

Linaker Primary School

Sefton Street, Southport PR8 5DB

Inspection dates 24–25 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has worked tirelessly in setting a clear direction for school improvement. She communicates her high standards with clarity, ensuring that no one is in any doubt about what is expected of them. As a result the school is improving.
- Staff are a fully committed team. They share the ambition of governors and senior leaders to make Linaker the best it can be.
- Almost all pupils make at least expected progress in reading and writing so that by the end of Year 6 pupils achieve well in English. Current pupils are on track to meet expectations in mathematics. Pupils who are known to be disadvantaged achieve particularly well.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are effective. This enabled pupils in Years 1 and 2 to attain standards that were in line with those expected for their age in all subjects.
- Senior leaders have successfully led from the front in the drive to improve the quality of teaching across the school.
- Early years provision is a strength of the school. Improvements in provision since the previous inspection ensure that children get off to a good start and make good progress.
- The governing body is now able to provide effective support in moving the school forward because of its higher levels of skills and knowledge.
- Respect and tolerance is a thread that runs through the school. Pupils are happy, enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They are welcoming, keen to please their teachers, and are proud of their achievements. Pupils' behaviour is good and they are quick to follow adults' instructions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- As a result of the school's recent actions, pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. However, gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding remain due to poor teaching in the past.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to take a role in the day-to-day life of the school to equip them for being active citizens not only at Linaker but in the wider society.
- Middle leaders' skills in checking how well pupils are doing and the quality of teaching in their subjects are not fully developed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics and eliminate the legacy of poor teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - teachers use the errors pupils make to quickly help them to adapt their teaching as necessary
 - teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve and set work that consistently deepens pupils' understanding
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in a range of contexts and other subjects.

- Extend the skills of middle leaders so they are able to make a significant contribution to school improvement by enabling them to:
 - provide high-quality evaluations of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in their subjects
 - use the range of information available to them to prioritise improvements in the areas they lead.

- Strengthen pupils' involvement in the life of the school and in the local community by:
 - giving the school council a greater role in making more significant improvements to the school
 - developing their role as Southport citizens by making an active contribution to their local community
 - offering more responsibilities to the older pupils in order that they become role models for the rest of school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders, governors and staff work tirelessly and share a clear vision for Linaker. They are passionate in their commitment to securing the best possible outcomes for each and every child.
- The headteacher has high expectations of her teachers and support staff. She is not prepared to take second best and ensures staff are well supported to reach the high standards she expects. Everyone is in no doubt about the school's direction of travel and the hard work and commitment that she expects from every single person.
- The headteacher has rolled her sleeves up and worked alongside staff to secure improvements in teaching across the school. She sees herself as the lead teacher and makes sure that she provides a role model to her team.
- Senior leaders observe teaching, and check teachers' planning and pupils' books frequently to sustain and drive improvements. They have put in place high-quality support to help teachers improve their practice. Staff have welcomed the priority given to training and cite numerous examples of internal and external training that have had an impact on improving their teaching.
- Systems to manage the performance of teaching staff are closely linked to the school's improvement plans. All staff are set ambitious targets. While teachers are well supported to enable them to improve their practice, the headteacher does not shy away from difficult conversations when teachers are not meeting the high standards expected by the school and that pupils deserve.
- Middle leadership is improving but still has a way to go. Middle leaders have started to undertake checks on pupils' work and to conduct lesson observations. These are having a positive impact on the teachers' compliance with policies and procedures. Leaders' evaluations do not always make clear the priorities for improvement in each subject and are sometimes not in enough depth to identify the reason behind any weakness.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum provides pupils with range of opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in a range of contexts and subjects as well as to develop as historians, geographers, artists and musicians. There is a wide range of pre-, lunchtime and after-school opportunities, including clubs for Lego, film, dance and drums. Pupils are encouraged to earn credits towards certificates and other awards as part of the Children's University. They are rehearsing for Young Voices 2016, which will be performed at the Manchester Arena. A range of activities ensures pupils have opportunities to go to the theatre, visit the zoo, explore the beach and watch a film at the cinema.
- Sports and physical education (PE) funding is used wisely by school leaders. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the range of sporting opportunities they have experienced including judo, fencing and street dance. Pupils have had opportunities to represent the school in competitions locally. Teachers have benefited from training through the school's partnership with a local specialist sports college.
- Pupil premium funding is used very well. By the end of Year 6, the performance of disadvantaged pupils overtakes that of others in the school. Pupils who are looked after thrive because their needs are met well by adults.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. There is a culture of tolerance and respect threaded through school. Pupils are keen to help and Year 6 pupils enjoy the jobs they have been given. However, older pupils do not have many opportunities to be role models. There is a school council and pupils are able to talk about its work; however, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to be active citizens across school. Pupils have only limited opportunities to contribute to the life of their local community.
- As a result of support, challenge and guidance from the national leader of education and the local authority, teaching has improved. Staff have observed high-quality teaching and collaborated with local schools. Staff now have a wider perspective on how to assess accurately and teach the content of the curriculum in their year group.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body has worked well with the headteacher in steering the school through a difficult period. The monitoring visit by the HMI in December 2013, together with the appointment of the current headteacher, was the catalyst for change.

- An audit of skills has enabled the Chair to match vacancies to gaps to recruit governors with the relevant experience whenever possible. Governors have undertaken an extensive programme of training and with support from the local authority as well as other providers. Consequently, governors have the skills and knowledge to provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to school leaders.
 - Frequent planned visits as part of their link governor roles and meetings with senior and middle leaders have given them a good understanding of what is going on in school.
 - The governing body places high importance on its safeguarding duty. The lead governor for safeguarding meets regularly with senior staff to check that pupils are well cared for. A number of governors have attended training to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.
 - Open and transparent systems for managing finances that are supported by the local authority's finance officer reassure governors that the budget is well managed and that any planned expenditure is carefully considered and its impact closely tracked.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The very experienced and knowledgeable safeguarding leaders ensure that systems to protect pupils and keep them safe (safeguarding) are rigorous and robust. Procedures to check the backgrounds of adults to ensure they are cleared to work with children are up to date. All staff have recently attended child protection training, including how to protect pupils and assess the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, including in the early years, is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils find learning interesting and engaging. The focus of senior leaders on securing high-quality training for all teaching staff is paying dividends. Teachers plan lessons well and use what they know about pupils' knowledge and skills to motivate and challenge pupils. In Year 5, pupils were enthusiastically finding factors of numbers, enjoying the increasingly challenging tasks set by the teacher deepening their understanding as soon as he could see they had a firm grasp of how to find a factor.
- The assessment system introduced in September is already used effectively by the overwhelming majority of staff and is providing senior leaders with an accurate picture of pupils' progress across all year groups. Pupils like the fact that the records are kept at the front of their books and they are able to see at a glance how they are getting on. Pupils find the targets they are given helpful in knowing what they need to do next.
- Teachers work collaboratively within school and with teachers in other schools locally to make sure their assessments are accurate. This approach to assessment is raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and also bringing a wealth of exciting ideas from other schools into Linaker.
- The marking and feedback policy asks pupils to engage in a dialogue with teachers about their learning in English lessons. In line with the school's policy, pupils are given time to act on advice given and use this time well. Pupils in Year 6 could talk about how they were developing their reading comprehension and how finding the opportunity to mark their responses as a group was very helpful in improving their work. Pupils are keen to share their work with their teachers and classmates.
- There is a consistent approach to teaching reading, ensuring that teachers build on the learning in the discrete phonics lessons in other subjects (phonics is the sound that letters make in words). Teachers' good subject knowledge allows them to pick up on pupils' errors. Teachers then follow this up swiftly with groups and individual pupils.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is improving. Leaders have analysed assessment information to accurately pinpoint areas for improvement and ensured that these are being swiftly tackled. They have implemented a systematic and structured approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers frequently assess pupils' learning, particularly in Years 4, 5 and 6, to identify and plug gaps in their knowledge. Teachers use questioning increasingly well to probe pupils' understanding and encourage pupils to explain their reasoning. Where teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that they regularly check pupils work, giving the 'rapid graspers' more challenging tasks and questions to work on ('rapid graspers' are those pupils who quickly pick up on new learning). Teachers then provide immediate support for other pupils to ensure that they catch up quickly so no one is left behind.

- At times, some pupils, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 2, do not achieve to the best of their abilities. They are capable of responding to work that is even more challenging. Pupils say their teachers make them work hard in most subjects and agree this is a good thing. However, in mathematics, pupils are clear that too often lessons are easy. Often teachers do not allow pupils the opportunity to 'have a go' and then use pupils' mistakes as a starting point for their teaching. As a result, time is lost as teachers explain tasks that pupils are already capable of and do not move learning on quickly enough when pupils are demonstrating that they understand.
- The teacher who leads provision for pupils who have special educational needs and pupils with disabilities and the learning mentor have a wealth of skills and experience that enable them to provide excellent support to teaching staff to ensure that all pupils' needs are well met. They are quick to adapt support plans, ensuring that pupils are enabled to catch up quickly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They look smart in their school uniform. In most classes, work is presented to a high standard. Classrooms are bright and attractive and pupils' work is beautifully displayed around school.
- Pupils of all backgrounds get on well together. They show respect for each other's cultures and faiths, playing harmoniously together. They are clear that bullying and the use of any derogatory language are unusual. Pupils have absolute confidence that any incidents will be swiftly and effectively dealt with by the adults in school.
- High value is placed on supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The work of the learning mentors is highly regarded by pupils and parents alike. They ensure that pupils who are facing behavioural, emotional and social challenges are developing skills and resilience to help them be successful learners.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy eating.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to share ideas and when teachers ask for contributions in class they are met with a 'sea of hands'. Pupils respect and value the ideas and opinions of their peers.
- Pupils are well supported by staff, who know them well and who quickly intervene when any pupil needs help.
- The oldest pupils like the jobs they have been given and enjoy the responsibility these bring. They are keen to help the teachers and other adults in school. However, there are limited opportunities to demonstrate that they are role models for younger pupils.
- Staff find lots of ways to acknowledge pupils' successes. Pupils are proud to be nominated 'Star of the day' or 'Star of the week' and are keen to earn rewards for good work and behaviour.
- Pupils elected as members of the school council identified areas for improvements such as better school dinners, more interesting trips and grass in the outdoor area. However, their impact is limited because they are not involved as much as they could be in changes to the curriculum or to teaching.
- Displays around school show pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and role as good citizens, for example, in learning about Remembrance Day, the reign of the Queen, and the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. Their development is captured in the display of the 'Tree of tolerance' and pupils' writing about their understanding of different faiths. Their role as Southport citizens is less well developed. They have limited chances to shape the future of the town or to become involved in improving the local community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The well-thought-out behaviour policy is applied consistently by all staff and ensures the school is a calm and orderly environment in which pupils can thrive.
- In lessons, pupils respond well to instructions and, more often than not, work hard to complete tasks. In most classes there are one or two pupils who become distracted, particularly when the pace of learning slows. However, these momentary lapses are quickly addressed with no interruption to the learning of other pupils. Other pupils are frustrated by this small minority of pupils.

- Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to please their teachers, with whom they have good relationships. In most classes pupils work diligently and pupils' books are testament to the amount of work they complete. Pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions so little learning time is lost.
- Behaviour at break- and lunchtime is generally good. Pupils showed consideration for their peers as they played outside, ensuring everyone was safe. The lunchtime nurture group provides a safe haven for pupils who otherwise would find unstructured play situations challenging.
- Exclusions from school are extremely rare and pupils joining school with a history of challenging behaviour have been successfully integrated.
- Pupils' attendance is much improved since the previous inspection. Staff are tenacious in following up absences, starting with first-day calling for all unexplained absences. The school has worked hard to raise the awareness of parents about the expectation that pupils should be in school every day, particularly for those parents of younger children who would not start school so early in their home country. The school's actions have been particularly effective in improving boys' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The quality of pupils' work in books and on the walls, in lessons, and in the most recent assessment information indicates good progress and at least average attainment in a range of subjects. Leaders have accurately identified areas for improvement and their actions have been effective in eliminating the legacy of poor performance.
- Children leaving Reception Year get off to a flying start in Year 1. Their improved outcomes, particularly in reading and writing, have ensured that they are well prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum. The legacy of underperformance in early years has been eliminated and in 2015, children left the early years with achievements in line with pupils nationally.
- Across Key Stage 1 there is a relentless focus on the teaching of basic skills in literacy and mathematics to ensure that pupils catch up quickly. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 improved in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. Pupils who left Year 2 were better prepared for Key Stage 2 than Year 2 pupils were at the time of the last inspection. Furthermore, those pupils who did not meet the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 caught up rapidly because of the carefully targeted, high-quality interventions put in place by teachers.
- Achievement in reading is good. Pupils love to read. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 has been broadly in line with the national average over the past three years. Pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy the wide range of high-quality books and are successfully developing their skills of inference and deduction. By the end of Year 6, pupils are successful readers. Over half of them achieve above age-related expectations.
- Pupils enjoy writing and they write in a range of subjects. During the inspection, a group of Year 2 pupils wrote a diary entry for Jane, the servant of Samuel Pepys, on the day of The Great Fire of London. They enjoyed using their historical knowledge to write vivid accounts of the events of the day and convey Jane's strong emotions as events unfolded. In Key Stage 1, pupils rapidly make up ground from low starting points. Inspectors saw a group of pupils in Year 1 enthusiastically taking orders from customers in their café. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' good progress ensures that they have developed skills and knowledge and can write confidently and capably for a range of audiences and purposes.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is improving. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who attained the level expected of them for their age at the end of Key Stage 1 was above the national average. Standards in mathematics declined significantly in 2015 at the end of Year 6. This was partly because of poor teaching in the past and the school being unable to plug the gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. Current pupils' progress is improving quickly and a higher proportion in each year group is in line with the expectations for pupils' age.
- The most-able pupils are being challenged more effectively and as a result their outcomes are improving.

- Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs achieve well across the curriculum. Their progress in reading and writing is as good as all pupils nationally. In mathematics, as for other pupils in the school, there was a dip in 2015. However, current pupils are making good progress towards their targets. Highly effective assessment ensures that timely interventions target any pupil at risk of falling behind. These are frequently monitored to ensure they really do make a difference. The good care and support that they are given ensures pupils develop a range of skills that make them successful learners.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. They make good progress, progressing faster than their classmates in Key Stage 2. The excellent care and support that children who are looked after by the local authority receive are much appreciated by parents, with whom the school works exceptionally well.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported, ensuring that by the end of Key Stage 2 they achieve above other pupils in school and the national average in writing and mathematics, and broadly in line for reading.
- Teachers are skilled in developing pupils' literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum. The pupils thoroughly enjoy being historians, scientists, artists and musicians. A group of Year 6 pupils were using their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding to draw an accurate scaled plan of the school and plan to use this information to build a three-dimensional model of the school buildings.
- The sports premium funding has been used to great effect. Pupils enjoying learning to play different sports and take part in a range of sporting competitions. The school has recently achieved the Bronze Sports Mark. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about judo, fencing and street dance. One pupil told inspectors that, 'if you like a sport, you can then join a club!'

Early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management are good. Leaders have accurately identified the priorities for improvement and the actions that have been put in place to achieve them have been very successful. Leaders are not complacent and continually refine and improve provision. As a result, outcomes for children at the end of Reception Year have improved rapidly and in 2015 rose to above national average.
- Teachers use effective arrangements to make sure children settle well into Nursery and Reception. They quickly get an accurate understanding of children's starting points to ensure that no time is wasted. Well-established routines ensure that children quickly feel secure and happy. The seamless transition between Nursery and 'wrap-around care' ensures that those children benefit from the continuity of high-quality provision throughout the day.
- Children get off to a flying start. Simple but effective systems ensure that every member of staff is well informed about the current priorities for key groups of children. Adults maximise opportunities to accelerate children's learning and ensure that children who have fallen behind can catch up quickly. The early years settings are rich in opportunities to encourage young children to read and write and ensure that children are immersed in mathematics.
- Highly trained staff ensure that children benefit from teaching that is personalised and dynamic. Adults move learning on through careful explanations and demonstrations. They build on high-quality texts as the source of children's learning. In Nursery, a group of girls were enjoying sharing a book. One girl counted to six, matching the numbers to a set of ducks on the page.
- Phonics is taught well. The consistent approach by teachers and teaching assistants ensures that teaching is closely matched to children's needs. As a result, children quickly learn new sounds and are able to apply these to words. Teachers were quick to pick up on misconceptions and correct mistakes. Teachers used a range of interesting and engaging activities to keep the children's interest and make learning fun.
- All groups, including children with special educational needs, those who are known to be disadvantaged, boys and the most-able, make good progress. Teachers know children well and make sure that they provide opportunities to enable every child to be a successful learner. Two boys confidently used their spades to trace the numbers two and nine in the sand. When they had completed these, they were eager for the adult to give them another challenge.
- Staff ensure that those children for whom English is an additional language are assessed in their own language on entry to ensure that staff are able to build on the skills and experience they bring with them. One child in Nursery was engrossed in her play with a zoo set. She was speaking to the animals in her home language, developing her own narrative, as she arranged them.

- Children's safety and welfare are of paramount importance. Rigorous and robust procedures ensure that children are very well cared for by highly trained staff. Statutory welfare requirements are met.
- Teachers actively encourage parents to become partners in learning and ensure they are well informed about how well their child is doing. They engage parents in supporting their child's learning through regular 'stay-and-play' sessions. Staff ensure that parents and children benefit from the wealth of support offered by the on-site children's centre. Parents agree with the view of staff and say that they are made to feel very welcome by staff and encouraged to support their children at home through activities such as sharing books and practising phonics.

School details

Unique reference number	104864
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10002202

This inspection 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	507
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judith Williams
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Brown
Telephone number	01704 532343
Website	www.linakerschool.co.uk
Email address	office@linaker.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2013

Information about this school

- Linaker is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is slightly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club, which are open to all children every day.
- The on-site children's centre is separately inspected by Ofsted.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed. There have been a number of changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- The school is supported by a National Leader of Education Mrs Pat Speed, Headteacher of Great Crosby Catholic Primary School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, including two joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunchtime. They also met formally with two small groups of pupils to chat about their learning and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the work in the outdoor areas.
- A range of pupils' books were checked jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the day. They also took account of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own parent questionnaire. Inspectors also took note of the 36 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Diane Palin	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Burbage	Ofsted Inspector

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