

Liberty Primary School

Western Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 3EB

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- While pupils generally make the expected progress from their starting points, too few make strong progress.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent from class to class and between subjects.
- Pupils make better progress in mathematics and reading than in writing. This is because they do not systematically build up their writing skills and knowledge of high quality writing features as they move up through the school.
- Teachers sometimes do not give pupils enough chances to answer questions and work things out for themselves, particularly during whole-class teaching.
- In some lessons, teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils can complete during independent work are not high enough.
- The part additional adults take in lessons is not always planned in sufficient detail to ensure they make as full a contribution to pupils' learning as they should.
- Leaders are sometimes overgenerous in appraising the quality of teaching. This happens when they focus more on what teachers are doing in lessons than on the impact teaching has on raising pupils' achievement further.

The school has the following strengths

- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in the way mathematics is taught. As a result, pupils make good progress and enjoy mathematics.
- Children make good gains in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They attend school regularly following the school's successful drive to improve attendance rates. They feel safe at school and know how to keep safe from harm.
- The governing body and senior leaders work closely together and demonstrate ambition for the school. Together, they have kept the school on an even keel through a period of expansion, involving considerable new building works.
- Teachers mark work carefully, provide good advice on how to improve further and set additional tasks for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and undertook some joint observations with senior leaders. They visited 31 lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to groups of pupils reading. They looked at work in pupils' books and tracking data showing pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school website, development plans and records relating to safeguarding pupils were also seen.
- The inspectors took account of six responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own analysis of a recent survey of parental views, and 39 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Madeleine Gerard, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Liberty Primary is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two part-time Nursery classes and three Reception classes.
- More pupils than the national average speak English as an additional language. Few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action is close to the national average. A smaller-than-average proportion is supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to six pupils aged 6 to 11 with behavioural, social and emotional special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals) is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school organises and manages breakfast and after-school clubs.
- There have been a high number of recent staffing changes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in English lessons, so that a greater proportion of teaching is good or better by:
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that all pupils are encouraged to think hard particularly during whole-class teaching
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of the amount of work pupils can achieve during independent tasks
 - ensuring teachers' planning makes clear what additional adults are expected to do during lessons so that they play a full part in supporting the learning of individuals and small groups.
- Raise pupils' achievement across the school, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring strategies are in place to enable pupils to build up their knowledge of high quality writing skills as they progress through the school and practise writing regularly.
- Ensure leaders, managers and governors evaluate teaching by focusing on its impact on raising pupils' academic standards further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make rapid progress over time once they leave the Reception class. This affects the school's results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and reflects the uneven quality of teaching.
- The school's information on progress shows some pupils make better gains owing to recent improvements to the quality of teaching and the greater stability in teaching staff. As a consequence, attainment at the end of Year 2 is improving although it remains low in reading, writing and mathematics overall compared with national averages.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average overall and improving, particularly in mathematics. This reflects pupils' keenness to learn new skills, including multiplication tables, in a structured way and to use resources including computers to work independently.
- English results overall have not improved at the same pace because pupils have not steadily built up their writing skills as they progress through Key Stage 2. Pupils make quicker progress in reading. The results of the phonics check for six-year-olds demonstrate pupils' average reading skills. Pupils in Key Stage 2 also make faster gains in reading because the school has introduced new reading project work: carefully selected books that capture pupils' interests and increase their enjoyment of reading. Pupils in Year 6, for example, speak enthusiastically about their favourite authors, the books they read in class and their use of hand-held electronic books.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils at the school because they benefit from working in small groups with class teachers in lessons. Additional sessions in small groups to boost self-confidence and self-esteem for selected pupils outside the classroom are effective in developing their basic skills, as well as their personal and social skills.
- Pupils in the specially resourced provision make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills from their starting points. In many cases this constitutes better progress than other pupils in the main school with special educational needs. Pupils in the resource base benefit from sessions led by specialist teachers and other well-trained staff that are carefully tailored to their specific requirements. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for measuring their own progress against weekly targets and appreciate daily discussions about how successfully they meet their individual goals.
- Overall, the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including pupils speaking English as an additional language, is broadly similar to other pupils. The school ensures that every pupil has an equal chance to learn and access to all the school has to offer.
- The data show that pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding underachieve compared with all pupils nationally by the end of Year 6, although the gap in achievement has recently narrowed. In other year groups, their achievement is similar to other pupils.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good gains from below age-related levels of skills when they join the school. Sustained improvement to teaching since the previous inspection has helped raise children's recent attainment to average by the end of the Reception Year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as its quality is too inconsistent. Inspectors saw some better teaching, but, overall, teaching is of inconsistent quality and does not ensure that pupils make fast enough progress in their learning.
- During whole-class teaching, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to think hard when teachers ask only one pupil at a time to contribute their ideas or to answer questions. As a result, the pace of learning slows because pupils have limited opportunities to discuss and

practise new learning and skills. Sometimes, a few pupils lose concentration when they are not given enough to do during teacher-led sessions.

- Teachers' planning does not always make clear what additional adults need to do in order to support pupils' progress further. When additional adults sit listening to the teacher instead of helping those who may need additional guidance, their impact on pupils' learning is diminished.
- Although pupils often work hard, teachers' expectations of the amount of work they should do during independent tasks are not always high enough. When pupils are not told how much time to spend on activities, they sometimes do not always get on as quickly as they should.
- When teachers set short time limits within which to complete tasks, pupils are motivated to meet the teachers' challenges. In a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 1, pupils enthusiastically completed calculations to find the difference between two numbers. Working with the teacher a small group of pupils who needed additional support used plastic cubes to help them understand quickly and make good progress. Higher attaining pupils who finished swiftly, enthusiastically moved on to completing further demanding work to find the difference between three-digit numbers.
- At the start of lessons, teachers make clear what pupils will be learning and encourage them to check how successful they have been at the end. Teachers mark work thoroughly, giving praise where it is due, making helpful suggestions as to how pupils can improve their work further and setting additional challenges. This consistently good-quality marking, together with evaluating their own progress in lessons, helps pupils to develop their independence.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good so that pupils are eager to learn. Teachers manage classes effectively and well-established routines ensure time is not wasted when pupils move from one activity to another.
- Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well planned in the inside and outdoor areas to help children to develop their skills. Adult-led activities contribute to children's good progress in developing their basic skills. For example, children in a Reception class working with an adult practised counting up to 10. They enjoyed rolling a dice and working out how many more were needed to make 10.
- Pupils in the specially resourced provision receive individualised support from trained staff and specialist therapists. These staff provide the help and guidance needed for pupils to develop both their personal and academic skills. Working with the adults, pupils enjoyed making sculptures of seagulls as part of a project based on a book set near the sea.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school. Their positive attitudes make a good contribution to learning in lessons. In a few classes, pupils do not always take responsibility for routinely following teachers' written comments and suggestions as to how to improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good, although sometimes a few pupils need reminders about the behaviour that is expected.
- Pupils from diverse backgrounds get on well together because the school fosters good relationships and tackles discrimination strongly.
- Through support from trained staff, therapists, and nurture groups, pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties develop self-confidence and build effective skills to help them take responsibility for moderating their own behaviour.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities in school and show caring attitudes through becoming peer mediators, playground friends and learning ambassadors. Older pupils enjoy reading with younger ones.
- The school is calm, orderly and safe. Pupils are confident that incidents of bullying are rare.

They say there is some name-calling and that staff deal with this effectively. Anti-bullying events, guidance about safe practices when using computers, and road safety training help them develop an awareness of unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe from harm.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has tackled low attendance successfully so that it is now average, and improving. Clear guidance and discussions with parents ensure the whole school community is clear about the importance of attending school regularly.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching and pupils' achievement are not yet good.
- School leaders do not ensure that the quality of learning and the progress pupils make throughout the school are consistently good.
- Leaders and managers regularly monitor the quality of lessons. However, written records show they sometimes focus more on how the lessons are delivered than on their impact on pupils' learning. This is why some variability remains.
- The school demonstrates capacity to improve further. Leaders, managers and governors have sustained improvements to children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and maintained pupils' good behaviour. Attendance rates have risen strongly as a result of a determined drive to promote regular attendance.
- Since the previous inspection, daily guided reading as well as the involvement of volunteers who regularly hear younger pupils reading have been rightly introduced to improve pupils' reading skills. Improvements to the range of activities pupils are set to do in mathematics lessons are also successfully helping to raise pupils' achievement.
- Similar improvements to the way writing is taught, such as the introduction of more regular writing sessions during English lessons, are not as consistently established to ensure that pupils develop high quality writing skills as they move through the school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted through celebrations of festivals including Black History Week, and fostering generosity of spirit through encouraging pupils to go out of their way to help others. Pupils tend the school allotments and take pride in the produce they have grown.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide additional literacy and numeracy booster sessions and to support pupils known to be eligible when they take part in enrichment activities and outings.
- The curriculum is varied and provides many opportunities for pupils to take part in interesting activities both in school and on visits and residential trips in Years 4 and 6. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a calm and happy start and end to the day for the pupils who attend.
- The local authority provides considerable ongoing support for the school, rightly focusing on improving the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievement. It has played a key part in improving the school's resources through a recent programme of building work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works closely with the school's leaders with a shared determination to drive improvements. They receive regular evaluations of the school's performance compared with other schools nationally and consequently know what the school is doing well and where it must do better, including in the quality of teaching. They take their role in managing performance seriously: they check the progress that has been made against agreed success criteria to ensure that salary progression is aligned to performance.
 - The governing body understands the uses to which the pupil premium funding is put, including extra sessions and enrichment opportunities. Governors evaluate the impact of this money

against the results these pupils achieve compared with other pupils at the school, although they do not rigorously check that they are catching up quickly with all pupils nationally. Governors maintain a strong control of the school's budget and have steered the school effectively through a considerable period of expansion. They are well trained and are highly committed to the school and are careful to ensure that procedures to keep pupils safe meet requirements and are effective.

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	102656
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	404834

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	522
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stella Croissant
Headteacher	Irene Smith
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 March 2011
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