

# Laurance Haines School

Vicarage Road, Watford, WD18 0DD

**Inspection dates** 11–12 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
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 leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher is an excellent leader with a very clear vision and a determination to succeed. The school is improving rapidly as a result of outstanding leadership.
- Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They are committed to the school's development and hold the leadership to account very well.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils display excellent attitudes to school and a clear love of learning. Pupils behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. They show good manners and are polite and welcoming.
- The safety of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are taught explicitly ways to keep themselves safe in a range of settings. They understand different types of bullying and feel confident in the ability of staff to deal with situations that arise.
- Teaching is good throughout the school and some is outstanding. Teaching assistants are used effectively to help pupils to achieve well. Skilled questioning and good-quality marking is used well.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities well below those typical of their age. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and children make good progress.
- By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards overall are above the national average.
- The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern British society. They are taught to be tolerant and accepting, to value people's differences and to celebrate diversity. Pupils understand democracy and the importance of following rules.
- Parents are very happy with the school. They appreciate its inclusive and welcoming climate and say that the school is 'like a family'.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is threaded through everything that the school does and is a particular strength.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils know that their teachers want them to succeed and they try very hard as a result.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain below average overall.
- Attainment in writing in Key Stage 1 and at the start of Key Stage 2 has not risen as quickly as other subjects.
- As yet, the school's new curriculum lacks the richness and variety to promote exceptional achievement, and does not provide sufficient opportunity to consolidate and develop pupils' skills in writing.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. They observed parts of 29 lessons throughout the school. Some observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or an assistant headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils’ exercise books, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work. Inspectors examined the school’s documentation on pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The views of parents were taken into account including: 65 Responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire; 28 ‘free text’ responses on Parent View; informal conversations on the playground; the three letters that were received; and those of the 14 parents who attended a meeting with the lead inspector. Inspectors also listened to the views of staff and evaluated the 53 staff questionnaires that were received.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, parents and governors. The lead inspector spoke with the School Improvement Partner by telephone.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents, including information about safeguarding, the school’s self-evaluation, plans for future development, attendance records and behaviour records.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Helen Bailey

Additional Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This primary school is much larger than average.
- There are two classes in most year groups from Nursery to Year 6, with three classes in both Year 3 and Year 4. Provision for nursery-aged children is part-time. The school has close links with the local children's centre and the headteacher is Chair of the Advisory Board of the children's centre.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection, and there have been a number of other staffing changes.
- The school hosts specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. The specific learning difficulties base is managed by the headteacher on behalf of the local authority. The base provides an outreach service to 54 local schools, under the day-to-day direction of the base leader.
- A very large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A quarter of the pupils on roll are of Pakistani origin. White British, Black African and other white pupils are the largest other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average and 48 different languages are spoken by pupils attending the school. Many pupils are at a very early stage of learning to speak English when they join the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The number of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium provides additional government funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and other groups.
- The school meets current floor standards; these are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the new curriculum to promote exceptional achievement by:
  - giving pupils more opportunity to apply and develop their skills in writing
  - fuelling pupils' thirst for knowledge and developing excellence across a wide range of subjects.
- Raise attainment in writing by:
  - developing phonics teaching so that it has a greater impact on pupils' writing
  - sharing the outstanding teaching in Year 6 with other year groups
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in subjects other than English.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- This is a good school that is improving rapidly as a result of outstanding leadership and management. Overall standards have risen, year on year, since the last inspection and under the leadership of the outstanding headteacher. Pupils are expected to behave well and to do their best.
- The headteacher is an extremely effective leader who is respected and valued by the entire school community. He is passionate in his belief that all pupils can and should achieve well. He refuses to accept that deprivation can have an impact on the educational achievement of young people and this belief means that this school makes a notable difference to the lives of disadvantaged children.
- The school has a very strongly inclusive ethos. All members of the school community are valued and welcomed and the school celebrates the 48 different languages that its pupils speak. Strong induction, intervention and monitoring systems are in place to ensure that pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning English when they join the school are able to pick up language skills quickly and soon feel part of the school community.
- The use and provision of continuing professional development opportunities for staff is a strength of the school. School leaders monitor provision very closely and are quick to both support and challenge staff to improve teaching.
- The school has been very successful in raising the quality of teaching in mathematics. The mathematics leader, a specialist in the subject, is given an hour daily to monitor, evaluate and observe other teachers. He provides specialist coaching for colleagues and the strong positive impact on standards is clear.
- The headship team – the headteacher, deputy headteacher and school business manager – works very well together and is highly effective. The school business manager's inclusion in leadership at this level means that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are sensibly able to focus much more closely on curriculum rather than management issues than would normally be the case.
- Leadership at all levels is very strong, and senior, subject and other leaders are committed to the same shared ambition to raise standards and improve the life chances of all pupils at the school. Leaders use data well to inform their self-evaluation, and development plans are thorough, rigorous and analysed fully.
- The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern British society. Pupils are taught the importance of following rules, and this is reinforced regularly. The election of the school council and eco-council members gives pupils an understanding of democracy appropriate to their age.
- Pupils are taught to respect and value other people's cultures and religions, and they are reminded of this expectation in the daily recitation of the school's creed. The school's recent Harvest Festival illustrates the way that tolerance and inclusion are promoted. The event was held at a local church and was attended by children of all faiths; almost no children were withdrawn from the visit. One parent identified herself as a Muslim and said, 'Why would it matter that it's in a church?'
- The school introduced the new National Curriculum in September and used this as an opportunity to revise its approach to planning and teaching. A new planning format has been introduced and a 'learning challenge', in the form of a question, now forms the basis of all lessons. The school's wider curriculum includes activities such as gardening, visits to a local café and residential trips. The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and is described as 'a work in progress' by the headteacher. It is not yet the key tool in raising standards that the headteacher would like it to be.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children are sound and effective. The school ensures that all statutory requirements are met.
- The pupil premium is used very effectively to improve standards for those who are eligible for it.

- The primary physical education and sport funding is used very effectively and is monitored well. The funding has been used to increase the range and frequency of activities offered, and an increasing proportion of pupils participate in sports as a result. The funding has also been used to fund specialist coaches to work directly with pupils and to improve teaching in the subject.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are strongly committed to the school and share the headteacher’s vision. They recently commissioned an external review of their performance and have already acted on its recommendations. Governors have a wide range of knowledge and skills.
  - Governors know the quality of teaching at the school well. They do not rely exclusively on information from the school’s leaders but use the local authority’s Improvement Partner’s visits to provide assurance that internal judgements are correct. They have appropriate involvement in performance management and they have established a clear link between teachers’ performance and their pay.
  - Governors have an excellent understanding of data and are able to use this knowledge to hold the school’s leaders to account for its performance.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. They work well individually, with partners and in groups. Pupils work independently on a range of tasks and also help their peers when they are stuck. Pupils are keen to talk about their lessons and what they are learning.
- The way behaviour is managed is a strength of the school. The consistency with which staff follow the behaviour policy means that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and respond accordingly. Staff manage behaviour subtly and unobtrusively, and so time is not wasted by the need for frequent reminders. A system of hand signals, used throughout the school, is working well.
- The school is a calm and orderly place where pupils can work sensibly around the building with minimal supervision. Pupils are friendly, sociable and display excellent manners. They are given opportunities to take on a range of responsibilities, such as becoming sports ambassadors, and carry out their duties diligently. Peer mediators are used successfully to help pupils work through low-level disagreements at playtimes. ‘Infant carers’ from Year 5 help to ensure that the younger pupils feel happy and safe during break times.
- The school has worked closely with parents and has successfully tackled attitudes to extended holidays to improve attendance overall. Attendance has risen steadily over the last three years and is now above the national average. Attendance rates for pupils eligible for the pupil premium and for those who speak English as an additional language were significantly below average three years ago. There has been a significant improvement, and attendance rates for both groups is now approaching the national average.

### **Safety**

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school has been very successful in teaching pupils ‘protective behaviours’. For example, pupils have been taught that they should be able to talk to a trusted adult about anything that worries them. They each decide their own ‘network hand’ and can confidently list the trusted adult that each digit represents for them.
- Pupils show an awareness of bullying and its different forms – for example, cyber-bullying – and have confidence that school staff deal with bullying issues when they arise. Parents also said that they feel that bullying is dealt with very effectively; one parent noted particularly the ‘quick and timely’ response she received to an issue she raised.
- The school is proactive in teaching pupils how to keep themselves safe. They are taught about a range of issues, at a level appropriate to their age, including internet safety, road safety and ‘stranger danger’.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- The school's strong focus on improving teaching in phonics (the sounds that letters represent) has been very successful. A new scheme was introduced a year ago and staff have been trained well in delivering it. The quality of phonics teaching, as well as the progress made by pupils, is monitored rigorously by a member of the senior leadership team.
- Marking is used well and there is a strong focus on providing 'next steps' to help pupils improve their work. Pupils are given time to respond to their teacher's comments and to make any corrections that might be needed. In the best examples, teachers also use marking as an opportunity to 'stretch' the most-able pupils by presenting further challenge.
- Teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage them to think. Teachers refocus lessons well in response to pupils' reactions.
- The quality of relationships between pupils and staff is a strength. Teaching staff know their pupils very well and are able to anticipate their needs and support them well as a result. Teachers use humour effectively and appropriately to engage and encourage pupils. The positive and welcoming classroom environments encourage good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together. This collaborative approach means that teaching assistants are well informed and their work has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Teaching assistants provide very strong support for pupils who speak English as an additional language and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as more generally in the classroom. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, a teaching assistant was used very effectively to extend the learning of a higher ability group while the teacher focused on the class as a whole.
- The school's new approach to planning is working well and is becoming increasingly embedded. Lessons are planned around a central challenge in the form of a question and the new 'stickability' system helps pupils to remain focused on their target.
- The nurture class provides good support for a targeted group of pupils. The staff focus strongly on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills and also on helping them to develop the skills they need in order to be ready to learn.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typical of their age. Many pupils are at the earliest stages of learning English or have communication skills typical of much younger children. The high focus on developing pupils' ability to communicate means that pupils make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage and an increasing proportion achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year, although this remains well below the national average.
- Standards in phonics are high and the proportion who achieved the required level in the Year 1 screening check was much higher than the national average this year.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen steadily in recent years and were above the national average in mathematics, writing and spelling and grammar this year. Reading was slightly below the national average. Pupils made good progress across all subjects this year and progress in mathematics was outstanding.
- Standards overall are below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, in all subjects, standards are rising and mathematics is now broadly in line with the national figure. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils throughout the school achieve well and make good progress in reading and mathematics.

- More-able pupils achieve well and make good progress. The proportion of pupils that achieved the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1 was similar to the national average. The proportion that achieved the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2 was above the national average in all areas except reading.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve well and make good progress. The attainment for these pupils, at the end of Key Stage 2, has risen steadily over the last three years. Disadvantaged pupils now attain levels in mathematics and spelling and grammar that are similar to all pupils nationally. Their attainment in reading is approximately a term behind all pupils nationally. In writing, disadvantaged pupils are approximately a term ahead of all pupils nationally by the time they leave the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well and make good progress from their starting points. Their progress is monitored closely by the special educational needs coordinator and the quality of provision is good.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make the same good progress as their peers.
- Standards in writing throughout the school are weaker than in other subjects and progress is not as fast. The school's high focus on phonics teaching has had a strong impact on reading but this has not yet followed through to writing. Pupils do not reach the expected level for their age until Years 5 and 6.

### **The early years provision is good**

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and provision is good. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is a leading teacher and has very good knowledge and understanding of how to organise and develop the curriculum in both Nursery and Reception. She has very good understanding of data and uses it well to improve provision.
- Phonics is taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Sessions proceed at a fast pace, with appropriate challenge, and children make good progress.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage staff work closely together and are an effective team. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning.
- Children's specific learning needs are identified early on and addressed thoroughly and promptly. The strong emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills means that most children are well equipped to move on to Year 1 at the end of the Reception Year.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is responsive to children's needs and interests and offers them a wide range of relevant experiences.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117320
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	449335

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	536
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Gibbs
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Roach
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 233146
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