

Linaker Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 104864 |
| Local Authority | Sefton |
| Inspection number | 308689 |
| Inspection dates | 6–7 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Gordon Alston |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 456 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Cllr M Fearn |
| Headteacher | Mr C Coleman |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 March 2004 |
| School address | Sefton Street Southport Merseyside PR8 5DB |
| Telephone number | 01704 532343 |
| Fax number | 01704 541949 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average sized school is in the centre of Southport and admits pupils from a wide surrounding area, part of which experiences significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that found in most schools. There are a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages. A Learning Resource Base (LRB) for pupils with mild learning difficulties is attached to the school. These pupils are integrated into mainstream classes for some lessons. There is also a Children's Centre providing for children from birth to three which was not inspected. Linaker Primary has gained the International School, Healthy School and Eco School Awards and has achieved Investors In People recognition.

Key for inspection grades

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which provides good value for money and which serves its pupils and the local community well. Parents strongly support this judgement with comments such as, 'Linaker is a real community school, with a committed, hardworking staff, providing a caring, interesting environment for children to learn in.' Pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour is good and they get on very well with each other and their teachers. They are keen to learn because good teaching provides them with interesting tasks and activities to challenge them. Pupils have the confidence to ask and answer questions because teachers are skilled both in managing pupils' behaviour and in encouraging them to participate fully in lessons. They eagerly find out things for themselves and work well in groups developing important independent learning skills.

Children enter the school with skills that are well below expectations and leave with broadly average standards. This represents good achievement. Effective systems to improve achievement, introduced over the last two years, have raised standards. Rigorous assessment and closer targeting of individuals and groups needing extra help have resulted in more pupils reaching expected standards in national tests and the school exceeding targets set by the local authority in 2007. Standards in writing lag behind other aspects and the school rightly identifies tackling this as the next step in improving pupils' achievement.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and are improving as a result of rigorous monitoring by senior staff. Teachers create a very warm learning environment because of a genuine concern for pupils to do well. However, the clarity of pupils' targets and teachers' comments after marking their work vary, and, as a result, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. The curriculum is good. It is broad and the development of pupils' knowledge and skills is carefully planned for. The curriculum is greatly enriched through a wide range of visits, visitors and many extra-curricular activities. These activities motivate pupils well and enhance their learning. The provision the school makes to integrate pupils from the LRB and those with specific physical or learning disabilities is very good and a joy to see. Consequently, these pupils achieve as well as their peers.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The drive shown by the conscientious headteacher who is well supported by senior leaders is evident in the improving achievement and personal development of pupils. Strong teamwork is ensuring a very positive impact on all aspects of the work of the school. The development of rigorous monitoring has been instrumental in helping the school evaluate its performance accurately and central in moving the school forward. Governors are highly supportive and rigorously hold the school to account. As a result, the school is moving from strength to strength and has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Strong leadership by the Foundation Stage leader has ensured children's achievement is good, both personally and academically. On entry to school, children's skills and knowledge are well below those typical for their age, especially in language, communication and personal skills. Although many do not reach expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of Reception, children's progress is good. This is because their learning is thoughtfully organised and carefully tailored to develop their basic skills. Good teaching in a warm, caring, supportive climate for

learning provides a hive of activities for children. This is particularly strong for Nursery children; however, facilities for outdoor play and learning are not yet sufficiently developed.

A comment, echoed by a number of parents, reflects how happy the children are in the Foundation Stage, when they said, 'the children can't wait to get to school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and standards in writing.
- Ensure pupils' targets are clear and that teachers give them sufficient advice on how to improve when marking their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In Key Stage 1, pupils build well on their earlier attainment and achieve well. Standards in tests are below average in reading and mathematics but well below in writing. Recently, progress during Key Stage 2 has improved and is now good. In 2007, Year 6 test results in English and in mathematics were broadly average. However, a number of pupils who achieve the expected and higher levels in reading do not do so in writing. New comprehensive tracking of pupils' progress enables strengths and weaknesses in their achievement to be identified early. Appropriate intervention strategies are effective in raising achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from the LRB also make good progress, due to effective support from staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils know right from wrong. They have good attitudes to their school and towards their work. This is evident, for instance, in the popularity of, and high participation in, extra-curricular activities and in the pupils' hard work in lessons. They have a keen awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy and fit lifestyle because of the successful emphasis given to promoting these aspects, as recognised in the Healthy School and Eco School Awards. Pupils contribute well to the school community and the locality. The schools council and Eco team are particularly active in improving the learning experiences for pupils, for example, contributing positively to developing the school's environment. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, having achieved sound basic skills and strong qualities of leadership, independence and teamwork. Attendance has improved recently and is in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers' caring relationships with pupils generate very positive attitudes to learning. Their strong subject knowledge, conscientious planning and sensitive questioning ensure that pupils clearly understand tasks and why they are doing them. Very good class management and stimulating environments contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Teachers and classroom assistants work well together to support pupils in their learning. In the best lessons, work is well matched to the needs of all pupils and

pupils work hard to reach their targets. However, pupils' targets are not always written in ways which they can understand. The usefulness of teachers' written comments when they mark pupils' work is also variable. Consequently, pupils do not always get enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for pupils of all ages promotes their academic and personal development well, and is matched closely to their different abilities. The needs of pupils from the LRB or those who have disabilities or learning difficulties are met effectively through a well planned programme of specific actions. All pupils, particularly able ones, have good opportunities to extend their skills when they are grouped by prior attainment for some lessons and work is planned to provide the correct level of challenge for them. Pupils make good progress in enhancing their basic information and communication technology skills across all subjects. Opportunities for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills across all subjects are developing, but are not advanced. The curriculum is well designed to ensure that pupils learn how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. A good range of visitors to school and visits to places of interest help to make the curriculum interesting and enjoyable. The curriculum is enhanced by the inclusion of Spanish for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 and French in Year 6. The range of activities outside normal school hours is good and includes a good range of physical and sporting activities, including specialist coaching, that promote fitness and health.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The systems to promote the personal development of pupils are good and are strengths of the school. A typical comment from parents, 'The school cares about every child', is a fine summary of the school's approach. For example, vulnerable pupils are strongly supported through several initiatives, and specific teaching programmes nurture their emotional development. The tracking of pupils' personal and academic progress is good. Pupils with learning or emotional difficulties are identified quickly and receive good individual support from the earliest stage. Good links with external agencies enable the school to provide welcome advice and guidance for pupils and their parents in relation to personal development and well-being. However, pupils do not always have a clear understanding of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. All aspects of child protection, safe recruitment of staff, risk assessment and health and safety meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership of the headteacher has successfully steered the school through a period of substantial growth and is now firmly focused on ensuring good teaching, achievement and quality of care. He is very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and key stage leaders, who carry out their responsibilities very enthusiastically; they all share the headteacher's determination to raise standards further. This strong senior leadership is helping to move the school towards meeting its aims. Monitoring and self-evaluation are well organised, so that the school's view of its performance is very accurate. However, the school now recognises the need to use the resulting data in a more focused way to ensure a consistency of provision across

the school. Performance management of staff is used well and is closely linked to priorities in the improvement plan in order to support the raising of standards. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and involve themselves in school life, enabling them to make an important contribution to moving the school forward. The strong team approach ensures that the school is continually striving to improve. The school works very closely with parents, who are very positive about what the school provides.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Linaker Primary School, Southport, PR8 5DB

After spending two days inspecting your school, I want to thank you all so much for making the experience a very enjoyable one. Your good behaviour and warm relationships are a credit to you all and helped us to judge just how well you and your school are doing.

Our judgement is that Linaker Primary is a good school. Several pupils expressed their views of the school to us saying, 'I enjoy every day - being with friends, and the teachers listen to you and try to help you'. They were right; your school is a very caring place. You have a committed headteacher and senior staff who lead your school successfully and have your well-being at the centre of all they do. All the staff make lessons interesting and they also make you work hard. As a result, you are learning lots and achieving well. They try to make school enjoyable and exciting with the many visits you go on and lots of visitors to school. We were pleased to see how hard you work, but equally important is how well you all get on. We saw lots of pupils who have responsibilities carry them out very well. We were also very pleased to see all the clubs you have. You take regular exercise, and sport is important to you.

To help the school become even better we have asked it to do two things. One is to improve your writing skills. We have also asked the school to make sure that you understand the targets that you are set and that you are given clear guidance about how to improve when teachers mark your work. We know you like to have targets and to try and achieve them. You may have some ideas of your own, which you might want to let your teachers know about, on how best targets can be shared and used with you and your parents.

Finally, we would like to thank you again and we wish you and your teachers all the best for the future.