

Links Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102635
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	308073
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Herbert
Headteacher	Mr D Marris
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Frinton Road London SW17 9EH
Telephone number	020 8769 4587
Fax number	020 8677 7860

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2008
Inspection number	308073

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Links is a larger than average primary school. A high proportion of pupils are from ethnic minority groups. Three quarters of pupils have English as an additional language including a significant minority who are at early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average and these pupils have varied educational needs. A much higher proportion of pupils arrive or leave the school at other than the usual admission times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Links Primary is a good school. It is particularly successful in the way it encourages the pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Almost all parents highlighted the happy ethos and positive learning environment at the school. One parent wrote 'My children are learning well and are happy at Links. I believe it is team work between teachers and parents that make the good progress possible'. Overall standards are broadly average. Pupils of all attainment levels and ethnic groups, including many recent arrivals with little or no English, make good progress. Speaking and listening and reading skills develop well for all groups of pupils. However, the school has accurately identified further improvement in writing skills as a key priority. The rising achievement trends in mathematics and science are largely because the good teaching in these subjects is based on pupils learning through practical activities. The school is on course to meet its challenging targets at the end of Years 2 and 6. Parents confirm that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and that their needs are met well.

Teaching is good. Pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy learning and make good progress because their teachers are invariably enthusiastic. Boys and girls are encouraged to be independent in their learning and to identify how they can improve their work further. Year teachers plan and work very effectively together. In a Year 3 science session on seed growth, pupils from both classes shared their ideas and resources well in setting up their practical experiments. There is less coherence in developing pupils' extended writing skills between Years 1 to 6. Marking and assessment are good.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils of all ages and ethnic groups feel very safe in the school. Behaviour is outstanding. Parents and pupils are very aware of what constitutes healthy foods as well as the importance of an active lifestyle. Contact between the school and the local community is extensive and adds significantly to the breadth of pupils' learning experiences. It prepares them well for future adulthood. Residential visits to Dorset, Kent and Normandy together with a wide range of activities in art, music and drama underpin the high quality of personal relationships and greatly enhance the timetabled curriculum. Participation in clubs and physical activities is outstanding. Extra-curricular activities, breakfast clubs and after-school clubs are a very strong feature of the school and are very well organised and led by a qualified youth worker.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, with the full support of the deputy headteacher, has a clear vision for the school and shows great skill in making all adults feel valued. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal qualities has been crucial in the school's continued success. Managers have adapted well to the increasing number of pupils who enter school with very little English. For example, they have employed three Polish classroom assistants to ease the transition of young children new to this country. However, the good practice in raising achievement through the school by a number of middle leaders, for example, in mathematics, is not shared by all subject leaders. Governors play an important role in the life of the school and have a regular programme of visits and reports from teachers to monitor the quality of provision. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with skills below expected levels but make good progress in most areas, particularly in personal development. By the time the children leave Reception, most have skills and knowledge broadly in line with what is expected in most areas of their learning. However, because many children begin with little or no English, standards in communication, language and literacy, particularly writing, are below what is expected. The children enjoy a good range of stimulating activities. The outdoor environment is used well to support the children's learning. Teachers assess children well and match activities to the needs of the children. However, adults can sometimes structure their own role within activities too tightly, which reduces the opportunities to develop the children's independence. Parents appreciate the good care and support provided by staff, as summarised by the comment, 'The staff are doing a wonderful job with the children. My child likes school because he is comfortable, loved and cared for and everyday he comes home with something new.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of writing throughout the school.
- Ensure that curriculum leaders share good practice in raising achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average and pupils make good progress. Writing skills are not as strong as other basic skills because there are weaknesses in phonic knowledge, sentence construction and grammar. However, all groups of pupils, including those who are at an early stage of acquiring English skills, make good progress in listening and speaking and in reading. Overall, the improving trends in mathematics and science in national tests confirm good teaching and a practical approach to learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are broadly average and pupils achieve well because of good access to computers and software. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well, thanks to the effective arrangements to support them. Overall, the school meets its challenging targets. The school uses a range of strategies, including booster classes, to raise pupils' performance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the positive learning environment is a reflection of the outstanding levels of care and concern shown by all adults for the personal development and well-being of each pupil. 'I am extremely pleased with my son's progress, both socially and academically - the school is caring and considerate.' commented one parent. School council members carry out their roles in a mature and responsible way.

A high proportion of pupils participate in extra-curricular activities that extend pupils' enjoyment of learning outside the classroom. The outside play area has an imaginative pattern of playground markings including a well-equipped caged area for ball games, a raised garden, a number of seating arrangements, a trim trail and, unusually, a Hampton Court style maze - all of which are very popular with pupils. Excellent school procedures to counter bullying or name-calling are followed closely. Pupils confirm that they tell a teacher or the headteacher straightaway should they occur and that such incidents are dealt with very quickly and effectively. Behaviour

is outstanding. There have been no exclusions in the past two years. Attendance is average and very good in the context of a rapidly changing school population.

Parents and pupils are very aware of what constitute healthy foods and the importance of an active lifestyle. Art, music and drama activities are strengths. They contribute greatly to developing pupils' self-confidence and relationships and enable pupils to participate fully in the life of the school community. Cultural awareness is emphasised effectively through display, in the topics studied and in assemblies. A strong focus on basic skills contributes well to pupils' economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all years. Lessons are characterised by positive working relationships and eager participation by pupils who are keen to do their best. Good quality work in pairs and speaking and listening activities challenge pupils in their thinking and enable them to 'bounce ideas off each other'. Teachers sustain a disciplined working atmosphere whilst maintaining a friendly good-humoured approach that is appreciated by pupils. New resources such as interactive whiteboards help to enliven teaching. Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers, make an important contribution to learning, and effectively support all pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. In the teaching of English, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to write independently for a sustained period of time which has limited the progress that some pupils make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well-balanced curriculum includes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language and for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils enjoy a broad and interesting range of work. The school sets regular homework in order to support pupils' learning. The curriculum is enhanced and enriched by visits to a wide range of venues and from visitors to the school. Events such as the 'Festival of Cultures' celebrates many different cultures through song, dance and food from around the world. Links with a school in Uganda enhance pupils' understanding of life in other countries. The teaching of French enriches pupils' experience of language. Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 benefit from the opportunity to take part in residential field trips including a trip to Normandy to support their learning of French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good. Pupils feel confident that there is someone who will listen if they have a problem. As one pupil put it, 'This is a great school, everyone is accepted, no one is left out'. Further support is provided through the good relationships the school has developed with outside agencies. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support as do those who speak English as an additional language. New pupils to the school comment positively about the welcoming nature of the school. One pupil said that 'he had quickly been accepted as a friend'. Systems for assessment and target setting are effective in giving older pupils guidance on how their work can be improved.

Satisfactory links have been established to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage of pupils' education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the experienced headteacher is a major strength and is focused on improving the provision to promote pupils' progress in learning, enjoyment and the standards they attain. The school gives good value for money. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is managed well. One parent commented 'the headteacher and his staff do not neglect any group of pupils - every child is important'. The school's self evaluation is good because it correctly identifies its strengths and the areas for development in a rapidly changing school population. The leadership of middle managers varies from good to satisfactory. Where it is good, leaders have a thorough knowledge of standards and progress across the school, an understanding of what needs to be done to further improve and evidence of the impact of their initiatives upon learning. The school is well supported by pupils and parents and has their confidence and respect. Governance, administrative support and financial controls are good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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

The quality of provision

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

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

18 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Links Primary School, London, SW17 9EH

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. It was a pleasure to talk to so many of you and I very much appreciated the help you gave me during the two days of the inspection. You will be pleased to hear that I think that Links is a good school and that you are making good progress in your lessons. Here are a number of things I like about your school:

- You are keen to come to school, enjoy learning and make sure that no one is left out or unhappy.
- You make good progress in your work particularly in mathematics and science.
- You are keen to follow a healthy, active lifestyle. We were very impressed with all the activities you take up before, during and after school and the opportunities you have to spend a few days away from home either in Normandy or in this country.
- We especially liked the lovely relationships and the respect that exists between you and your teachers and all adults in the school.

The challenge now is to achieve even higher standards in your work. I have asked your teachers, with your help, to improve further your writing skills and ensure that your progress in all subjects is as good as it can be.

Once again, thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

Brian Evans

Lead inspector