



# Link Secondary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 133742  
**LEA** Sutton LEA  
**Inspection number** 282360  
**Inspection dates** 4 October 2005 to 4 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mark Evans AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	82-86 Croydon Road
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special		Beddington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Croydon, Surrey CR0 4PD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02086887691
<b>Number on roll</b>	40	<b>Fax number</b>	02086885522
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Gay Gray
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Joe Pearson

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 4 October 2005 - 4 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 282360
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

The Link Secondary School is a non-maintained special school, one of two that are run by Link Day School Limited, a registered charity. Since the last inspection, it has gained non-maintained status. The school provides education for pupils who have speech, language and social communication difficulties and other learning difficulties, including for some, emotional issues related to their educational needs. There are currently 40 pupils on roll, taught in five year-based classes.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Link Secondary School is a good school with many outstanding features. The teachers know their pupils very well indeed and the manner in which the work of the speech and language therapists is integrated into everyday teaching is exemplary. Pupils achieve good standards and behaviour is excellent. A few more able pupils could achieve even more. Teaching is high quality, with meticulous planning. Use of assessment data is not yet fully developed. The curriculum provided by the school is excellent; it offers a range of education and therapy that together elicit at least good progress from the pupils. The pupils are very well cared for, which is another key strength of the school. Pupils learn how to live healthy lives, they feel safe and they nearly always enjoy school. Leadership and management are very successful, supporting pupils and staff alike. The school improvement plan is very detailed, but is not as easy to follow as it should be. Governors know the school well and provide good support. The school's finances are very well managed and it provides good value for money. The school has made a series of significant and very beneficial structural and procedural changes since the last inspection. Because of the commitment and ability of the headteacher and senior managers, the capacity for further improvement is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

\* Use assessment and other data to continue raising pupil attainment.\* Ensure that the school improvement plan succinctly describes the overall direction of the school, for example, by adding an executive summary.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The standards pupils reach are good in all subjects, given the difficulties they have with learning. The school sets targets for each individual, and there is close liaison between all adults involved with a pupil; for example between the speech and language therapists and the class teachers. For nearly all pupils, these targets are set at a challenging level. A few of the most able could achieve more, and the school has firm plans to extend the range and the quantity of accredited subjects and awards to which these pupils have access. The school has a very clear picture of the pupils' capabilities, which is based upon evaluation of their prior attainment. A wide range of tests and indicators are used to evaluate pupils' attainment and progress, including standardised external tests, internal testing by the speech and language therapists and end of year assessments in all curriculum areas, administered by the teachers in all classes. The school has piloted a commercial scheme which will make the tracking and analysis of progress even clearer, once it has been fully embedded throughout the school. Pupils make at least good and often very good progress. Particularly noteworthy is the progress they make in spelling and language, which is due to the close working of teachers and speech and language therapists. Reading skills also develop well, but the school has correctly identified the need for a revised policy.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is very good. They make good progress in spiritual and cultural development and excellent progress in their moral and social development. Nearly all of them report that they enjoy coming to school and their attitudes to learning, as seen in lessons and around the school, are very positive. Behaviour is excellent and attendance is consistently very high. The pupils respond very positively to the school's practice of encouraging safe practices and healthy lifestyles. For example, Year 11 pupils responded very well to safety instructions in a science lesson which involved handling parts of dead animals; without making a fuss, they put on their protective gloves and behaved very sensibly. The school does not have catering facilities. At the beginning of each term, senior managers agree the healthiest options from the school meals service. Many pupils have difficulties that include anxiety about new or different foods, but the carefully planned class-based lunchtime routines help them overcome these. The pupils make a good contribution to the local community. There is a programme of visitors into the school and an increasingly varied series of visits out of the school, for example to share a meal with students at a local college. Pupils have also worked alongside local volunteer groups on ecological and other developments to the school grounds. The range of accredited awards available to the older pupils allows them to begin to develop skills that will be useful in the workplace. Their achievements are understandably limited by their needs.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and on many occasions outstanding. Teaching is of a high quality. Teachers know their pupils very well indeed, which combined with the detailed planning, leads to activities which are very well matched to individual needs. Pupils make good progress. Support staff make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning and care. There are strong relationships, which support learning well, and there is often a sense of fun in lessons that adds to the excellent atmosphere, for example in an English lesson about Dr. Frankenstein and the creature he created. The pupils are committed to their work, enjoy learning and have positive attitudes to school. The planning of English in coordination with the speech and language therapists is exemplary. Therapists extend this partnership across the whole curriculum. Teaching staff are very well supported in their own personal and professional development by the formal systems of performance management in the school, and by the informal support received by teaching and therapy colleagues. The impact of this is very positive for the pupils. Assessment of what pupils learn is becoming increasingly based on the commercial scheme adopted by the school and this is helping teachers plan for all abilities in a class. Target setting on an individual basis is well established. Monitoring of learning is also good, though data analysis is on only an individual basis, and by gender, means that patterns in learning amongst groups of pupils may not be detected.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is very good in all respects and is exemplary in the way in which literacy and speech and language therapy are interwoven into the everyday teaching provided by the school. The curriculum is very well planned and statutory requirements are met. The strength of the school's approach to the curriculum is that it is responsive to individual pupil's needs. Pupils are given access to the full National Curriculum, with additional support in relevant areas, especially speech and language. The school gives strong emphasis to the inclusion of all pupils in the curriculum offered. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good; the former in particular is a key element of the school's successful approach to the provision of education. Through teachers' planning and relevant support, the school ensures that all pupils can gain access to the curriculum, no matter what their needs. Pathways along which pupils' learning progresses are well defined through the schemes of work which are well established. Pupils are increasingly well prepared for life after school, in particular through the new, wider approach to accredited learning. Education for health, safety and welfare is very good. There are many opportunities for pupils to experience events and situations outside of school, and these are well managed, and much enjoyed by the pupils. There are frequent and regular visitors to the school, such as musicians and police officers, which also provide good links with the outside world.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Pastoral care and the support provided for pupils are a particular strength of the school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are excellent. The school has developed a very good programme of personal, social and health education, including drugs education, relationship guidance, team building and training for independence. There is also a residential week which takes place two years in every three, which forms a focus for the development of inter-personal skills as well as further developing skills for independent living. The school's full time qualified counsellor, who manages the pastoral welfare of the pupils, works closely with parents, teachers and children alike - this reinforces the strong links between families and the school. The impact is seen in the close, honest and open liaison which underpins the pupils' education. Academic progress is monitored by subject co-ordinators, who also monitor their colleagues' teaching. The quality of the support provided by the whole range of therapists is very high.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good and in many respects, they are excellent. The headteacher has led a very effective series of developments and, ably supported by the senior management team, has ensured significant improvements since the last inspection. The quality and effectiveness of self-evaluation is very good. The head

teacher and senior managers know the school very well and are clear about how to improve the achievement of the pupils. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can. There are sufficient suitably qualified staff, and the processes for recruitment and selection ensure that the pupils are both well taught and safe. The accommodation has been improved significantly since the last inspection as have the provision of information and communication technology and other resources. This has been at least partly possible by efficient deployment of resources, both on a day-to-day basis and over the longer term. The school provides good value for money. The governors and the trustees discharge their responsibilities with care, enthusiasm and commitment. The school welcomes the governors' and trustees' involvement and encourages regular contact whenever practicable.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

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

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Hello everyone - you might have noticed me a couple of weeks ago at your school. Some of you were kind enough to talk to me during the day and others saw me in lessons. Thank you for making me feel welcome, for showing me your work and for telling me about your school.

At the end of the day, I prepared a list of things that I think the school does very well, and another list of things that it could do even better. Some of the things you told me about, like the very good teaching and the kind adults at the school, are on my list. Other very good things I saw were: the very careful job the teachers do when planning your lessons, the way they work with your families as well as with you, and the manner in which the therapists and the teachers work together to give you the very best support they can.

I have talked to Joe about some ways of making the school even better. The main ones are to look at the ways in which all of you learn to see if there are other ways the teachers can support groups of you and also to plan the development of the school in a different way, so that more people can use the plan. I'm sure you will help him and all the staff at the school, by continuing to work well in class. It will also be good if you carry on telling the staff how you think things are going, through the school council. I hope that explains a little bit about what I was doing at the Link Secondary. I really enjoyed my day there. Thank you again for making me feel so :) welcome.