need to do to improve even more.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by enjoying everything you do at school.

We send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Penny Spencer  
Lead inspector

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