

Larkfield Primary School

Preston New Road, Churchtown, Southport, Merseyside PR9 8PA

Inspection dates	3–4 February 2016
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

- Pupils are polite, helpful and friendly and expressed very positive views about school when they spoke with inspectors. The great majority of parents who responded to surveys agree that their children are happy and safe.
- The early years provision is a strength of the school, giving children a very secure and enjoyable start to learning.
- Leaders, governors and staff responded resolutely to the findings of the previous inspection with strong commitment and clear vision to raise standards and improve teaching.
- Records show that progress has accelerated and pupils currently in the school are achieving well, including those who have special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils work hard and progress well from their different starting points due to good teaching and the rich curriculum that captures and builds on their interest. They leave the school well prepared for the next stage of education.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe in school and their comments included, 'The teachers look after us' and 'Everyone is reliable'.
- Well-promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures pupils acquire traditional British values and become responsible individuals. Their respect for others was clearly illustrated by this comment, 'On the outside we are different, but inside we are all the same'.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is improving securely but does not yet result in outstanding achievement.
- Attainment in mathematics lags behind reading and writing, especially at Key Stage 2, because pupils have limited opportunities to put their mathematical skills into practice by solving meaningful problems.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the quality of teaching in order to build on and accelerate current improvements in pupils' achievement throughout the school, most particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring the recently implemented systems to check pupils' progress are securely understood and used consistently by all staff in planning learning
 - sharing and extending the good practice already found in the school
 - revising and simplifying the school marking policy and ensuring it is used consistently so pupils are given clear information about how to move their learning forward.
- Further raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - providing a wider range of real-life problems for pupils to solve, so they can put their mathematical knowledge into practice and extend their skills in meaningful situations
 - completing the review of the mathematics policy to ensure uniform teaching strategies are used across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders, governors, middle leaders and staff used the findings of the previous inspection to carry out searching self-evaluation of what the school does well and what needs improving. Rather than attempt a 'quick fix' approach, carefully considered action plans were drawn up to ensure pupils gain a strong foundation to their learning. Actions were then carefully evaluated to check that they were making the desired impact.
- Raising the quality of teaching was prioritised in order to raise achievement. The class structure was reorganised and specialist teachers appointed for reading and mathematics. Consequently, progress is accelerating securely across school. Although some legacy of slower progress remains for older pupils, leaders are tackling this with additional support and intervention, such as the 'Pink Ladies' maths group.
- Staff are held to account for their pupils' progress at half-termly meetings with senior leaders. Regular checks on the quality of teaching include lesson observations, workbook scrutiny and progress information. Outcomes are used to provide appropriate professional development so staff enhance their skills and benefit pupil achievement. Much good practice exists in school, but leaders have yet to fully share this across the school.
- Middle leadership is developing well and making an increasingly strong contribution to school improvement, for example holding subject 'surgeries' to share specialist knowledge and help staff. The mathematics policy is currently under review to ensure all staff teach the same methods, such as for calculation. Actions to raise attainment in mathematics are beginning to show results but are still at an early stage of becoming fully successful.
- Children get a good, secure and happy start to their learning due to good leadership in the early years.
- High priority is placed on providing equal opportunities for all to do well both academically and socially through additional support or therapy to meet individual needs. Pupils with special educational needs receive the support they need and those who find learning easier are given further challenges.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. Additional support enables disadvantaged pupils to progress as well as, and often faster than, their classmates, and any remaining gaps between their performance and their classmates are rapidly closing.
- Good use of sports funding provides a range of activities across the school, such as gymnastics coaching. More pupils are taking part in sports and physical activities and staff have learned new skills.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school environment is harmonious, and pupils mix happily. Trusting and supportive relationships were seen throughout the school.
- Traditional values of friendship, tolerance and respect, rights and responsibilities are acquired through assemblies, lessons, representing classmates as school or eco councillors or working as playground 'Ambassadors', preparing pupils well for future life in our multicultural society.
- The curriculum is well planned and suitably adapted so pupils can make good progress in all subjects and gain the numeracy and literacy skills they need across the curriculum and for the future. Popular clubs enrich learning. There is additional music teaching, visits locally and further afield, and a residential experience for older pupils.
- The large majority of parents feel well informed by newsletters, messaging, the website and parents evenings, and leaders and staff are always willing to meet parents.
- The local authority provides good support for the school. Leaders and governors have made full use of this to improve provision and provide focused staff professional development.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have reorganised their committee structure since the previous inspection. They know the school well and are fully informed through updates on achievement and reports. Consequently, they challenge leaders and hold them to account by asking searching questions. They know the focus on reading has been successful and now are monitoring actions to raise attainment in mathematics.
 - Local authority training on school local and national data and a range of information and progress reports enable governors to compare the school's performance with others.
 - They check the use of pupil premium funds and know this is effective because disadvantaged pupils often outperform their classmates and do well in comparison with other pupils nationally.
 - Governors ensure salary rewards are only given to staff when their pupils learn well, and that staff performance management leads to further professional development to improve both teaching and management skills.

- Governors ensure sports funding is used to offer a variety of sports activities in order to increase pupils' skills, enjoyment and participation and to help staff learn new skills to pass on to their pupils.
- Governors make sure that the school teaches pupils traditional values so they are ready for their future lives in modern British society.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are all trained in child protection procedures, and any concerns are followed up rigorously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- School records and inspection evidence confirm that the quality of teaching is rising, due to leaders' monitoring and professional development. Consequently, pupils are now progressing well and attainment is rising.
- Pupils commented, 'We get to learn new things' and 'We have to work hard', and when asked about homework, one said, 'I love it!' Mathematics was named as a favourite lesson, showing the positive impact of better teaching in the subject. Literacy, art, information and communication technology and science are also popular, demonstrating the breadth of pupils' curriculum experience and enjoyment.
- Happy relationships between pupils and with staff aid learning and progress. Good behaviour was observed in lessons, and the majority of pupils are keen learners, concentrate and apply themselves willingly to their tasks.
- Staff ensure learning tasks are purposeful, build on pupils' interests and meet their individual needs. This was seen in a lively group reading activity with older pupils, extending their interest in the history of the Second World War while deepening their comprehension skills and ability to 'read between the lines' to gather meaning.
- The teaching assistants provide good support for learning and contribute effectively to pupil progress, especially those who find it hard to learn in a whole class or may be vulnerable.
- Recently introduced systems to track and monitor progress provide accurate information about how well pupils are doing. Staff are still becoming familiar with the system and using the information to match work to pupils' different abilities or target extra help where needed.
- Pupils say their work is marked and they can respond to teachers' comments during 'Fix It' time. The school marking policy is complex with lots of different symbols. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks showed variations in the way marking is applied, so pupils do not always receive clear guidance about how to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is a calm environment where pupils work and play happily together and become increasingly mature and sensible. They enjoy roles of responsibility and are proud to wear the red caps that identify them as Ambassadors in the playground.
- Having a say in school matters by serving on the school or eco councils helps pupils to acquire British values of democracy, fair play and caring for the environment.
- Pupils know that they are responsible for their actions and are well aware of the difference between right and wrong. Rewards such as 'Dojos' are valued, and pupils do not want to lose any of the weekly Golden Time!
- Pupils understand that there are many different religions and cultures and that everyone deserves equal respect. They have links with a child in Africa, who they raise money for to support in school.
- Pupils told inspectors that they are safe in school because they feel secure and well cared for. They know that there are different forms of bullying, such as repeated name-calling or cyberbullying. They say bullying is not a problem in school and they are confident staff would help and quickly sort it out if any did happen. The majority of parents agree that any bullying is dealt with well.
- Pupils who may be vulnerable, and their families, receive extra support from staff and external agencies, so they can participate fully and progress as well as their classmates.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe, secure setting for those who attend, and support working parents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Observations during the current inspection and school records show that this has remained the case since the previous inspection. Pupils said behaviour is 'mostly good' and parents agree. There is no record of any discrimination or racism, and exclusion is only used very rarely.
- Good learning behaviour and attitudes in class result in good progress, and most pupils present their work with care and pride. Around the building, pupils show consideration for each other and happily hold doors open, politely saying 'You're welcome' when thanked. Rules and behaviour management strategies are known and understood by all pupils, who say these are fair.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is average. Absences are followed up on the first day, and attendance has a high profile, with rewards and class certificates to ensure all pupils attend regularly and on time.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Current school assessment information, records and inspection evidence confirm that attainment has risen and progress has accelerated since the time of the previous inspection, and all groups of pupils are now progressing well from their different starting points.
- Following the previous inspection, the impact of leaders' drive to give pupils a very firm foundation of teaching and learning was quickly seen in Key Stage 1. In 2015, attainment at the end of Year 2 was just above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and the proportion of pupils who reached the higher level, Level 3, was significantly higher than the national average in all subjects. Assessment records, pupils' books and inspection evidence show that pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to reach their targets in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2015 matched national averages in reading and writing, but was significantly lower in mathematics. In this cohort, the proportion with special educational needs was much higher than usual and pupils had not benefited from the improved provision as the younger ones did. However, the proportion of pupils who attained the very highest level, Level 6, in mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar was above the national average and matched it in reading.
- Pupils' workbooks, observations and school records show that progress across Key Stage 2 is now accelerating securely, due to better teaching, support and intervention, so the remaining legacy of slower progress for older pupils is swiftly being eradicated.
- Reading is taught consistently well due to the skilled specialist who leads this aspect of provision. Daily practice of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) means that pupils quickly learn how to tackle new words. In 2014 and 2015, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national figure, an improvement on previous years. By Year 2, nearly all pupils met the standard. Small-group reading sessions for older pupils extend their skills, so they read fluently with good expression and obvious enjoyment, acquiring the skills they need for future learning. They demonstrate good comprehension of the text, talk enthusiastically about favourite books and authors, and recommend books to each other.
- Pupils quickly begin to write confidently, neatly and at length, and this supports their work in all subjects, such as history or science work, giving it more meaning and purpose, for example writing about the Second World War or reporting experiments.
- Pupils acquire basic number facts, including times tables, but do not always have enough opportunities to use and develop mathematical knowledge in meaningful problem-solving situations. Consequently, attainment in mathematics lags behind reading and writing. Leaders responded by appointing a specialist mathematics teacher to support and guide staff. Clear targets and action plans for improvement are in place but it is too soon to see the impact. In response to analysis showing that girls often lack confidence in mathematics, the 'Pink Ladies' maths group was set up to provide extra help and support. This is proving successful in raising their attainment.
- Additional challenges are provided for pupils who find learning easier, to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding, such as the classic literature book club.
- Pupil premium funds are used well to ensure disadvantaged pupils receive extra support so they progress from their particular starting points at a similar rate to their classmates. The gap between attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1 and other pupils nationally has narrowed over time and continues to do so. At Key Stage 2, the gap widened in 2015 because a higher

than usual proportion also had special educational needs. Analysis of data shows that disadvantaged pupils with no special needs outperformed other pupils nationally and their classmates in all subjects.

- Well-led provision and skilful support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability and learning tasks closely matched to their individual needs ensure they progress as well as their classmates.
- When they leave the school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with skills typical for their age, especially in personal and physical development, but a little weaker in reading, writing and mathematics. Most children have good oral skills which enable them to participate very confidently in discussions and activities.
- All groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress. The proportion reaching a good level of development at the end of their time in Reception is above the national average and children are ready for further learning in Year 1.
- Children are well cared for, so they feel safe and secure and quickly gain confidence. They behave well and are always ready to tackle a task, happily sharing equipment and taking turns so there is no interruption to their learning.
- Good-quality teaching stimulates children's interest and enthusiasm, for example motivating boys' interests with a topic on superheroes. Children join in eagerly, develop independent learning skills and select resources freely. They love learning in the well-resourced areas outside where they can choose to run about, dig in the garden and mud kitchen, or engage in quieter activities like reading, writing, counting or painting.
- Staff have high expectations for what the children can achieve, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, and plan activities that stretch them. Consequently, they all make rapid progress in their academic and social development.
- Daily practice of letters and the sounds they make gets children ready for reading and writing. Most soon learn and begin to blend letter sounds into words. This was seen when they received a letter from Olaf the snowman, asking them to find some lost bears. They discussed how to rescue the bears from the ice, worked together to set them free, then wrote back to Olaf telling him the bears were safe.
- Staff carefully assess and record what children can do and where they need more practice. Disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs are monitored closely and supported effectively so they can progress as well as their classmates.
- Good links between parents and school make children even more secure. Parents receive information about how their children are doing, often by email from the recording system used in Reception, and can contribute 'Wow moments' to their child's Learning Journey booklet.
- Good, knowledgeable leadership is focused on improving the provision for every child, ensuring the characteristics of effective learning are incorporated into each activity.

School details

Unique reference number	104887
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10002203

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Clarke
Headteacher	Julian Ward
Telephone number	01704 224720
Website	www.larkfieldprimary.co.uk
Email address	admin.larkfield@schools.sefton.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2013

Information about this school

- Larkfield is larger than most primary schools.
- Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2015. These are minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Staffing appointments since the previous inspection include two specialist teachers who joined the middle leadership team.
- The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs each day.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons in all classes, including two observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, and visited small-group and intervention sessions.
- Inspectors talked with some parents and held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching, current achievement data and systems used to check pupils' progress were examined.
- Inspectors scrutinised workbooks from several year groups, listened to readers from Years 1, 2 and 6 and observed pupils outside and at lunchtime.
- The procedures for safeguarding pupils were inspected.
- Inspectors considered letters from two parents, the 52 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and those on Textview, the school's own survey of parent views and the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kathleen McArthur, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Burbage	Ofsted Inspector

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