

Laurel Avenue Community Primary School

Laurel Avenue, The Woodlands, Durham, DH1 2EY

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

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 behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are friendly, caring and polite. They are proud of their school and like to help others. Bullying is rare and when it does happen pupils know what to do.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils are confident staff will keep them safe. This is because there is a warm, caring atmosphere where all staff 'go the extra mile' to ensure the well-being of pupils.
- The headteacher, governors and other leaders share a strong desire to raise standards and improve teaching. Leaders have excellent plans to do this and regularly check pupils' achievement to make sure teaching helps pupils to make good progress.
- The relentless drive of leaders and governors is making sure pupils achieve well, teaching is good and the school is improving.
- The headteacher has forged very strong partnerships with the local community and with parents, so there are high levels of confidence in the work of the school.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics. While progress in writing is not as strong, it is improving. Pupils achieve well because teaching is matched to their ability levels.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers know pupils extremely well and use their knowledge to plan learning that help all pupils, regardless of ability, make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants manage the behaviour of pupils skilfully so that disruptions to learning are kept to a minimum.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children thrive in a calm, well-organised, stimulating atmosphere. As a result they make good progress, particularly in their personal, social and communication skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not ensuring pupils make rapid progress in writing and mathematics. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their work in mathematics or to use their skills in real-life situations. They are not always expected to use correct grammar and punctuation in their writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons taught by five teachers and a sports coach, as well as making shorter visits to look at pupils' work. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector talked to pupils at break and dinner times, and heard others in Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Not enough parents responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) so these could not be taken into account. The inspector talked to parents at the start of the school day and during Christmas lunch to gain their views informally during the inspection.
- The inspector met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, as well as records of the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Fifteen staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Laurel Avenue Community Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, is three times higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. There has been an increase in the number of pupils joining the school from other countries where English is not their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is much higher than that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times is much higher than usually found.
- The school has a range of awards, including a silver school games quality mark and an anti-bullying award.
- Children attend part-time in the nursery and full-time in the Reception class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that expectations are even higher and pupils make more rapid progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - having higher expectations of the quality of pupils' work, in particular ensuring pupils are consistently expected to use the correct grammar and punctuation in their writing
 - making sure pupils have opportunities to correct their mathematics before moving on to new work so that their skills and understanding are more secure
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use their mathematics in real-life situations and in other subjects in order to practise their skills meaningfully and better develop their understanding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has created a culture where staff share a strong desire to make sure all pupils, whatever their backgrounds, achieve well. She is very ably supported by other leaders and governors. As a result, there is a strong team ethic, pupils make good progress and the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because they track pupils' progress accurately and check the quality of teaching regularly. Leaders give teachers good feedback about the quality of their teaching and this helps them to know how to improve. Where any pupils are not making enough progress, additional teaching is put in place to help them catch up.
- There are precise and useful action plans in place to help to raise standards still further. These actions are having a good impact, for example, achievement in writing is starting to catch up with reading.
- In this small school, all teachers lead many subjects. They do so with enthusiasm, welcoming the opportunity to develop their middle leadership skills. For example, the leader for information and communication technology (ICT) has compiled a comprehensive collection of evidence to qualify for e-safety accreditation, making an excellent contribution to the safety of pupils in the process.
- Pupil premium funding is provided for the vast majority of pupils in the school who are eligible. Leaders use this funding well to ensure all pupils make the best possible progress. This is an example of the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to extend the range of sports offered and increase the involvement of pupils. For example, pupils have had opportunities to play golf at a local golf club and there is a new orienteering course around the school. As a result, pupils are now starting to experience sporting success. They were local winners of golf and tennis tournaments this year.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. It helps to promote the British values of tolerance and respect as pupils have a good understanding of other religions and cultures. Older pupils have a good understanding of democracy and the make up of the United Kingdom through their recent study of the Scottish referendum. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their preparation for life in modern Britain.
- The school is a caring, safe environment where safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- The headteacher's approach to her work with parents, the local community and other agencies is exemplary. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the support it provides. On the first day of the inspection parents, grandparents and carers were welcomed into school to share Christmas lunch. Pupils who are vulnerable, disabled, disadvantaged or have special educational needs are cared for extremely well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a strong commitment and visit regularly. They are enthusiastic champions of the school, while having an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses.
 - The local authority have observed all of the teaching during the year and provided a written report for governors. This, together with regular reports from the headteacher, ensures governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching.
 - Governors are able to challenge the work of the school because they have a good understanding of assessment information. They use all the performance information they have to make decisions about pay awards so that they are able to reward good teaching.
 - Governors manage the budget prudently, making sure designated funding benefits the pupils for whom it is intended. As a result, all pupils, regardless of their ability and means, make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons because adults have high expectations and are consistent in their approach. As a result, pupils flourish in a calm atmosphere and have good attitudes to their work. Pupils are happy, like their teachers and enjoy school.
- There are a significant number of pupils who have special educational needs related to their behaviour.

The expertise of teachers and teaching assistants in supporting such pupils and managing their behaviour ensures lessons are not disrupted and that all pupils are included. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

- Pupils are given extensive opportunities to look after each other. They enjoy taking responsibility for younger pupils, helping at lunchtimes and organising play activities and equipment. As a result, behaviour at these times is also good.
- Pupils from the school council make a positive contribution. For example, they devised a system to encourage good attendance involving awarding certificates and prizes.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of different types of bullying, including racism. This is because there are regular activities such as anti-bullying week, 'Show Racism The Red Card', and a visit from 'Childline' that increase pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils say that bullying 'hardly ever happens', and that when it does it is dealt with very quickly.
- Parents are confident that behaviour is good in the school, and none spoken with during the inspection expressed any concerns.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly average. There are now hardly any pupils in the school who are persistently absent because good attendance is constantly encouraged and leaders are rigorous in following up those at risk of being absent too often.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All pupils spoken with said they feel safe and parents have no concerns about safety in the school.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to stay safe in a wide variety of situations. This is because the school has an excellent range of activities suitable for all ages to help them know how to stay safe. For example, all pupils are taught to stay safe on the internet and some learn how to ride their bicycles safely on the road. Older pupils also attend a safety carousel organised locally. This has a marked impact as they remember vividly the safety messages about fire, water and electricity.
- There are excellent systems to keep vulnerable pupils safe. Leaders are rigorous in their approach, take the safety of vulnerable pupils extremely seriously and forge excellent links with agencies that provide additional support.

The quality of teaching

is good

- There have been good improvements to the quality of marking and feedback given to pupils since the last inspection. Teachers not only mark pupils' work regularly and accurately, but they also make sure that pupils know exactly what it is they need to do to make good progress. Pupils do not always have the same opportunities to go over past errors or misunderstandings to correct their work in mathematics.
- Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils exceptionally well. They forge excellent relationships with pupils by constantly using praise and encouragement so that there is a productive working atmosphere in classrooms. While expectations of behaviour are high and pupils work hard, there is not quite the same degree of expectation of the quality of written work that pupils could produce, especially in the accuracy of their punctuation and grammar, in order for them to make even more rapid progress.
- Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to the good behaviour of pupils in lessons. They also teach small groups of pupils well so that, for example, the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is effective. Reading is taught consistently well throughout the school.
- Teachers assess the attainment and progress of pupils regularly and accurately. They use this information to set work that is matched well to the different ability groups within each class.
- Teaching is well organised in the school. For example, an extra teacher in the early years in the mornings allows Reception-aged children to be taught literacy and numeracy separately from the younger nursery children so that they are appropriately challenged and make good progress. This flexible approach to the needs of different groups and individual pupils is a strength of the teaching across the school.
- Teachers explain new work clearly to pupils and ask appropriate questions to get pupils to think more deeply.
- Pupils are set English and mathematics homework on a weekly basis. Some pupils enjoy the opportunity to complete their homework after school in a weekly homework club.
- Pupils have good opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have written a persuasive argument in religious education to express their different views of the

creation of the world.

- There are fewer opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge, either in real life situations or in other subjects.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is consistently good and the work that is set is matched well to pupils' different learning needs.
- The number of pupils in some year groups is very small and this, together with higher than average numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than Year 1, make year on year comparisons unreliable. This was particularly the case in Year 2 in 2014 where six out of seven pupils joined the school after the start of Year 1, and more than two-thirds had special educational needs or a disability.
- These factors also led to standards reached in tests at the end of Year 6 in 2014 being much lower than average in writing and mathematics, although they were average in reading. Despite these lower standards, this still represented good progress from these pupils' different starting points. Work in books shows that all pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve or exceed the attainment expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in reading from below average starting points in Year 1. While attainment in the phonics screening check was below average in 2014, this represented good progress from pupils' starting points. Pupils continue to make good progress in reading throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, so that by the end of Year 6 all pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age and some are doing even better than this.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics so that the vast majority make good progress to reach the attainment expected for their age by the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in mathematics is low. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematics skills and knowledge in other subjects or in real-life situations so that they have a deeper understanding. There are a few occasions when pupils are moved on to new areas of mathematics when they have not fully understood the previous work. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 1.
- Overall, pupils make good progress in writing. This is because they are given many opportunities to write at length in English lessons and in other subjects. Standards in writing have been much lower than in reading for a number of years. Improvements to the quality of marking and feedback are helping to close this gap so that standards are rising. However, sometimes pupils do not use the correct grammar and punctuation in their written work. This is because teachers are not expecting them to do so all the time.
- The most able pupils make similarly good progress to their classmates. There are some excellent examples of enrichment activities that help them to aspire to the highest levels in their work. For example, students from Durham University lead a 'Bright Sparks' club where the most able pupils are learning Latin after school.
- The majority of pupils in the school are disadvantaged and in some year groups there are only one or two pupils who are not. This means that attainment comparisons within year groups and with other pupils nationally are unreliable. Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as others in the school. In Year 6 in 2014, there was no gap between the two groups in reading and mathematics and a gap of about a year in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their attainment has improved over time so that it is above average when compared to similar pupils nationally in reading and average in writing and mathematics. This is because the school tracks progress carefully and provides effective support in lessons.
- Pupils who speak English as a second language make good and sometimes excellent progress so that they catch up with their classmates by the end of Year 6.
- Achievement is not outstanding because not enough pupils are making rapid progress, particularly in mathematics and writing.

The early years provision is good

- Children start school in nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typically found. About a third

of children start with skills and abilities that are very low. For example, a number of children started school this year who were not toilet trained. A small minority can speak very little English when they start.

- Children quickly settle in to a calm and vibrant atmosphere where they are happy and feel safe. They enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities that help them to thrive and make good progress. By the time they leave reception the majority have reached a good level of development so that they are ready to start school in Year 1.
- Children who are in the early stages of speaking English because they do not speak it at home have made good overall progress, with some making rapid progress, to reach a good level of development, including acquiring good reading and writing skills.
- Children make particularly good progress in their personal and social skills. They behave well in a range of situations whether they are being supervised directly by an adult or not. This is because adults nurture good relationships where children feel important and cared for. Good routines are well established so that children know what is expected. They are able to take turns, listen to adults and each other well. For example, some of the most able boys were able to concentrate and hold a lengthy conversation with each other about the toy animals they were playing with.
- The quality of teaching is good. All adults have a consistent approach so that it is difficult to know who is the teacher. The organisation of teaching has changed this year so that reception children experience more direct teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in the mornings. As a result, they are making good progress in their understanding of letters, sounds and numbers.
- The quality of leadership and management is good. The early years leader is a very knowledgeable and experienced teacher who has created an effective team who share consistently high expectations and know exactly what they are expected to do each day. The curriculum is planned well to make sure there are a range of interesting activities that are directed by adults within a rich learning environment. The early years leader uses assessment information well to make changes to the provision to ensure improvements in achievement.
- There are good safety procedures in place and children learn how to stay safe in a range of meaningful situations suitable for their age.

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	114140
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	443857

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	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Elliott
Headteacher	Gaynor Davison
Date of previous school inspection	5 April 2011
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