

Linden Primary School

Headland Road, Evington, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 6AD

Inspection dates

25–26 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not communicated priorities with sufficient clarity. Therefore, actions for improvement are not sharply focused or consistently implemented across the school.
- Senior and subject leaders are not clear about the impact of the actions they take in an effort to improve pupil outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning.
- School leaders have not monitored and evaluated the quality of pupils' learning often enough or with enough rigour.
- Teaching and learning are not consistently good. Teachers do not use assessment well to identify the next steps in learning for pupils. Pupils are not always clear about what they are learning and how to improve.
- Teachers are not equally skilled in supporting pupils to apply taught skills, particularly using grammar and punctuation to develop writing, and using fluent calculation skills to deepen mathematical understanding.
- Outcomes are not good enough for particular groups of pupils. Lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress or achieve as well as they should.
- Early years practitioners are not challenging children, particularly boys, to extend their thinking and skills through tasks within the classroom and in the outdoors.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance are not yet bringing about sufficient improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have a strong commitment to the school, its pupils and community. Governors, staff and parents share their ambitions for the academic outcomes and personal development of every child.
- Pupils enjoy their learning, because the curriculum interests and engages them. Their learning is enhanced through a wide range of trips and experiences, including outdoor learning.
- The school's values are ever present in the actions of staff and pupils. This leads to pupils' high standards of behaviour, courtesy, and harmonious respect towards each other's individual and cultural differences.
- Safeguarding of pupils is effective. Staff know safeguarding is a priority at all times. Pupils say they feel safe. Parents have a high level of confidence that their children are safe and well looked after.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further to bring about more rapid progress for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers require children to accurately and consistently apply English grammar and punctuation to further develop their writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers offer more frequent opportunities for pupils to apply their reasoning skills in mathematics to deepen their understanding.
- Further accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - ensuring that their personal targets and learning from additional support are consistently built upon within the classroom
 - closely assessing the progress of the pupils against the targets set.
- Improve the progress and outcomes for children in the early years, particularly for boys, by:
 - ensuring that the early years leader and senior leaders more frequently check the impact of actions on progress
 - ensuring that practitioners are using regular and precise assessments to plan activities that challenge and develop children's language and skills, including in the outdoors.
- Improve leadership and management across the school by:
 - ensuring further refinement and sharpening of actions for improvement so that leaders can successfully judge if an action taken has been successful or not
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels check more frequently that actions are having a positive impact on outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that further action is taken to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not communicated key priorities with sufficient clarity. They have a detailed personal understanding of the school, but have not been effective in refining this into sharp and precise actions for improvement that are understood across the school. This means that, although appropriate areas for improvement and actions have been identified and acted upon, especially in relation to writing and mathematics, these have not been effective in bringing about consistent rapid improvement.
- Senior and other leaders are not clear about the impact of the actions they are taking in an effort to improve outcomes and the consistency of teaching and learning across year groups. Although leaders have a wide range of internal information and data about pupils' and their progress, this is not being effectively analysed and summarised to inform next steps with sufficient clarity and timeliness to bring about consistent rapid improvement.
- School leaders have not monitored and evaluated the quality of pupils' learning often enough or with enough rigour. The systems and schedules for reviewing pupils' work and the effectiveness of teaching have only recently been revised to respond to increased national expectations and have not had time to have an impact sufficiently.
- Subject and phase leaders are aware of their roles and responsibilities but their knowledge and understanding of their particular area of responsibility varies. Where it is strongest, subject leaders use observations and checking of pupils' work and teachers' planning to identify and provide appropriate staff training. For example, effective training opportunities have been provided to improve teachers' knowledge of English grammar and punctuation and to improve teachers' understanding of mastery in mathematics.
- Teaching and learning across the school is not consistently good. Where stronger practice is identified, leaders are not consistently ensuring that this is shared, or clear enough in explaining what is or is not effective. Performance management targets lack clarity to be able to hold teachers to account for improvement of outcomes, particularly for specific groups.
- Leaders are using additional pupil premium funding and funding for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities on appropriate areas. However, carefully planned interventions and targets are not being built upon consistently by teachers within the classroom. This is slowing improvements in outcomes for these groups of pupils.
- School leaders have welcomed the recent effective support from the local authority to help them to improve the clarity, consistency and rigour of improvement planning and actions. They have provided effective support and training, particularly in relation to improving the skills of middle leaders. However, there has not been sufficient time for this to bring about the required improvements.
- The headteacher and his team show a strong sense of care and responsibility towards the pupils and community. The school's values and behaviour code have been developed and embedded over time and all pupils respond well to these. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated in the school. Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes reflect this positive aspect of leadership.

- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Senior leaders have a clear vision of what they want pupils to experience and the explicit development of attitudes to learning and life. Learning is planned through cross-curricular topics, which pupils enjoy. Enrichment activities have also been developed well to help pupils broaden their experiences, including outdoor learning. Pupils benefit from lessons that help them understand and respect people's differences. They learn about different faiths and cultures, and this prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use the additional funding from the physical education and sports grant to very good effect. They have ensured that teachers have worked alongside expert coaches and received effective training to improve their teaching and coaching skills. Pupils have had many opportunities to take part in a range of sports, including boxing and activities to support less-confident children.
- Leaders have been effective in improving communication with parents since the last inspection, with a wide range of useful information provided through newsletters and the website, as well as parents commenting positively on the approachability of staff. The inclusion leader has been particularly effective in building relationships and securing support for vulnerable families.

Governance of the school

- Governance has strengthened considerably since the last inspection, with their commitment to the school being very clear. Members share the ambition of school leaders to provide high-quality education for all pupils.
- Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, particularly the need to improve the quality of teaching of writing and mathematics. Minutes from more-recent governors' meetings and monitoring visit reports illustrate that they are beginning to ask more searching and challenging questions. However, the lack of clarity and precision in plans for improvement are limiting the impact of their monitoring.
- The governing body is well organised and has successfully recruited members with a range of skills and expertise, to add to the leadership capacity of the school. They scrutinise the wide range of information they receive and are using the effective guidance of the local authority well to further develop their effectiveness to hold leaders to account.
- Governors are aware of performance data and challenge leaders about the achievement of pupils. Governors know their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and the use of the pupil premium and sports grants. However, their knowledge of the impact of such funding is not as strong, nor as timely, as it should be in order for them to hold leaders fully to account.
- Governors have a clear understanding and undertake their duties well in ensuring that safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are clear and rigorous systems and procedures in place, which are understood by all staff. Leaders keep precise records to ensure that effective and timely work with external agencies. Staff and governors receive relevant training and updates, including on radicalisation and extremism. The school has also extended this training to parents.

- The culture of safeguarding in the school is evident in children feeling safe and parents' confidence in this. Learning about how to keep safe is woven into pupils' learning across the school curriculum, including knowing how to keep themselves safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good. Although appropriate actions are in place to improve pupil progress towards them achieving age-appropriate expectations, these are relatively recent and are not yet impacting sufficiently to secure the consistent and rapid progress of pupils.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to inform the next steps in learning for pupils. The current school tracking system is not consistently understood by teachers. This is evident in the variability of how progress is interpreted in progress meetings and in pupils' books, where their progress from task to task is inconsistent. Teachers are not consistently clear enough about the purpose of learning tasks for the pupils to understand what they are learning and how they can improve. An example of this was that pupils were very enthusiastic to write about their interesting reading. Then they were simply asked to write about a famous historical figure. This meant that pupils did not know it was meant to be a recount or know the key features that were required.
- The tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress has lacked focus. Opportunities for leaders to challenge teachers about pupil performance have been missed. Additionally, this monitoring has not focused enough on the outcomes of specific groups of pupils such as disadvantaged or the most able. Leaders have begun to address this, and staff are beginning to understand the importance of this information in ensuring that no pupil falls behind. The impact of this has still to be seen.
- In both English and mathematics, there is insufficient evidence of pupils applying the skills and knowledge they have learned. Although teachers generally use questioning well and pupils are keen to talk about their learning and encouraged to think, pupils are not being consistently expected to develop this in their written work and to accurately use their taught skills to fully develop their work or deepen their understanding.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and pupils are keen to learn. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed and want to support pupils well. The behaviour policy is consistently and effectively applied.
- There are examples of stronger teaching. Leaders have not effectively shared and communicated with sufficient precision what is having an impact, and this has been a barrier to more rapid and consistent improvements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All staff follow the strong lead of the headteacher in treating all pupils with dignity and respect and are very effective role models for pupils.

- Leaders have ensured that mutual respect permeates all aspects of school life and that pupils particularly understand and respect other cultures. Pupils work well together, listening respectfully to teachers and each other. Pupils play and work harmoniously together across the school day. Pupils who use the school breakfast club enjoy their time with their peers and are well prepared for the start of the school day.
- Pupils take pride in their work. They are keen to learn and present their work well. Pupils frequently refer to 'having a growth mindset' to improve their thinking and learning. They become more confident to apply and extend their skills to develop their work when they are clear about the purpose of the task and what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils willingly take responsibility and show maturity when doing so. Older pupils are responsible and well organised in running a healthy tuck shop. Pupils help new joiners settle in through buddying.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and they feel very safe. They know whom to speak to in school if they have any worries. They understand the different forms of bullying and are particularly well informed about cyber bullying and how to keep themselves safe online. School records show that bullying is rare and staff vigilance is high when monitoring this aspect of behaviour.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke to inspectors and responses to recent school parent questionnaires were very positive about the support that their children receive and are rightly confident that they are happy and safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because leaders have not been effective in reducing overall absence and persistent absence. This is despite concerted efforts to communicate the importance of high attendance with the community and pupils through rewarding and celebrating those classes with the highest attendance, sharing attendance figures and targets in newsletters and taking action on persistent absence.
- Pupils show courtesy and consideration towards each other and adults, including visitors in the school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. Pupils behave well in class and around the school and interruptions to learning are rare. Pupils enjoy receiving rewards, but understand the school sanctions. They take responsibility for their actions and choices, due to a strong ethos of respect and active citizenship.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Overall there are inconsistencies in the progress made by different groups of pupils and in different subject areas. Progress for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages in reading, writing and maths at key stage 2.
- The progress and attainment of all key stage 2 pupils was significantly below national averages in writing in 2016. This was despite attainment in line with national in English grammar and punctuation and above the national average for spelling.

- Although the progress made in key stage 2 by middle and higher prior-attaining pupils is in line with national averages, the number of pupils attaining higher expectations is low compared to pupils nationally for reading and maths and there were no pupils attaining greater depth in writing. Attainment in science was significantly below national averages at the end of key stage 2.
- Key stage 1 progress is a relative strength. Progress during key stage 1 is accelerated. However, the low early years prior attainment on which this was based was very low and did not accurately reflect pupils' actual capabilities. In 2016, attainment in key stage 1 maths was below national average because a significant number of girls did not achieve the standard expected. Leaders have provided appropriate training which is ensuring that this is not the case for current pupils.
- Pupils make good and better progress in their phonics, especially when considering that pupils historically left early years with very poor phonic skills and had a lot of ground to catch up. Attainment is in line with national averages.
- Leaders are now taking appropriate action to improve outcomes, although current assessment data is not succinctly summarised and showing clear acceleration of progress across all phases and groups. It is showing that actions for improvement are improving writing in Year 6 and the number of pupils at age expectations in mathematics across the school. It is also showing that the strengths in key stage 1 are being maintained. Overall, the work in pupils' books and observations in lessons are consistent with this.
- However, current information shows that weaknesses remain in some groups, particularly for disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because teachers are not consistently making adaptations within the classroom to ensure that targets and interventions are being routinely built upon.
- Pupils are achieving well in reading and actions are improving achievement more consistently in mathematics. Although leaders' actions are now ensuring that pupils are securing skills that prepare them suitably for the next stage of their education, the most able pupils are not yet being sufficiently challenged to achieve greater depth, particularly in writing, and to deepen their mathematical understanding and reasoning, to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils who are new to English and newcomers to the school are well supported to progress in their language development. This is an ongoing strength across the school.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that provision in the early years is consistently good. Assessments of children are not used well enough to ensure that the learning tasks provided in the outdoor and indoor environments meet their needs. As a result, children do not make the progress that they could. This means that children do not leave the early years well enough prepared for key stage 1.
- Improvements in 2016 raised overall attainment in the early years closer to national averages. However, this was because girls did significantly better. Boys' attainment did not improve and continued to be very low compared to national averages. This means

that the in-school difference between boys and girls in the early years significantly worsened in 2016.

- Adults know individual children well and where they have a precise understanding of the progress they require children to make they intervene in tasks and move the learning on. For example, a teacher encouraged children to add an adjective to their sentence. However, this is not consistent across the early years classes.
- A wide range of interesting and engaging activities are provided. However, adults miss opportunities to extend children's learning. For example, boys were enjoying playing in the sand for an extended period of time, but adults did not build upon this to develop the planned learning focus of ordering.
- In particular, the outdoor area is poorly resourced and not used frequently and effectively to develop and extend children's thinking, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Activities led by adults are more effective and help children to make better progress. For example, inspectors observed successful phonics sessions led by teachers. Pupils joined in enthusiastically and teachers effectively showed children how to say and write sounds and how to segment words.
- Relationships are a strength in the early years classes. Children develop good attitudes to learning and work and play cooperatively with each other. Staff settle children quickly into the routines and ensure that they learn to get along well with others.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and children are happy and confident. Parents appreciate the approachability of staff and are rightly confident that their children are safe and well cared for.

School details

Unique reference number	120068
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10001031

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	471
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Anthony Lees-Smith
Headteacher	Zaheer Mohamed
Telephone number	01162 738435
Website	www.linden.leicester.sch.uk
Email address	office@linden.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Linden Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school. Most children attending the school come from the immediate area. There is a higher proportion of pupils entering the school later on in their primary education than usual.
- The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and two thirds speak English as an additional language, with the largest group being pupils from Asian backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

- In 2015 and 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 26 lessons, including six joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors observed the teaching of early reading skills and pupils were heard reading. The inspectors talked to pupils about their school and looked at pupils' books while visiting lessons. The inspection team scrutinised a large sample of pupils' work through joint scrutiny with the headteacher and subject leaders, as well as in classrooms during observations, to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time.
- Inspectors held discussions with the school's senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents informally at the start of both school days and considered 51 responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire, Parent View, a range of comments made through the free text service and school parent questionnaires. There were no returns from the staff or pupil surveys.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, the most recent information on pupils' achievement and progress, and information relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and punctuality.
- Inspectors considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.

Inspection team

Mandy Wilding, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Liz White	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Moulds	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Wheatley	Ofsted Inspector
Jeannie Haigh	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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