

Link Primary School

138 Croydon Road, Beddington, Croydon, CR0 4PG

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- From starting points that are usually low, pupils make excellent progress because teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers plan extremely carefully to meet the individual needs of each pupil and set work at the right level of difficulty.
- All groups of pupils achieve outstandingly well during their time at the school, particularly in communication, literacy and numeracy and personal development.
- The seamless work between education and therapists allows pupils to develop their ability to speak, listen, and explain their understanding exceptionally well across all subjects.
- Children in the Reception class make rapid progress. Their achievement is outstanding.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is excellent. They are well looked after and feel safe and secure. As a result, they enjoy coming to school and this is evident in their rising attendance.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils feel happy and safe in school and enjoy strong supportive relationships with staff. They are able to concentrate on their learning because anxieties are reduced to a minimum.
- Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. They are confident their children are making excellent progress. As one parent commented, 'It is a fantastic school and all staff go the extra mile to support pupils and families.'
- The rich and varied range of subjects and activities promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. This is further enriched through visits, residential experiences and links with other schools, including in Africa.
- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher, supported by a very strong school leadership team, has maintained the school's excellence in all of its work as well as in its capacity to sustain improvement.
- Governors are extremely knowledgeable and offer very high quality support to the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 episodes of teaching. A third of these were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, different groups of staff, including senior leaders, and the school improvement consultant. The inspector also talked informally to pupils and staff around the school.
- A meeting took place with parents and carers at the start of the school day. The inspector also took into account a number of letters written by parents and carers to express their views.
- There were insufficient responses to the online inspection questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors took into account the school's own surveys. Questionnaire responses from 22 members of staff were also considered.
- The inspectors scrutinised examples of pupils' past and present work and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and planning, information on pupils' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small school, which provides for pupils mainly with speech, language and communication needs. Some pupils have additional learning, sensory or physical needs; there is a growing number of pupils with autism spectrum conditions. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school is based on two sites in close proximity to each other. The main site caters for Years 3 to 6 and the second site for Reception to Year 2.
- Link Primary School is run by Link Day School Limited, a registered charity, and the trustees are governors of both the Link Primary and Link Secondary Schools.
- The school does not use the local authority school improvement services.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teachers' written comments show pupils clearly how to improve their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From their starting points, which are usually very low, pupils' achievement throughout the school is outstanding, irrespective of individual special educational needs or disabilities. All groups make excellent progress, including those pupils eligible for support through additional funding. Similarly, those from different ethnic backgrounds and pupils who speak English as an additional language also make excellent progress.
- Pupils' progress in communication is outstanding because education and therapy staff consistently use a range of communication methods. These include signing, pictures and symbols, and technology such as touch-screen tablets. All methods are highly effective in supporting pupils' learning. As a result, pupils with specific speech and language difficulties become less frustrated. They make rapid gains in their ability to speak clearly and explain their thinking. This also makes them more enthusiastic and engaged in their learning across all subjects.
- Pupils with additional needs who are on the autistic spectrum make exceptional progress. Specialist approaches, such as the use of distraction-free areas for learning and the nurture group, are successful in helping pupils to communicate and relate to other people more effectively.
- Progress in mathematics is equally outstanding. This is because the pupils are provided with regular, planned opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills across all subjects, for example when exploring shape through making patterns with water or when working out the cost of shopping or weighing ingredients in food technology.
- In writing, pupils make rapid progress and develop their confidence in writing for different purposes and audiences. For example, pupils learn to fill in the required information for a passport and describe particular facts about different countries in postcards to their classmates.
- All pupils read at a level matching their capabilities. The less-able pupils understand a wide range of objects of reference, images and symbols that develop exceptionally well their understanding of the meaning of words. This enables pupils to express clearly and confidently their opinions about stories and characters or to make decisions when choosing particular things, such as a snack, drink or activity.
- The more-able pupils achieve extremely well. They link letters and the sounds they represent to read and spell words of increasing difficulty correctly.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make outstanding progress, particularly in their social and personal development. This is because they have access to a wide range of learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, that enables them to find things out for themselves.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education because of specialist teaching. Pupils enjoy taking part in physical activities and have an increasing awareness of how sport and exercise contribute to a healthy lifestyle, relative to their levels of ability.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because the school places great emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary and insists upon correct grammatical usage.
- Additional funding is used effectively to accelerate learning for eligible pupils. This is done through a wide range of support programmes and resources. Extra specialist teaching support in lessons and in small groups is equally effective. Consequently, eligible pupils make the same excellent progress in line with their peers. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching**is outstanding**

- Teaching over time is consistently good and much is outstanding. Expectations of what pupils can do are high and staff constantly push the boundaries for what pupils can achieve. This prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.
- Teachers plan lessons extremely well to excite their pupils and maintain their interest. In an English lesson in Key Stage 2, the teacher used mystery objects in a bag to develop exceptionally well pupils' ability to use descriptive words when speaking and writing. Pupils were highly engaged by the enthusiastic approach and skilled questioning by the teacher, which deepened pupils' thinking about their learning. As a result, all pupils made excellent progress in their understanding of the meaning of words and produced high quality written work.
- All staff are highly knowledgeable about the pupils in their care and the subjects they teach. Teachers work in highly effective partnership with specialist on-site therapy staff. This ensures the effective development of pupils' communication skills consistently across all subjects. This is particularly so through the use of signing, symbols and objects of reference.
- For instance, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, sensory materials and objects of reference were used effectively by all staff to develop pupils' understanding of climate. Each pupil was motivated to participate in an activity, which was fully adapted to their individual interests, so that all remained on-task and made excellent progress.
- Teaching assistants are very experienced in knowing when to step in and support learning and when to give pupils time and space to work things out for themselves. This is highly effective in supporting pupils' ability to work on their own and find things out for themselves. Developing self-help learning skills is a key strength within the school.
- Pupils with autism are supported and guided very well in lessons by highly knowledgeable staff. Work is clearly structured and clear routines for different parts of the day help pupils to feel relaxed and able to learn. As a result, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders learn to listen with increased concentration, take turns and to share.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have frequent and regular opportunities to practise listening skills and this prepares them well for learning how to follow teachers' instructions. It also helps them to make a good start on learning early reading skills, whether that means recognising symbols or beginning to read simple words.
- Relationships in classrooms are excellent. Staff create a consistently positive atmosphere in which pupils feel happy, well supported, and ready to take on new challenges. Staff plan very effectively to meet the wide range of needs and abilities and set work at the right level of difficulty for all groups, including the most able.
- The use of technology to make learning lively and help pupils to communicate more effectively is excellent. Pupils are confident in using tablet computers to photograph and record their work and to help them in their learning and communication.
- Throughout the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and pupils have a range of ways to review and reflect on their own and others' work, including the use of photography.
- Most teachers' marking is of an exceptionally high quality and identifies what pupils have done well and how to make it even better. Very occasionally, teachers' written comments do not show pupils clearly how they can improve their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are outstanding**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Parents say their children love school and they are very impressed by how happy their children are at school and the sense of purpose they achieve there. The school's positive impact on pupils has a very good effect on their life at home.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning help them to make outstanding progress. They arrive

promptly to lessons at the start of the day and after their breaks. They settle quickly, listen intently, and are eager to ask and answer questions. Pupils make great efforts, even with the tasks they find most difficult.

- Pupils are typically well behaved around the school and when they go off site. Playtimes are well organised so that there are plenty of activities for pupils to be involved in, and this encourages socialisation and taking turns, for example in riding the bicycles.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development highly effectively, resulting in harmonious relationships between pupils and adults. They are courteous and polite to each other and to adults, opening doors and saying, 'Thank you', when others do things for them. Pupils raise money for a wide range of causes and have positive views on the importance of helping those less fortunate than themselves.
- The strength of support for the increasing number of pupils who find it very difficult to follow routines and behave calmly means these pupils respond very positively to staff and remain cooperative. Pupils' behaviour improves significantly over time as a result of the very effective way in which it is managed, and because pupils are not frustrated by not being able to communicate or do things on their own. Consequently, there have been no permanent or fixed-term exclusions over recent years.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent knowledge and developing understanding of different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe, including when using computers and other media. There are well-developed procedures to keep pupils safe across both sites.
- Attendance is improving because the school works effectively with specialist staff and outside agencies to support those pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, provides highly effective leadership. She has been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement across the school. All staff are totally committed to providing every pupil with the best possible education and care. The shared drive for improvement has been relentless and has ensured the school has sustained and improved on its outstanding outcomes since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders have an accurate, realistic view of how well pupils are doing and how excellent teaching contributes to this. All leaders are very successful in ensuring that policies and procedures are applied consistently by all staff across both sites so that all pupils make rapid gains in their learning. Discrimination is not tolerated.
- Checks on the quality of teaching by senior leaders are extensive and thorough. Targets have been set for staff to improve their practice and these are clearly linked to improvements in pupils' learning. No members of staff are offered salary increases unless justified by their performance.
- Plans for improvement and rigorous checks on how well the school is doing show that leaders are sustaining and improving outcomes for pupils and ensuring that achievement for all groups is excellent.
- All staff are fully committed to creating equality of opportunity, tackling any discrimination, and improving life chances for their pupils. Senior leaders have ensured that school funding has been effectively used to ensure pupils who are eligible for additional funding make the same excellent progress as their classmates.
- The school has made effective use of the additional sports funding for primary schools. It has used this for specialist teaching and training for teachers and to increase the range of physical exercise activities on offer. These opportunities have had a highly positive impact on developing pupils' healthy lifestyles and their better physical well-being.
- Rigorous safeguarding practices are in place across both sites. This provision is continuously monitored and reviewed to ensure safe practices are of the highest quality.

- Communication with parents and carers is highly effective. Parents and carers explained how approachable and helpful staff are, not only in helping their children to make progress but also in helping them to gain access to services for themselves and so better support their child.
- The school's rich and varied curriculum makes an exceptionally strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff seize every chance to widen pupils' horizons and broaden their first-hand learning experiences through a wide range of trips, extra-curricular activities, visits and residential experiences that allow them to take risks in a safe, supportive environment. Highly effective links with schools internationally allow pupils to develop an excellent understanding of people whose lifestyles and cultures may differ from their own.
- The school improvement consultant provides highly effective support in judging the quality of teaching and checking robustly information on how well pupils learn.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has provided an excellent level of support and challenge to the headteacher as she has striven to ensure that all pupils are given every opportunity to succeed. Governors have had a wide range of training and have a very good understanding of current requirements on their roles and responsibilities. They visit the school regularly and are well informed about how well pupils learn and undertake careful checks of this. Consequently, they have an excellent understanding of the links between the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Members have contributed to the improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection by ensuring any underachievement is tackled robustly. Governors ensure there is no gap between the performances of different groups of pupils, monitoring the impact of the spending of additional funding very well. They ensure salary progression is linked to high quality performance. Governors are involved in the school's work to review how well it is doing and to plan for future development, and this helps them to set precise targets for the headteacher's performance management. Governors are rigorous in ensuring safeguarding requirements are in place for all settings the school uses and update policies regularly.

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	133741
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	439636

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Norton
Headteacher	Beverley Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2009
Telephone number	020 86885239
Fax number	020 86670828
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