



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Linton Primary School

Derbyshire Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 20 and 21 September 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Linton Primary School
Type of school:	Infant and Junior
Status:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mrs S Cottle
Address of school:	Main Street Linton Swadlincote Derbyshire DE12 6QA
Telephone:	01283 760382
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr D Soanes
Local education authority area:	Derbyshire
Unique reference number:	112978
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr P Brooker HMI
Dates of inspection:	20 and 21 September 2004

Introduction

1. Linton Primary School is situated in the village of Linton near Swadlincote in South Derbyshire. The school serves the local village and also draws some pupils from neighbouring villages. It is an average-sized infant and junior school with 230 pupils aged from four to 11. A further 41 pupils attend the nursery from the age of three. All pupils are of white UK heritage. At 12 per cent, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Forty pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, a proportion that is below the national average. Six pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need, slightly above average.

2. The school was inspected in February 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of February 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In September 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of February 2003.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- the ability profile of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average. The pupils make a good start in the nursery, but their progress is uneven as they move through the school. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but too many pupils make insufficient progress in Years 3 and 4;
- taken over time, standards of attainment are broadly average. Most pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve the Early Learning Goals for five-year-olds, although standards in literacy are lower than expected;
- in national tests for seven-year-olds in 2003, the proportion of pupils who achieved at least the expected Level 2 in English and mathematics was above the national average. However, results in 2004 declined compared with the previous year and were below national average figures;
- in the end-of-Key Stage 2 national tests in 2003, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science was above the national average. In 2004, however, standards of attainment in English and science declined compared with the previous year. Results in mathematics improved, but the school failed to meet its targets in English and science;
- the pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress;

- the pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons overall. The quality of learning was satisfactory in almost all lessons and good in five. However, there remains too wide a variation between the most challenging lessons and those where the pace of learning is pedestrian;
- the quality of teaching is sound overall with some good features. Teaching is good in the nursery, but elsewhere not enough teaching is consistently good. It was at least satisfactory in almost all lessons observed, including one in three that were good or very good;
- suitable systems have been developed to assess and monitor the pupils' progress. Assessment is sound overall, but assessment data are not used effectively to inform teaching, and are not used critically to revise curriculum planning or to rigorously monitor the pupils' progress;
- the pupils behave well and in general have positive attitudes to learning. Around the school, during break periods and in the lunch hall they were friendly and polite, and interacted sensibly. There are good relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves. Pupils of all ages take an interest in their work and sustain their concentration well;
- the pupils' attendance is satisfactory and their punctuality is good;
- the school has a positive ethos and there is good support and guidance for the pupils. There is good provision for their moral and social development, although opportunities to promote their spiritual development are often missed. The school does not exploit sufficient opportunities to broaden the pupils' awareness and understanding of other cultures;
- the school is well led and managed by the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. The headteacher provides decisive and clear leadership for the school and has quickly galvanised the staff in order to accelerate the school's improvement;
- the responsibilities of subject leaders have developed appropriately. However, the allocation of management roles and responsibilities is inequitable and does not serve the school's present or future needs;
- the governing body provides good support for the school while effectively holding it to account. Governors are well informed about the school's developing strengths and remaining weaknesses;
- after a slow start, the local education authority (LEA) has provided very good support and guidance for the school through regular monitoring, advice and appropriate training. Intensive support has been well prioritised on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and by developing the school's leadership and management capability.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:
- improve the pupils' rates of progress and their standards of attainment;
 - further strengthen the quality of teaching;
 - ensure that the allocation of leadership and management responsibilities meets the school's needs;
 - make better use of assessment data to inform teaching and to evaluate rigorously the pupils' progress.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Overall, the level of skills, knowledge and understanding shown by the pupils when they enter the school is broadly average. Their progress is good in the nursery, but is uneven as they move through the school. Most pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve the Early Learning Goals for five-year-olds, although standards in literacy are lower than expected.

8. In national tests for seven-year-olds in 2003, the proportion of pupils who achieved at least the expected Level 2 in mathematics was above the national average and in writing was well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was above the national average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. In the most recent end-of-Key Stage 1 tests, in 2004, standards of attainment declined. Taken over time, there has been a steady improvement in standards in Key Stage 1, although in recent years the pupils' average points scores in reading and writing have generally been just below the national average. Standards in reading and writing remain too low, notably amongst boys. In the most recent tests, just over half of the boys achieved at least Level 2B in reading and only one in three did so in writing.

9. Standards in the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests have been consistently at or above those seen nationally in recent years. In 2003, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science was above the national average. However, unvalidated results in the most recent tests in 2004 show that compared to last year, the school failed to meet its targets in English and science, however, the results in mathematics improved. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in mathematics and science is likely to be in line with national figures, but below average in English. In general, when compared with pupils in schools with similar results at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress through Key Stage 2, as indicated by their test results.

10. The pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons overall. Most pupils attain levels commensurate with their age, however, in several classes a small number does not achieve the levels of which they are capable. Furthermore, there remains too wide a variation between the most challenging lessons and those where the pace of learning is pedestrian. The quality of learning was at least satisfactory in 18 of the 19 lessons and good in five. The

pupils made insufficient progress in one lesson. Standards in English and mathematics are assessed at the end of each year and the pupils' progress is analysed. This analysis indicates that the majority made at least satisfactory progress over the last year. However, the tracking has highlighted wide variations in achievement between classes. In general, Year 6 pupils achieve well, but their accelerated progress is insufficient to make up for slow rates of progress at the start of Key Stage 2. The school's analysis highlights significant underachievement in Year 3 and Year 4, notably in writing. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but too many pupils make insufficient progress in Years 3 and 4. The pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

11. The continued focus on support for literacy has led to more consistent teaching and steadily improving standards. The teaching of phonics is suitably rooted in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and this has given pupils greater confidence in developing skills in reading and writing. However, too many younger pupils have poor handwriting and a weak knowledge and understanding of letter sounds and blends. Consequently they struggle to spell accurately and to read new words. In Key Stage 1, standards of reading and writing vary widely but are broadly in line with age-related expectations. In Key Stage 2, many pupils write accurately and fluently, but there are relatively few opportunities for extended writing or writing for different purposes in other areas of the curriculum. In general, the pupils listen attentively and speak clearly, although rarely at length. The Year 4 pupils structured their writing effectively and had some awareness of how to use punctuation for effect. The older pupils in Years 5 and 6 write for a suitable range of audiences and purposes and many improve their writing through the use of complex sentences. The content and accuracy of the pupils' written work show improvement over time. Pupils take care with their handwriting, but spelling is often weak. The school has developed a more structured and systematic approach to guided reading. Occasionally the pupils had opportunities to read critically but most reading tasks tended to be an identification of features of style.

12. Standards in mathematics lessons are close to those expected for the age of the pupils. Their number skills are appropriate, and most pupils selected and applied appropriate methods to undertake calculations accurately. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 used estimation effectively in order to validate their answers, for example when converting improper fractions. Most Year 6 pupils use mathematical vocabulary accurately, but many struggled to articulate their ideas using mathematical language, and some were confused by word problems. Furthermore, when their mental arithmetic was insecure, basic errors in calculation undermined the accuracy of the pupils' work, even when they understood the methods being taught. The school has made good use of the National Numeracy Strategy and effective use of materials derived from this is helping to raise standards in mathematics.

13. Most pupils make reasonable gains in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes. Science teaching covers a suitable range of topics and lessons include a variety of practical investigations. The pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in science, and standards are above those expected both in terms of knowledge and the pupils' ability to investigate and begin to draw general conclusions. Year 2 pupils understand how to make simple predictions and are given good opportunities to test and evaluate their results. Standards in Key Stage 2 are in line with age-related expectations in terms of the pupils' scientific knowledge and their understanding of scientific investigation.

14. The pupils demonstrate appropriate skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Standards have improved since the last inspection and are broadly in line

with age-related expectations. The school makes effective use of ICT across the different subjects of the curriculum.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The pupils behave well and in general have positive attitudes to learning. Around the school, during break periods and in the lunch hall they were friendly and polite, and interacted sensibly. A small number of pupils presents challenging and occasionally volatile behaviour, but they are well managed so that their conduct does not affect others. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in all lessons, including two thirds in which they were good or very good. The pupils responded enthusiastically to lively and challenging teaching. In the whole-school assembly the pupils were orderly and readily participated in question-and-answer sessions. There are clear and consistent routines in all classes and a satisfactory climate for learning: the pupils settled quickly to their work; followed instructions; and sustained their concentration well, even when they were expected to listen for extended periods of time. Most pupils were keen to apply themselves to what they were doing. When asked to collaborate in pairs and small groups they worked productively and independently.

16. The school provides the pupils with good support and guidance and promotes good attitudes and behaviour through a range of suitable rewards and sanctions. The headteacher has recently introduced a system of commendations to which the pupils have responded positively. The adults in the school present good role models and have a positive approach to managing behaviour. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are good. There have been no fixed-term exclusions this year.

17. Attendance has improved since the last inspection; at 94.56 per cent for the school year it is broadly in line with the average for primary schools nationally. Levels of unauthorised absence have been reduced since the last inspection and are in line with national figures. The school monitors closely the pupils' attendance and patterns of absence. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence although this is rarely necessary. The school has effective strategies to challenge patterns of non-attendance and to reward the pupils who regularly attend. Punctuality is good.

18. The school has a positive ethos and there is good support and guidance for the pupils. There is good provision for the pupils' moral and social development, although opportunities to foster their spiritual and cultural development are often missed. Assemblies contribute positively to a sense of community and introduce pupils to a range of moral and social issues. The headteacher's assembly encouraged pupils to reflect upon their own conduct and to make positive choices by behaving constructively and helpfully towards one another and the school community. Good quality displays around the school celebrate the pupils' work as well as providing a wider cultural context, for example with the art of Matisse. However, the school does not exploit sufficient opportunities to broaden the pupils' awareness and understanding of other cultures.

19. The school has made good progress in improving the social climate and relationships. The pupils are encouraged to assume responsibility. At the start of the year all classes discussed, negotiated and agreed class rules. In addition, members of the school council have been involved in the selection of the headteacher, organising charity events and in leading the school's work to become an eco-friendly school.

The quality of education

20. The quality of teaching is sound overall with some good features. It is consistently good in the nursery, but elsewhere not enough teaching is consistently good. It was at least satisfactory in almost all lessons observed, including one in three that were good or very good. In general, classes have a positive climate for learning; short-term planning is sound; exposition is good; and the pupils are well managed and directed. There are good relationships between adults and pupils, and teachers have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and response. The best lessons were very well planned and expertly managed. In these lessons learning was well paced, lively and presented pupils with challenging tasks. In one mathematics lesson the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils responded to the teacher's very high expectations by working hard and making every effort to respond to the questions asked; individual white boards ensured that they were always engaged and that the teacher could assess their understanding and adapt the lesson accordingly; and independent activities were well structured, suitably differentiated and well supported by teaching assistants.

21. All lessons had strengths, but the proportion of good and very good teaching is too small. In general, the pupils are given a suitable variety of activities and a good range of different resources. Several strategies are routinely used by most teachers to engage the pupils in learning, including paired talk, small group work and the use of mini white boards. However, in a few lessons there was an unsuitable balance of direct teaching and independent work. Several lessons that were satisfactory overall had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Even in some generally effective lessons, weaknesses in teaching constrained learning and inhibited the pupils' progress. When lesson introductions were too long and when there was over-emphasis on closed questions, the pupils' concentration waned and the pace of learning was too slow. In these lessons the pupils made significant progress only when they worked independently. In a few lessons the pupils' independent activities lacked sufficient challenge, notably for the higher-attaining pupils. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the work was inadequately explained and discussed, and the pupils were confused. In this lesson the learning activities were poorly structured and the pupils learned little.

22. The quality of teaching in the foundation subjects has improved significantly since the last inspection and is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The most effective teaching in these subjects is based on good planning, with learning objectives that focus sharply on precise areas of knowledge, understanding and specific skills that the pupils needed to acquire. Lessons are planned around a suitable variety of learning activities that involve the pupils actively in their learning. ICT resources have improved since the last inspection and the computer suite is well used both to teach discrete ICT skills and to support the pupils' learning in other subject areas.

23. Teaching assistants provide good support for individuals and groups of pupils. They have a good knowledge of the pupils' different needs and contribute to the records of their progress over time. The school has taken steps to ensure that their time and expertise is better used during lessons and they are now more actively involved during whole-class discussions and plenary sessions. Teaching assistants are particularly adroit at managing the difficult behaviour of the most challenging pupils.

24. Since the last inspection, the school has effectively reviewed the time allocated to all subjects and has made suitable revisions, both to this, and to the overall time spent teaching in Key Stage 2. The curriculum is broad and includes all subjects in reasonable depth and

balance. The headteacher has revised the curriculum map by introducing common topics across year groups, with a planned rotation to ensure that topics are not repeated. Teachers have responded positively to the new approach and have enjoyed the opportunities for collaborative planning. The recently introduced topic about the Egyptians includes an interesting variety of activities. The school exploits good opportunities to extend the pupils' wider experiences with a suitable range of extracurricular activities and visits.

25. Suitable systems have been developed to assess and monitor the pupils' progress. End-of-year tests are used to record the pupils' achievement and to set individual targets for the end of the next year. However, assessment data are not effectively used to inform teaching, and the information is not used critically to revise curriculum planning or to rigorously monitor the pupils' progress. Procedures for setting targets have developed well in English and mathematics, and individual targets are effectively used to guide the pupils' progress in some lessons. Since the last inspection, the marking policy has been revised and the quality of marking has improved significantly. Assessment is sound overall: the pupils' work is conscientiously corrected and teachers' comments are positive and encouraging. The best marking is detailed and diagnostic, makes links with short-term targets and clearly sets out what the pupils need to do next. The introduction of peer assessment has proved a useful development. Its effective use in a Year 6 English lesson encouraged the pupils to be more self-critical and to reflect carefully on their own improvement.

Leadership and management

26. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. They form a dynamic and effective leadership partnership and are committed to the school's long term development. The headteacher provides decisive and clear leadership for the school and has quickly galvanised the staff in order to accelerate the school's improvement. During the long-term absence of the previous headteacher, the acting headteacher skilfully raised staff morale and developed a collaborative ethos amongst the staff. The introduction of a 'teaching and learning workshop' has provided good opportunities for teachers to discuss and share good practice.

27. Effective systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating the school's progress which have enabled the senior management team to make confident judgements in order to implement suitable intervention and support. The school's improvement plan identifies key priorities for development, based on a clear evaluation of the school's strengths and remaining weaknesses. The composition of the senior management team has been reviewed and suitably revised to include the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator. However, the allocation of management roles and responsibilities to other members of staff is inequitable and does not serve the school's present or future needs. The lack of dynamic leadership in key areas has slowed the school's improvement: the Foundation Stage is ineffectively managed and systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress have been slow to have an impact on teaching.

28. The responsibilities of subject leaders have developed appropriately. The subject co-ordinators have implemented systematic and increasingly rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's progress, including a wide range of lesson observations, monitoring of planning and book trawls. All teachers have embraced curriculum-management responsibilities and have an understanding of their individual leadership roles. Subject leaders are given responsibility for evaluating and guiding curriculum development.

29. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has developed appropriate systems for assessing, monitoring and recording the pupils' progress. She has drafted a sound policy for special educational needs and planned improvements are suitably guided by a clear action plan. Provision for and management of pupils who have special educational needs has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now sound.

30. The governing body provides good support for the school whilst effectively holding it to account. Governors are well informed about the school's developing strengths and remaining weaknesses. Systems for monitoring the work of the school have been developed and governors have assumed responsibility for discussing and approving policies through an effective structure for meetings and committees. This extended level of commitment and strengthened organisation has had a positive impact on the school and has increased its capacity for sustained improvement.

31. After a slow start, the LEA has provided very good support and guidance for the school through regular monitoring, advice and appropriate training. Intensive support has been well prioritised on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and by developing the school's leadership and management capability. These improvements have been very well supported by the school improvement adviser and by the adviser for early years. Feedback from lesson observations has been constructive and has informed whole-school and individual issues for development.

Implementation of the action plan

32. The inspection report of February 2003 required the school to address six key issues. These principally related to: improving leadership and management; raising standards in identified subjects; improving attendance; and improving provision for pupils who have special educational needs. The school has implemented each of the tasks set out in its action plan and has made good progress overall in addressing these key issues. However, there remains work to be done to further improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' rates of progress and to further raise their standards of attainment.

33. The leadership of the school is good and management is sound overall. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher managed well the work of the school and carefully prioritised actions to address the key areas of weakness. Since September 2004 the substantive headteacher has accelerated the school's improvement.

34. Training and support for the staff have been suitably targeted, and weaknesses in teaching and management of the curriculum have been addressed. The roles of subject co-ordinators have developed well and, although their effectiveness is variable, their management of the curriculum is sound. Subject responsibilities have been suitably delegated and monitoring systems are sound. Effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are in place.

35. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is sound. Suitable policies and procedures have been developed, and these are well monitored by the co-ordinator for special educational needs. Procedures for monitoring attendance have been tightened, and absences are rigorously monitored.

36. As a result of LEA guidance and support and the efforts of the staff, the school now has the capacity to evaluate its own performance and to guide its future development.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in February 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2003, and in January and May 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of February 2003.

In September 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Nineteen lessons or parts of lessons and one assembly were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, members of the School Council and a representative from the LEA, and informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of February 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.