

Liberty Primary School

Western Road, Mitcham, London CR4 3EB

Inspection dates	27–28 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not secured consistently good teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders do not manage the quality of teaching rigorously enough. They do not always ensure that, in a small proportion of the teaching, teachers follow their advice in order to secure good improvement.
- Plans for the future are not sharp enough in identifying specific actions and timescales to bring about improvements.
- Leadership and teaching are not good in the resource unit, Lilac class.
- Teaching overall varies in quality and is not consistently good.
- Teaching does not provide pupils with enough well-directed challenge to encourage more rapid progress.
- Teaching does not sufficiently promote in pupils a love of reading and good enough reading skills. Leaders have not had enough time to improve strongly a legacy of weak reading in the school.
- Teaching does not always clear up pupils' misconceptions quickly enough.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in their learning. Rates of progress vary from year group to year group, and from class to class within the same year group.
- Pupils' attainment also varies from year to year and from class to class.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has rapidly created a 'can do' ethos in the school. The improvements she has introduced in two terms are making a big difference. The headteacher has introduced many reforms. Ways of checking pupils' progress have improved. The website is attractive to parents and complies with requirements. The headteacher and governors have made wise choices in appointing new middle leaders.
- Leaders know their school and are honest and rigorous in identifying areas that need to be improved.
- The school is well placed to sustain its upward momentum.
- Pupils' outcomes are improving, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Through clearly focused support, disadvantaged pupils do as well as other pupils at the school.
- Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Pupils quickly absorb the school's inspiring system of values. They respect others. They are polite and confident young people.
- Pupils are looked after well. There is no bullying. The school is a safe environment.
- The Nursery and Reception classes give children a good start to their education. The early years provision is well led. Adults choose activities that promote children's language, number and social skills well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is consistently effective in improving pupils' outcomes, particularly in reading, by:
 - pitching the level of challenge more closely to pupils' needs, so that they receive tasks that enable them to make the fastest progress they can
 - establishing a culture of a love of reading throughout the school
 - ensuring that teaching is highly responsive, so that any misconceptions in pupils' minds are quickly cleared up.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, so that it is consistently effective, by:
 - ensuring that all leaders play their part in checking the quality of teaching rigorously and making sure that the advice to teachers is consistently followed up
 - making sure that leaders' plans for the future have a sharp focus on the most important areas for improvement, with clear actions and timescales for achieving improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because leaders at all levels have not secured consistently good teaching or ensured that pupils throughout the school make strong progress.
- Leaders visit lessons often and provide valuable advice on how teaching can improve. However, their advice has not been effective in all cases, and a small proportion of the teaching is not improving quickly enough. As a result, pupils in a small minority of classes make less progress in their learning than they should.
- Plans for future improvements cover the right priorities. However, plans do not always have a sufficiently sharp focus on what precise measures will effect improvements or how quickly they should be put in place.
- Leaders have not tackled vigorously enough the quality of teaching and the progress made by the few pupils who attend Lilac class.
- Leaders are rapidly putting the school on an upward course. The new headteacher quickly identified areas of the school's work that needed urgent improvement. For example, before officially taking up her post, she was faced with a number of staff changes, particularly to the leadership team. With the approval of governors, the headteacher was fully involved in making a number of appointments to ensure the stability of staffing and leadership from the start of her tenure.
- The invigorated spirit in the school is a personal achievement of the headteacher. Staff back her fully. The large number of responses to the online survey of their views are highly positive. For example, almost all staff who were at the school at the time of the previous inspection feel that the school has improved a great deal. A typical comment from one member of staff was, 'The headteacher is a "can do" person and encourages her pupils and staff to have the same attitude'.
- Parents told inspectors that leaders' engagement with them had sharply improved since the members of the current leadership team took up their posts. A typical comment from one parent was, 'The school now has strong, available and approachable leaders, and the parent community is more at ease'. Inspectors took account of the school's own parent survey, taken only days before parents were invited to complete the Ofsted online survey. The responses from 212 families to the school's survey were overwhelmingly positive, with 98% agreeing that they were happy with their children's education at the school. These responses were reflected in the largely positive comments to inspectors during the inspection.
- Leaders have an honest and realistic understanding of their school. They are justly proud of the improvements they have already made, and are ambitious to improve the school further. They know the areas that the school needs to improve. Because of such rigorous self-evaluation, the school is on a steep upward course.
- Leaders at all levels have quickly improved ways of checking pupils' progress. They have introduced new and accurate ways of collecting figures on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Leaders have improved the school's engagement with parents. For example, the new website is inviting and packed with information to help parents understand the school's work.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a strong focus on reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement is rising in mathematics. The new topic-based curriculum is popular with pupils and is improving their writing skills. Leaders have introduced improved ways of teaching young children their sounds and letters. Leaders have introduced guided reading lessons for all pupils. Such measures are beginning to have an effect on raising pupils' reading skills, though there remains some way to go to tackle the legacy of underachievement in reading.
- The curriculum is enriched by a busy programme of trips and visits. Pupils spoke enthusiastically of opportunities to visit museums and different places of worship.
- The headteacher has effectively established a set of Liberty values that are known and understood by all. For example, a Year 1 pupil volunteered to visitors that a fellow pupil who would not share a ball had 'bad Liberty values'. The school fosters qualities such as empathy, belief in oneself and courage, and these promote British values of tolerance, decency and democracy.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. It does this through the curriculum, which provides many opportunities for pupils to think deeply and reflect on the world around them and how to get on with others. The school also provides good opportunities for the whole school to come together in assemblies. These occasions enable pupils to reflect on issues such as which individuals inspire them. In such ways, the school promotes pupils' respect for others.

- Leaders and governors make good use of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, there is little difference in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils throughout the school.
- Leaders and governors use the additional funding for primary sports and physical education (PE) well. For example, the funding offers the chance for more pupils to have swimming lessons than would otherwise be the case. New participants are attracted to the wide variety of sports on offer, and these are aimed at all pupils, not just the most talented. The school ensures that the benefits of the funding will continue after it ends by using sports consultants to train teachers in PE skills.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is improving rapidly. Governors have made recent wise appointments, particularly of the headteacher. Working closely with school leaders, governors now contribute well to school improvement.
 - Governors know the school well. They are proud of how far it has come in a short while, but know that aspects of its work need to improve.
 - In order to support and challenge leaders, governors visit the school often, and report their findings to the school and to other governors.
 - Governors test out the school's policies for themselves. For example, in order to keep pupils safe they walk the site and undertake training in safeguarding. After speaking to pupils, governors suggested installing worry boxes, so that pupils can express their concerns freely while feeling safe.
 - Governors spend public money wisely, ensuring that staff progression along the pay scales is not won without demonstrable benefit to the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school is safe and secure. Doors and gates are securely locked. Those who work with children are rigorously checked. All staff know what procedures to follow if there is a safeguarding issue. Staff and governors are trained in recognising and reporting potential extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is variable in quality. While some teaching is strong, enabling pupils to make rapid progress in their learning, this is not the case across the board. Evidence from school data shows that pupils in some classes achieve less well than in others.
- Where teaching is not good, it does not consistently provide the right level of challenge to enable pupils to learn rapidly. Sometimes tasks set are too difficult for some pupils, and they struggle. Occasionally the most-able pupils are held back because the level of challenge does not lead to rapid learning. This inconsistency affects pupils of all abilities, including the most able, so that they sometimes make slower progress than they could.
- Occasionally pupils misunderstand what is expected of them, and these misconceptions are not always cleared up as quickly as they might be. Pupils then make slower progress in their learning.
- New initiatives to improve reading across the school are beginning to make an impact. There are new reading corners in each classroom to encourage pupils to settle down with a book. One pupil told an inspector who heard her read, 'I practise reading a lot and I'm getting better and better'. However, adults have not yet established a deeply rooted culture where reading is valued as a pleasurable activity.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic in imparting their knowledge to pupils. For example, in one effective 'booster' class for the most-able mathematicians in Year 6, pupils drew squares on graph paper based on the Fibonacci sequence. They were excited to learn how their graphs produced classic spirals, as found in ammonite shells.
- Adults carefully assess pupils' work, both orally and in writing. They provide effective guidance on how pupils can improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own learning and to edit their written work. Such close attention to pupils' learning is resulting in an upward trend in their skills.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support to teachers, taking small groups so that they can work with them in depth and improve pupils' understanding.

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 looked after well and pastoral arrangements are good. The school successfully ensures pupils' safety. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe because, in the words of one, 'Teachers support you'.
- The school ensures that pupils have the skills and awareness to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils told inspectors that they are taught to avoid the potential dangers of using computers and understand how to protect themselves from cyber-bullying.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is no bullying at the school, and a scrutiny of the school's behaviour logs confirms that incidents of unkindness between pupils are few and far between. Parents confirm in surveys of their views that they feel their children are safe and happy at the school.
- Pupils told inspectors that they like the new arrangements for shorter lunchbreaks, as previously any acts of unkindness had happened towards the end of these breaks. They now feel confident to enjoy safely the wealth of equipment in the playground.
- Pupils who attend breakfast club or the after-school care provision are well looked after. The provision is well planned to ensure that pupils of all ages make new friends and have a range of worthwhile activities. The food offered to them is healthy and pupils have the opportunity to help prepare food for themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are confident, articulate young people. They are polite, friendly and ready to talk to visitors. They demonstrate that they have successfully adopted the school's values through their respectful conduct towards others.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. When the teaching is engaging, pupils show good powers of concentration. Occasionally, however, when teaching does not provide well-directed challenge, pupils lose concentration.
- Incidents of unsettled behaviour, including in Lilac class, have fallen as the school's reward systems become embedded and familiar to pupils.
- Classrooms are orderly and attractive, displaying pupils' best work and providing key technical vocabulary to help them learn for themselves.
- Pupils show their enjoyment of school through their regular attendance, which is on a rising trend and is currently average. Levels of persistent absenteeism have dropped and are now average. Attendance during the inspection was good, with most classes full or nearly full.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because there is too much variability in the attainment and progress of pupils throughout the school. In some year groups, and in some classes within year groups, pupils achieve less well than in others. This variability reflects inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders inherited a legacy of weaker attainment and progress in reading. Through determined action on the part of leaders and staff, this is beginning to improve. However, progress in acquiring reading skills is less strong in some classes than in others.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics has been stronger than in reading. Current pupils' attainment and progress in writing and mathematics continue to improve.
- Leaders have successfully ensured that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils in the school. Published data and school figures for all year groups show that differences between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils are only minor.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive support in lessons or in withdrawal groups, and make progress in line with others. Those in Lilac class make less rapid progress in their learning, because tasks sometimes lack sufficient challenge.
- Pupils who need to catch up are helped in class and in small groups. This additional support is carefully evaluated to ensure that pupils benefit from it.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make progress in line with other pupils. Those who arrive at the school with little English are given additional support and quickly catch up.
- Pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their schooling. They leave Year 6 with skills, particularly in writing and mathematics, that are not far below average for the country as a whole.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is delightful. It is graded higher than the school as a whole because children make good progress in acquiring new skills, and because the teaching is accurately pitched at children's needs and abilities.
- The provision is well led. Leaders plan well. They understand the strengths of the provision, and what remains to be done to make it outstanding. Leaders have effected many improvements since the previous inspection. The outdoor play areas are rich in resources and activities to help children learn. Ways of checking children's learning have improved, so that adults provide swift and accurate support for any child at risk of falling behind.
- The additional early years funding for disadvantaged children is used well, so that they make the same progress in their learning as other children, and sometimes better.
- Adults promote children's speaking and listening skills well, encouraging them to think about their learning and to answer questions as fully as they can. For example, a simple activity of using toy jungle animals dipped in paint to create a 'jungle' picture was used effectively to get the children to talk about animals in far-away lands.
- Children in both the Nursery and Reception Years benefit from a wide range of activities designed to promote their skills in all areas of learning, including their social skills and physical development. Language and number skills are taught well. For example, in one Reception class, the children showed how confident they were in using technical words, such as 'hundred square' and 'digit', and were practised in counting forwards and backwards.
- Children's learning is not, however, outstanding. Occasionally, particularly when children choose their own activities, learning is not as rapid as it might be because some activities do not have a sharp enough focus on acquiring language and number skills.
- Children behave considerately in the early years provision. They are looked after well. For example, a new pupil who was homesick was quickly reassured and involved in new activities. Such kind care gives the children confidence, so that they play together harmoniously and take turns without squabbling.
- Parents are welcomed into the early years provision. There are regular 'stay and learn' sessions, where parents find out for themselves what their children are learning. There are many home-school links, such as 'wow clouds', where parents and staff celebrate children's achievements together. A typical comment from the parent of one child in the early years provision was, 'The environment is friendly and inviting, and teachers are always willing to help'.
- When the time comes for children to move into Year 1, transition arrangements are strong. For example, Year 1 pupils make a book about their year, so that Reception children are already familiar with Year 1 before they visit. Such thoughtful arrangements enable children to move confidently to the next stage of their schooling.

School details

Unique reference number	102656
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10011926

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	540
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stella Croissant
Headteacher	Nadine O'Hara
Telephone number	020 8646 5290
Website	www.liberty.merton.sch.uk
Email address	liberty@liberty.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 July 2014

Information about this school

- Liberty Primary is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been considerable changes in staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher took up her post in September 2015. Around one third of class teachers and most subject and middle leaders also took up their posts at the start of the academic year.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium. This funding is used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A large majority of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, with no one group predominating. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs or disability.
- The school accommodates a resource unit, Lilac class, for up to six pupils of varied ages who have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. Currently the unit has four pupils. The unit is scheduled to close in July 2016.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school care provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classes throughout the school and observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects. They visited the breakfast club and after-school care provision. The headteacher and the lead assistant headteacher joined inspectors on most of their classroom visits.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of pupils, listened to them read and looked at samples of their work. An inspector met a group of pupils to hear how they felt about the school. Inspectors took into account 51 responses to the online survey of pupils' views.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, including those who hold responsibility for specific subjects.
- A meeting was held with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- An interview was held with the local authority's school improvement inspector.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents during the inspection. There were 13 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and inspectors took these into account. Inspectors also took into account the school's own recent survey of parents' views.
- Inspectors took account of 41 responses to an online questionnaire for members of staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents. These included the school's own views of how well it is doing, its plans for the future and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence on pupils' attainment and progress. They also examined safeguarding information, and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Rai	Ofsted Inspector
Diane Rochford	Ofsted Inspector

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