

Larkswood Primary School

New Road, Chingford, London, E4 8ET

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Because provision is so much better, children in the Nursery and in Reception now make good progress in their learning and play.
- Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is good and most groups of pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good across the school, especially in the teaching of reading, writing and early number skills. Teachers' marking tells pupils how they can improve their work.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. In many lessons, pupils work hard and produce work that is of a good standard. Pupils in Year 6 take their roles as 'buddies' seriously and perform their duties well.
- Teachers have a detailed understanding of how well the pupils in their classes learn and know that they are responsible for doing everything they can to make sure no individuals or groups fall behind in their learning.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the Interim Executive Board have worked extremely hard and with ruthless determination and great success to move the school from inadequate to good in just over a year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In mathematics, in Key Stage 2, girls do not always make the same good progress as boys.
- Although there are strengths in pupils' key skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation, their handwriting is not good enough because few pupils write in a clear joined-up style.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 16 teachers. In addition, they did a number of 'learning walks' around the school to look at displays and small teaching groups.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documentation, including information on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, evidence of progress that the school has made since it was put into special measures and reports from the school's challenge consultant.
- Inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, the inclusion manager, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the school council and a group of pupils from Year 6. They also spoke to pupils in lessons.
- As this was a section 8 deemed section 5 inspection, the school was not asked to invite parents and carers to fill in the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors did look at the questionnaire, but there were no responses. They took into consideration the views of 47 parents and carers who completed the most recent questionnaire organised by the school.

Inspection team

David Curtis	Additional Inspector
Juliet Ward	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average primary school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery and three Reception classes. In Year 1 there are four classes. In Years 2 to 6, there are three classes in each year group. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are taught in ability groups for mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special education needs, supported at school action, is above the national average. The proportion with more severe need, supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is above the national average. Over 20 home languages are represented in the school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for extra government funding through the 'pupil premium' is above the national average.
- No pupils are taught in any alternative provision.
- The school meets the current government 'floor standards', which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In October 2011, the school was placed into special measures. It received monitoring inspections in March and June 2012.
- The Interim Executive Board was appointed immediately after the school went into special measures. The Secretary of State made it a condition that the Interim Executive Board would remain in place until the school was removed from special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of girls in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring girls are expected to take a full part in question-and-answer sessions
 - ensuring, especially within ability groups, that work is consistently challenging and matched closely to their targets for improvement.
- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting by ensuring that teachers expect pupils to use the skills taught in handwriting lessons in all of the writing they complete.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception, with the result that they start Year 1 with the knowledge, skills and understanding expected for their age. Progress in communication and language and in mathematics is much better than a year ago. Children make particularly good progress in learning their letters and sounds.
- Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2, with the result that pupils' levels of understanding in reading, writing and mathematics are, for the first time in five years, average in these subjects. In the Year 1 'Phonics Screening Test', pupils did much better than pupils nationally.
- In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress, especially in reading and writing. In mathematics, boys make faster progress than girls. Pupils read confidently and with good expression and they particularly enjoy reading their own work to the rest of the class.
- In writing, pupils show a good understanding of how to improve their ideas;. For example, in Year 4, one pupil changed the sentence, 'This is a yummy chocolate bar' to 'This is a delicious fudge mellow new chocolate bar.' In writing an advertisement to promote 'exploding sweets', one pupil wrote, 'This is a stunning war zone in your mouth; it is like travelling back in time.'
- Pupils' skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are good and they talk confidently about verbs, adjectives, alliteration, similes, metaphors and personification. However, in handwriting, pupils' skills are not good enough because too many still print rather than use a joined-up style.
- In mathematics, there has been, over the last year, a major improvement in pupils' skills in using and applying their mental arithmetic skills in problem solving.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for the 'pupil premium' is good, with the result that the gap in their progress, compared to those not eligible, is closing quickly.
- Over the last year, the progress of pupils with special educational needs has been much faster and these groups, both at school action and school action plus, now achieve at least as well as similar groups nationally. This is a significant improvement.
- The progress of pupils whose first language is not English is good as their needs are identified quickly and a range of support provided to help them learn, such as extra support in the classroom, small-group work and specialist help when needed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including in the Nursery, is much improved and this is the main reason why children's progress is so much better. Teachers have improved their teaching of key skills in communication and language and in mathematics. There is a much better balance of activities between those that children choose for themselves and those that are led by adults. The indoor and outdoor areas promote children's learning well, in an exciting and stimulating way.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and across the school, the teaching of reading is good. Teachers are confident and skilled in teaching letters and sounds (phonics) and make good use of a commercial scheme to teach the key skills needed in writing.
- Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good, with an increasing amount that is outstanding. Teachers' planning is good, so that pupils know what they will be learning and what they will need to do in order to be successful learners by the ends of lessons. Occasionally, planning in mathematics lessons, where pupils are taught in ability groups, does not always meet the needs of all pupils, particularly in challenging girls and in addressing identified areas for improvement.
- Teachers' marking is good. It tells pupils how well they have done and how they can improve their work. Marking is linked closely to pupils' targets which guide their next steps in learning,

with the result that pupils have a good understanding of what they must do to reach the next level.

- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers expect pupils to respond to their marking of previous work and give pupils time to do this. In addition, teachers use 'MUST, SHOULD and COULD' comments, to make it totally clear to pupils how much work they need to do by the ends of lessons.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of interactive whiteboards to introduce new learning or to capture pupils' interests. In Year 3, pupils made good progress in writing their own 'Magic Box' poems because they heard an author reading his original poem to other children. Although the use of questioning is generally good, there are occasions when girls are not expected to take a full and active part in question-and-answer sessions in mathematics.
- Teachers are not strict enough in reminding and making sure that pupils use a joined-up style of handwriting to present their work. However, they have over the last year made sure that work is much neater and that pupils take much greater care and pride in presenting their work, especially by using rulers to draw lines.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with special educational needs and/or those whose first language is not English. They show good skills in making sure pupils understand what they have to do. Teaching assistants are good at writing down pupils' ideas, giving them greater confidence to talk about them because they know they will not have to struggle to write them down.
- The teaching, for example of Black History Month, makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In discussion with inspectors, the school council said how much better teaching is in the school and how much more they enjoy learning. Most parents who completed the school's most recent survey agreed that teaching is now good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In many lessons, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They appreciate and value the different backgrounds and beliefs of their school friends. Pupils say that behaviour is much improved and they are confident that any bullying is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils showed no worries or concerns about their safety.
- In a few lessons, a very small number of pupils find it hard to concentrate and can become easily distracted. This is usually linked to where teachers do not make it really clear as to the amount of work they 'MUST' do by the ends of lessons.
- In most lessons, pupils work very hard and enjoy every minute of the activities on offer. They show very good concentration and produce high-quality work, for example in Year 4, where they made advertisements to persuade people to buy a range of 'new sweets'. In many lessons, pupils work together well in pairs and in groups. They really respect and value the opinions of each other. Pupils take delight in celebrating success.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, especially cyber bullying and the dangers of the internet and social media sites.
- In Year 6, pupils take great pride in being 'buddies'. They perform their duties extremely well, whether hearing younger pupils read, being a friend to a pupil who needs one in the playground or helping with key tasks around the school.
- Attendance is improving at a fast rate but getting all parents and carers to recognise fully the importance of regular attendance is a continuing challenge for the school. It does all it can to promote good attendance, including an 'Attendance Tea Party' where parents and carers are invited to join their children from those classes, in each key stage, which have the best attendance each half term.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is very successful in ensuring that all pupils, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnicity, play a full part in its day-to-day life. Discrimination is not tolerated and the strong focus on equal opportunities has resulted in any gaps in achievement closing quickly.
- Over the last year, the headteacher, assistant headteachers and senior leaders have worked incredibly hard, and with great success, to improve the quality of teaching and provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Tough decisions were made in relation to staffing issues because the first priority was to ensure that pupils are taught well at all times. The determination and challenge to all staff, from the headteacher and local authority, to take the school out of special measures in a year have led to success.
- Senior leaders know that work still needs to be done and they have a good understanding of the school's key priorities, including improving the progress of girls in mathematics.
- A key reason for the much better progress of pupils is that class teachers have a good understanding of their pupils and know that they are directly accountable to the headteacher to make sure that no individuals or groups fall behind in their learning. Any pupils identified as at risk receive immediate additional help and support.
- The headteacher and senior leaders check up regularly on how well teachers perform and teachers' improvement targets are linked closely to improving pupils' achievement.
- The school's allocation of £116,000 for 'pupil premium' is accounted for to the nearest pound, for example in the amount of additional teaching support, funding to enable these pupils to attend school trips, including residentials, and the purchase of additional books to encourage these pupils to read at home. The improvement in the progress of these pupils, and the fact that the gap between their performance and that of others in the school is narrowing, show that the money has been spent wisely.
- Since the last inspection, the school has introduced successfully the International Primary Curriculum. As a result, pupils use and apply their key literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well across other subjects, including history and geography. The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their understanding of 'equality' and 'freedom'.
- The school receives good support from its external 'challenge consultant' adviser, especially in improving the quality of teaching. The local authority was very helpful to senior leaders in dealing with staffing issues following the previous inspection.

■ The governance of the school:

The Interim Executive Board ensures that the school complies fully with all requirements for safeguarding and child protection. It regularly attends training courses and has a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school, through regular reports from the headteacher and members taking part in 'learning walks' and looking at pupils' books, for example with the literacy and numeracy leaders. Members check regularly on how the 'pupil premium' is spent and on its impact on pupils' progress. The Interim Executive Board also checks on how well all staff, including the headteacher, perform and it has a good understanding of where staff are on the pay scales and how this links to the quality of their teaching.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134178
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	397963

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. 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	684
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Jaynn Taylor
Headteacher	Lynne Harrowell
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 October 2011
Telephone number	020 8529 4979
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