

Larchfield Primary and Nursery School

Bargeman Road, Maidenhead, SL6 2SG

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has worked successfully, with relentless determination, to bring about improvements following a period where there were many staff changes and a dip in standards.
- Governors and the recently appointed deputy headteacher have made a strong contribution to the improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school is a friendly welcoming place. Pupils enjoy school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Pupils feel safe and parents are confident that their children are kept safe and are looked after well.
- Children make a good start in the early years. They are made to feel welcome and settle quickly.
- All groups of pupils are making good progress in Years 1 to 6. Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those learning to speak English, receive consistently effective support which enables them to achieve well.
- Teachers have high expectations. Lessons engage pupils in their learning. Pupils benefit from good quality questioning which promotes language skills well.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils know right from wrong. They appreciate fundamental British values, such as tolerance and respect for people from all walks of life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils lack confidence in exploring relationships in mathematics within numbers and shapes and in using systematic approaches when solving problems.
- Children in the early years are not given sufficient help in linking their play outdoors to their day-to-day learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 16 lessons and parts of lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work. They also listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also met the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's data on pupils' progress and records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- They observed movement around the school at playtime and at lunch breaks, and attended assemblies. Displays around school and also in classrooms were scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 18 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the results of a very recent questionnaire carried out by the school, which had 99 responses. They spoke informally with a number of parents.
- The 31 responses to a recent staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Carr

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is below average in size. The majority of pupils are White British. Over a third of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups. A quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language, although very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children who are in the care of the local authority or those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. These needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication problems or moderate learning difficulties.
- Children in the early years attend part time in the morning or afternoon Nursery classes or full time in the Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a breakfast club organised by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide further opportunities in mathematics for pupils to explore relationships within numbers and shapes and develop systematic approaches to solving problems.
- Enrich outdoor learning in the early years, by:
 - establishing key strategies for adults to use to promote children's development across all areas of learning
 - providing prompts to help children to link their play with day-to-day learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have faced significant challenges. Tough decisions had to be made in order to eradicate weak teaching and strengthen middle leadership. The school has now turned the corner. The teaching is good and pupils are achieving well. The strong team spirit, and common determination to ensure all pupils do as well as they can, owe much to the headteacher's inspirational leadership.
- Recently appointed middle leaders, including those who coordinate English, mathematics and the provision for special educational needs, are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Working closely with the highly effective deputy headteacher, they provide good role models for colleagues, share successful methods and regularly check how pupils are doing. Leaders are aware that some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The curriculum includes activities that engage and motivate pupils, whilst at the same time sustaining an emphasis on key skills in literacy and numeracy. For example, when studying the planets, pupils in Year 4 wrote imaginatively and honed their skills in reading scales and calculating as they worked out the amount of fuel needed for a journey into space. However some aspects of the new mathematics curriculum designed to promote pupils' breadth and depth of understanding are not fully implemented.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. References to these aspects of personal development are the focus of many assemblies and are woven into lessons and other activities.
- Pupils learn about democracy, for example through elections for the school council. Pupils applying to be head boy and head girl have to make a case for their appointment and are elected by their peers. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school's work to foster good relations and welcome pupils from a range of backgrounds is highly effective. One parent commented, 'The school is culturally rich and my children have benefited greatly from this.'
- School leaders have a passionate commitment to ensuring every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed. No pupil is excluded from anything that the school offers and discrimination is not tolerated.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to close the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others. The additional money has enabled the appointment of more learning support staff and some is used to enable disadvantaged pupils to take part in out-of-school activities, including a breakfast club and home learning club. A family learning support assistant, partly funded by the pupil premium, works in partnership with families and has close links with local agencies.
- The primary school sport funding is used effectively to widen the opportunities for sport and physical activity for pupils and securing progress in physical education lessons. Programmes have been devised which focus on specific goals, including confidence, leadership, team work and motivation. Pupils take part in 11 different sports throughout the year.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Their comments included that it is 'an awesome school' and that 'the head is wonderful'. Consultation evenings are held every six weeks. Parents are encouraged to share their views through regular questionnaires and one-off surveys, such as a recent one which asked for parents' opinions on sports day. Annual reports give detailed information of how children have done during the year. All parents returning the recent questionnaire were happy about the information they received about their children's progress.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet the statutory requirements. Leaders are well aware of pupils' home circumstances and work closely with various local services when there are any concerns.
- The local authority provides support when needed. School leaders have a strong working relationship with the school improvement adviser who visits regularly to discuss all aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and provision in the early years.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are routinely involved in reviewing the school's effectiveness and are well aware its strengths and priorities for improvement. They ensure that regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and that the pay policy is applied fairly. This means that good teaching is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled head on. Where support for weak teaching does not result in improvement, governors do not shy from making tough decisions. Governors have a secure understanding of how assessment data enable comparisons with other schools to be made. Consequently, they are well equipped to hold leaders to account by asking insightful questions when anomalies emerge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and polite, and are mutually respectful. They consistently follow well-rehearsed routines which make for a calm and harmonious atmosphere. Playtimes are active, social occasions where friends get together to play or chat.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are evident during lessons where, for the most part, pupils are attentive, keen to contribute ideas and cooperate well when working with their classmates. Some pupils find it difficult to sustain their attention. Adults provide excellent role models of the behaviour they expect.
- Pupils move around the school sensibly. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. The school works effectively with individual pupils who sometimes struggle to control their behaviour.
- Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and carry out tasks around the school to the benefit of all. Members of the school council look into things that are important to their classmates and regularly attend the governors' meetings where they present their issues together with recommendations. They recently carried out a survey on how safe and happy pupils feel at school
- Breakfast club is well attended. Pupils are provided with a nutritious breakfast, giving them a good start to the day. After eating, they engage well in a range of games designed to improve basic skills.
- Attendance is average. The school works tirelessly to support the small number of families where attendance is lowest. The importance of good attendance is promoted constantly and persistent absence is followed up rigorously. Good attendance is rewarded weekly and termly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All parents and staff who returned recent surveys agreed that their children are kept safe. The school gives the highest priority to ensuring this is the case. Pupils talked very positively about the security cameras that 'keep an eye on us' and how they could talk to an adult if they felt the need.
- Pupils are very clear about how to avoid hazards, for example when using electrical equipment or when using the internet. They are aware that there may be 'bad people who can scam on-line' and of the need to keep personal information to themselves.
- Pupils were confident that there is no racist or sexist behaviour, and were adamant that bullying of any kind is extremely rare. Younger pupils valued the role of the head boy and head girl in sorting out minor playground disputes.
- All staff and governors attend annual training on safeguarding. They keep a discreet, but careful, look out for any pupils showing signs of distress and are swift to respond if necessary. Displays reinforcing the idea that 'this is a listening school' affirm the school's commitment to taking care of pupils and supporting their families.

The quality of teaching is good

- There is a positive climate for learning across the school. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers and other staff develop warm relationships with pupils, at the same time maintaining high expectations for work and behaviour. Pupils, for the most part, do their best to meet these challenges.
- Lessons are well planned to capture pupils' interest and sustain their engagement. Teachers set ambitious targets for individual pupils and ensure that they know what to do to achieve them.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to ask searching questions to find out what pupils already know, to extend their thinking and to deepen their understanding. This is particularly successful in English. For example, teachers, whilst praising good work, frequently ask pupils to think about and provide hints about how they can improve their written work.
- The quality of the marking of pupils' work is generally good, but there are some inconsistencies. Often, teachers provide comments to help pupils improve their work. However, although pupils are aware of their targets, they do not always know what they must do in order to achieve them.
- Teachers and skilled teaching assistants provide effective support for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those learning to speak English. They provide purposeful activities to help these pupils either catch up with their classmates or to help ensure they do not fall behind.
- The teaching of reading, including phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), is systematic and effective. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment of reading. Younger pupils explained how adults support them, particularly in sounding out using the 'blending arm'.

- Writing is taught well. Pupils are given many opportunities to write for different purposes and achievement in writing is improving. Samples of pupils' written work displayed in classrooms provide a clear and cumulative picture of their progress. Their latest work is stapled on top of their previous efforts. Pupils proudly flicked through their work from September onwards which revealed growing accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and showed the emphasis teachers give to handwriting.
- In mathematics, pupils cover a lot of useful and vital work on number facts, calculations, shape and measurement. This has led to significant improvement in standards. In the most successful lessons, teachers probe pupils' understanding and mastery of the subject by prompting a line of enquiry and explanations using mathematical terminology. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities for pupils to make progress in these aspects of the subject.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2013, Year 6 pupils reached standards that were significantly above average. There was a marked dip in standards at the end of 2014. This was due to a number of factors. Over half of the 24 Year 6 pupils were disadvantaged, with many having special educational needs. As the cohort had moved through the school, the quality of their teaching had been varied, and senior leaders had to deal with some major staffing issues. As a result of their efforts, pupils across the school, including those now in Year 6, are achieving well.
- In 2014 the results of the Year 1 national screening check for phonics were in line with the national average, showing a major improvement on the previous year. All pupils who did not meet the standards in 2013 had done so by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils typically reach the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, indicating good progress from their starting points at the beginning of Year 1. Current pupils in Year 1 are making rapid progress due to highly effective teaching. Pupils in Year 2 are progressing well from a very low start. Current data, supported by inspection evidence from observing learning in lessons and the work in pupils' books, show an improvement in all areas. While standards are below recent national averages overall, more pupils are reaching the higher levels.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 maintain a keen interest in reading and use their comprehension skills effectively in a variety of subjects. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are increasingly accurate. For example, pupils in Year 3 used these skills to good effect when writing about their research into volcanoes. By Year 6, pupils routinely use devices such as rhetorical questions to engage the reader. Handwriting improves through the school with most older pupils using very neat joined script.
- A whole school focus on mathematics has led to improved progress. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are becoming adept at mental calculations, with an increasing ability to instantly recall number facts, such as multiplication tables. Their confidence in using these skills when tackling problems is growing, but variable. Some find difficulty in approaching problems systematically and explaining their thinking.
- Across the school, the most able pupils are achieving well. Pupils who started at above average levels are building well on this secure start. This is supported by evidence in pupils' books and the most recent data collected by the school. There were very few Year 6 pupils in the previous two years who had reached the higher levels at the end of Year 2. Consequently, meaningful comparisons with the national picture are not possible. In the current Year 6, there is a greater proportion of most able pupils. They have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from the beginning of Year 3 and are working above the expected levels.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs varies from class to class. There are highly efficient systems for identifying individual needs and support for these pupils is well organised and effective. As a result, they make similar progress to their classmates, with some pupils building exceptionally well from their starting points.
- The acquisition of language for those pupils for whom English is an additional language, including those at a very early stage of learning, is rapid. They catch up quickly and achieve well.
- In 2013, pupils in the Year 6 class who were disadvantaged were approximately half a year ahead of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, this group was around two terms behind in all three subjects. This was mainly due to the fact that most of these pupils had special educational needs. School data, supported by inspection evidence, show that the actions introduced by the school to narrow any gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are having the desired impact. Meticulous tracking records indicate that disadvantaged pupils more often than not made better progress than their classmates over the last year.

The early years provision**is good**

- As children join the Nursery class their communication, language and number skills are often below those typical for their age. Since the previous inspection, the early years provision has improved significantly, so that it is now good. Children are now achieving well in the early years and the proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is in line with national averages.
- Adults provide a calm and stimulating environment in which children are happy to play and make new friends. Considerable attention is given to promoting children's emotional and physical well-being by building strong, positive and caring relationships.
- Adults' regular contact with parents helps children to settle in well. Children behave well because teachers establish clear, consistent routines and children know what is expected of them. They feel safe and learn to get along with one another as they play and learn.
- Teaching is good. Adults assess children accurately when they start and quickly identify the skills they need to learn. Classroom activities are generally well planned to support children's development, particularly in literacy and numeracy, through talk, discussion and play.
- The outdoor learning area is much improved since the previous inspection and includes a good range of attractive resources. These are not always fully utilised, however. When teaching outdoors, adults do not always extend children's thinking or help children make links with their current learning. There are few visual prompts to reinforce children's language development, for example as children play on the climbing apparatus and move 'over', 'under' and 'through'.
- The appointment of an experienced teacher to lead this phase has successfully driven forward improvement. Staff are well deployed and teachers and teaching assistants monitor children's progress carefully to ensure that all groups of children achieve well. Staff have a good understanding of what has been achieved so far and what there is still to do.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109938
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	456190

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 of pupils on the school roll	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Lattimer
Headteacher	Niki Alvarado
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 June 2012
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