

Linaker Primary School and Children's Centre

Sefton Street, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 5DB

Inspection dates

8–9 October 2013

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

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. Standards are below the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Overall pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and number are not yet securely in place from an early age or consistently built upon to enable pupils to raise their standards in English and mathematics.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make expected progress overall. The progress of pupils in their writing, in Key Stage 1 and for the most able pupils, is inconsistent.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. There is not enough teaching that is good or better to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their standards.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement. They become restless and lose concentration in lessons where they are not challenged to 'stretch' their learning or when they do not understand exactly what is required from them.
- Leadership and management require improvement. The school's systems to track pupils' progress are not consistently applied by staff to speed up pupils' progress.
- Governors' understanding of pupils' achievement in the different year groups is basic and, therefore, they do not fully challenge the school's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' standards are rising and their progress is improving, especially in Year 6.
- The quality of teaching is improving. Some teaching is good or outstanding, enabling pupils to make better than expected progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because the quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around school is good and they feel safe. Most are very polite and helpful.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have secured improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors are committed to improving pupils' outcomes and are very involved in the life of the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 20 lessons, three were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors visited classes with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to look at pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading from Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, including the special educational needs leader and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, three members of the governing body, pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's records of parents' views and conversations with parents. The questionnaires completed by 36 staff were also taken into account.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and reviewed various documents including the school's view of its effectiveness, tracking of pupils' progress, pupils' books and records of governing body meetings and the performance management of staff. Documents relating to behaviour, safety and safeguarding were also considered.

Inspection team

Marie Cordey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Additional Inspector

Clare Nash

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. An above average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a children's centre on site which is inspected separately by Ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is good or better in order to raise attainment across the school, especially in pupils' writing, for the most able and in Key Stage 1, by:
 - emphasising the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar and building on pupils' knowledge year by year
 - using the marking of pupils' books to help to plan further work that closely matches their abilities
 - regularly marking pupils' work and ensuring that pupils know how well they are doing and exactly what they need to target in order to improve their standards
 - providing more challenge in lessons, especially in Key Stage 1 and for most-able pupils, to enable pupils to reach their potential, raise their standards and ensure that pupils always have positive attitudes to learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that systems to track and target pupils' progress are used by all staff to speed up progress that is not good
 - improve governors' understanding of pupils' achievement so that they are able to challenge the school's performance more effectively.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how well this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In the last few years, pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, have been either well-below average or below average. Standards in English and mathematics for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2013 improved, especially for the most able pupils, but were still below average.
- Pupils' standards in Key Stage 1 and 2 are adversely affected by their attainment in writing because this not only reduces their combined English standards, which include reading and writing, but also their combined performance in English and mathematics. Taken separately pupils' standards in reading and mathematics are in-line with the national average.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 are not improving as quickly as those in Key Stage 2 because the quality of teaching is not as effective in securing pupils' knowledge of basic skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. A strong leadership focus and tailored professional training to improve pupils' ability to link sounds and letters in Year 1 led to significant improvements in pupils' standards in the end of Year 1 phonics screening test.
- Pupils' starting points vary but are typically below average. They make expected progress overall from their individual starting points. In some classes, pupils make better than expected progress because the quality of teaching is good or better.
- Standards in mathematics and in reading are higher than in writing. Leaders' focus on these areas has led to the improvement evident.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs requires improvement. The effectiveness of learning support is variable; some teaching assistants are under-used, especially when the teacher is introducing the work for the lesson. Pupils needing support are quickly identified but some do not receive consistent or specific enough support to make their progress consistently good.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make the same progress as their peers. Those who are known to be eligible for free school meals attain similar standards to other pupils. This reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Progress is steady in Key Stage 2 but is not as consistent in Key Stage 1 where a small number do not make sufficient progress. This means that teachers in Key Stage 2 need to close the gaps in these pupils' learning to ensure that overall, pupils make expected progress.
- Pupils whose first language is not English make expected rates of progress and their standards are below average. Increasingly, the most-able pupils in this group and amongst other pupils reach their potential but this is not yet inconsistently the case because teaching is not always challenging enough to enable these pupils to attain the highest levels, especially in writing and in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils achieve well when teaching is of at least good quality. Outstanding teaching in a Year 2 class modelled how highly effective teaching rapidly accelerates pupils' progress. All pupils in this lesson, understood how adjectives and comparisons can improve writing and demonstrated their knowledge in well-crafted, entertaining writing. Because pupils were encouraged to link sounds with letters and refer to junior dictionaries, their work was also spelt correctly. However, overall the ability to spell, punctuate and use grammar consistently accurately is a weakness in pupils' writing.
- The use of the new Primary School Sport funding is making a difference in improving pupils' skills as well as their knowledge about the benefits of healthy lifestyles. Pupils enjoy physical education and the many sports they participate in after school. Pupils in Year 4 commented on 'synchronising' gymnastic activities because they were given specific vocabulary to describe routines.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because they are taught well and their curiosity for learning is stimulated by a good range of activities. All these activities, both indoors and out, give children the opportunity to count, use letters and start to make words. Children are settled and happy in attractive surroundings. Their skills are now in line with

those expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching over time is improving, it still requires further improvement because its effect on speeding up pupils' progress is inconsistent. Not enough teaching is good or better, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Basic skills, especially in spelling, punctuation and grammar, are not emphasised enough, especially in Years 1 and 2, and this has a detrimental effect on the quality of pupils' writing. Because these skills have not been built on across the school, pupils' skills in writing have not improved as much as their skills in reading and mathematics.
- Lessons are not always planned closely enough to match the needs of individual pupils. For instance, the most able pupils are not 'stretched' to ensure that they consistently achieve what they should nor are tasks explained clearly enough so that all pupils can understand what is expected from them.
- Marking is not regular or helpful enough to ensure that all pupils know how well they are doing or precisely what they need to do in order to improve their work. Although leaders expect that all books should contain pupils' targets, this is not always the case.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are mostly carefully supported to understand their work and become more independent. This is not always evident because some pupils are helped when they are capable of doing the work themselves.
- There is enough good and better teaching to provide a template for improving the overall quality of teaching.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy learning because many well-planned activities captivate their imagination. Good teaching extends children's knowledge and skills of emerging reading, writing and in number so that they are well prepared for Key Stage 1.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement. This is because they become less positive in their attitudes to learning when teaching is unclear or lacks challenge. Pupils' attendance has been below average but has improved because of the school's positive engagement with parents and a very clear focus across the school on the importance of attendance.
- Pupils are keen to welcome visitors and behave well around school and in the playgrounds. They are very proud to be given responsibilities, such as on the school council or as monitors. Pupils are eager to join in conversations with each other and with adults. They blossom when their views are asked for and particularly enjoy reading aloud to others.
- Pupils relish the large number of additional activities provided by the school, especially in music and sport. They enjoy educational trips, such as the recent one to Speke Hall, as well as residential visits in this country and abroad.
- Pupils say they feel safe and their parents agree. Conversations with parents prompted comments praising the school's work in looking after the most vulnerable pupils. Pupils are very aware of different forms of bullying and are resolutely opposed to any form of discrimination. They know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Pupils are aware of what is right and what is wrong and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Their social and moral development is good because of the school's and parents' emphasis on good behaviour and respect for others.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle down quickly because they are made to feel very welcome and are re-assured about coming to school. They learn to share and cooperate because expectations of their behaviour and of their learning are high.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although leaders' and managers' actions are leading to improvements in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching, leadership and management are not good overall because the quality of teaching is not yet effective enough to ensure pupils' overall good achievement. Standards are not yet rising fast enough because of inconsistencies in the rate of pupils' progress and in the quality of teaching, especially in Key Stage 1. Pupils' writing standards and the achievement of the most-able pupils are areas for further improvement identified by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Leaders know the school and have evaluated strengths and weaknesses accurately. As a result of actions to raise pupils' attainment, the quality of teaching has been tackled and standards for pupils in Year 6 have improved. Professional training to match the school's plans for improvement has been undertaken by teachers and teaching assistants. Most staff share the drive for improvement set by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, although some staff would appreciate further training to improve their effectiveness, especially in helping them to improve specific aspects of their teaching. Performance management targets are linked to teachers' pay and are not considered to be met if teaching is not good enough to speed up pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is appropriately matched to pupils' abilities to ensure that pupils make expected progress overall and have equality of opportunity to learn and further their personal development. Their spiritual and cultural development is good because of the range of cultural opportunities in drama, music and art provided for pupils.
- Appropriate support to improve pupils' outcomes is provided by the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school requires improvement. Governors acknowledge that their knowledge of pupils' progress and of the difference made by use of the pupil premium is limited. Their allocation of the new Primary School Sports funding was carefully planned and is helping to improve pupils' skills in physical education as well as their appreciation of healthy lifestyles. The composition of the governing body has changed recently and governors have made a point of signing up for a number of courses to improve their knowledge. Governors have been involved in the leadership of teaching and are aware of performance management arrangements linked to pupils' achievement. The governing body meets statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils and updates their training appropriately. Finances are managed appropriately to help the school to improve.

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	104864
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	426289

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	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Booth
Headteacher	Colin Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2010
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