

# Laurel Avenue Community Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114140
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	311500
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rosemary Rodger

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

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<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 on roll</b>	
School	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Ann Elliott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Valerie Vayro
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Laurel Avenue The Woodlands Durham County Durham DH1 2EY
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 3868416
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 3845608

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This small school serves an area of high social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils attend the school from the immediate area. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average. The school has received several awards including Active Mark Gold, Arts Mark, Healthy School, Investing in Children and re-accreditation of a local authority Anti- Bullying award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Laurel Avenue is a good school with outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage. The personal development and care and safety of pupils are given a high priority, resulting in a strong, caring ethos in which the all round learning of pupils is effectively fostered. The school provides a haven of calm and warmly welcomes parents and visitors alike. It plays a pivotal role in the local community because of the wide use made of the school's facilities and activities for pupils outside the school day. Parents are unanimous in their praise of the school.

Many pupils overcome barriers to learning effectively which is reflected in their good achievement. Children make good progress from very low starting points when they start in the Nursery. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 as a consequence of skilled teaching emanating from a thorough analysis of pupils' progress term by term. Despite this, standards at the end of Year 2 are below average. The results of national tests by the time pupils leave school in Year 6 are broadly average in mathematics and science and below average in English. A considerable focus has been given this year on implementing a new system to help to improve writing. This is beginning to have a good impact on improving writing in a weekly writing task, but for older pupils weaknesses in the basic skills of writing, including spelling, affects the overall quality of their work. However, overall achievement is good in English, mathematics and science. Standards and achievement have improved considerably since the previous inspection, particularly in mathematics, although small numbers in each year group mean that comparisons with national figures year-on-year need to be treated with caution. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well throughout the school. The organisation of the mixed-age classes means that pupils with additional needs are able to work outside their age group with pupils at a similar stage in their learning. This is a noteworthy feature in Key Stage 1. It was effectively demonstrated by the confidence with which older, less able pupils engaged in a speaking and listening role play activity. The more able pupils are identified, but there is still less challenge for them in some lessons to help them make even more progress and reach higher levels.

Behaviour is excellent. Older pupils have many responsibilities for helping to encourage good behaviour, for example, in their role as 'buddies' and 'mediators' they ensure that playtime squabbles are quickly resolved. Pupils have very good attitudes and appreciate all that the school provides for them. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Key features are exemplary planning and use of whiteboard technology to add enjoyment and challenge to learning literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils know what to do to improve their work because of the detailed guidance provided by their teachers. The good curriculum places a high priority on developing basic skills. It is further enriched by a good range of sporting activities during and after school, as well as visits to places of interest that support learning in history and other subjects. Arrangements to ensure pupils are kept safe meet requirements. Pupils say they feel safe because of the care shown by their teachers. They are consistently guided and supported at all times, especially with their work. Parents are kept informed about homework which is set regularly throughout the school and on an almost daily basis by the time pupils are in Year 6.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is well supported by an effective, hardworking team of colleagues. Effective steps to improve the partnership with parents through establishing a 'friends of the school' group and improving communication with parents in an informative and friendly newsletter are having a good impact. Governors use their professional expertise to good effect to benefit the pupils.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Based on their very low skills and ability when they start in the Nursery, children make excellent progress by the time they leave the Foundation Stage unit in all areas of learning. They quickly settle into the routines. Home visits help to allay any parental concerns and begin to give children confidence. It is the view of parents that their 'children come on in leaps and bounds'. 2007 was an exceptional year and children exceeded the level expected for their age by the time they started in Year 1. However, there is fluctuation year-by-year and not all children attending the Nursery transfer to the school. Overall, most children reach the expected level and an increasing number reach beyond it. Achievement is outstanding because teaching is exemplary and fully engages children in everything they do. Not an opportunity is missed to encourage children to develop their literacy skills, whether it is reading their name when choosing a fruity snack, self registering when they come into school or reading the instructions to make a cup of tea during outdoor playtime. Children enjoy learning because it is fun. An investigation into the range of everyday utensils and crockery very successfully helped to improve children's early language skills. Teapots, jugs, kettles and different kinds of tea generated a wealth of learning that helped to improve the speech and understanding of many children. Personal, social and emotional development is very well promoted too. Children grow in confidence and play calmly and productively at all times. Children delight in brushing their teeth as soon as they arrive into the unit. Assessment is exemplary and fulfils two main purposes excellently; to guide future learning for the children and to inform parents of their child's progress. Leadership of the unit is outstanding because of the excellent model of exemplary teaching and the impact of this talent on other staff.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' writing in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that the more able pupils are appropriately challenged.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school based on their very low starting points. The excellent start in Foundation Stage is leading to improvement in Key Stage 1 although standards remain below average. The school's meticulous assessment data and scrutiny of their books shows that pupils are making good progress in lessons and standards are improving. The results of national tests by the time pupils leave school in Year 6 are broadly average in mathematics and science and below average in English. This is a marked improvement on standards over the past four years; they have risen each year in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and science. The concerted effort throughout the school to improve standards is beginning to have a good impact, especially in raising standards in writing. However, older pupils have gaps in their basic skills and this hinders their writing and spelling. Although most pupils make good progress higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and could make better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

The excellent personal development and well-being of all pupils is widely praised by parents who unanimously hold the view that their children are well cared for and really enjoy school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils are 'happy in school', partly because of the buddy system that supports them at break times and the partnering with a buddy if pupils are new to the school. Teachers are approachable and welcoming to parents. The school is a hub in the local community and provides a haven of calm and reassurance to pupils. Pupils thoroughly enjoy a range of sporting activities and links with their feeder secondary school provides additional sporting activities. The good participation of pupils is reflected in the Active Mark Gold award. Pupils enjoy fresh fruit every day. Pupils are encouraged to discuss anything they may be worried about in confidence via the 'worry box'. They know that should problems arise when playing that 'mediators' will intervene to help stop arguments. Older pupils have an extensive range of responsibilities that they take seriously. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils understand the importance of attending school all the time. They proudly described the awards they achieve for good attendance. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of working hard and how it will equip them for their future careers.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good, and as a result pupils make good progress as they go through school. A strength is the calm, well ordered environment provided for the pupils. Relationships are exceptionally good. Expectations that pupils behave well are fundamental to their learning and generally pupils understand this. Pupils enjoy learning basic skills because of the innovative use of whiteboard technology to play games. Lessons are diligently planned and what the pupils are expected to learn is visually shared and explained. This is a strong feature in Key Stage 1, as shown, for example, through pupils' efficient learning on the use of connectives. Teaching builds effectively on pupils' prior learning although tasks for the more able are not always sufficiently challenging. Marking is thorough and makes good links to what the pupils are expected to learn. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their targets for improvement prior to assessments. This leads to a greater understanding of what they have learned and what they still need to learn. Displays to support pupils' learning are exemplary. Pupils find these are useful prompts, especially when they are writing. However, there are very few displays to celebrate pupils' achievements in writing and to model exemplary writing.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 2

The good curriculum is enriched through a range of exciting after school clubs, visit and visitors. There is a high priority given to the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). A recent development to include the content of some of the other subjects, such as history or geography, into literacy lessons is a good initiative and provides a clear relevance to pupils' work. The quality of written work in subjects other than literacy and numeracy is not as good because expectations that pupils will apply their basic literacy skills and spell correctly are not always high enough. The planning for mixed-age classes

takes good account of the wide range of individual needs. Pupils with learning difficulties are particularly well included, although not enough is provided to challenge the more able pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Arrangements to ensure high quality care, guidance and support for pupils are good.

The school has recently been awarded an anti-bullying re-accreditation for the third year running. Actions to improve attendance have resulted in good improvements since the previous inspection. Information to parents about full attendance on the monthly newsletter rewards to classes and individual pupils for full attendance are successful actions that have taken place. Pupils are safe and confident in school because of the very high level of care shown towards them and their parents. The arrangements to track the progress of pupils year by year are meticulous and used effectively to support learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction for the school. The governors provide good support. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher work effectively as a senior team implementing new initiatives to secure improvement to pupils' progress. Staff are committed and very hardworking. Teamwork is effective. Staff know pupils very well and work hard to ensure that all are encouraged to achieve well. This is clearly seen in the meticulous records kept of all pupils and the wealth of knowledge available about individual pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other vulnerable pupils. The school works well with external agencies for the personal well-being of all pupils and their families. The school runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Priorities are based on a thorough analysis of pupils' achievements and actions to secure improvements have a beneficial impact, for example, to raise attendance, improve links with parents and tackling weaknesses in writing standards.

Target setting is a firmly based on an accurate and realistic analysis of pupils' standards and progress year by year. Targets are fairly challenging but there is a little more potential for stretching the performance of the more able pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2, now that overall good progress is beginning to be more marked throughout school. The school's self-evaluation is modest in the diagnosis of some of the strengths and weaknesses. It has not taken sufficient account of the considerable support provided to improve teaching and the improvements that have been achieved particularly in raising standards. Improvements since the last inspection are good. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### 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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	3
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	1

### 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Laurel Avenue Community Primary School, Durham, DH1 2EY

Thank you for making my visit to your school so enjoyable and for all the help you gave me. I really enjoyed talking to so many of you and looking at all your work. Please thank your parents for the comments they sent me about your school. You attend a good school. I would now like to tell you why I have come to that judgement.

You all work very hard and understand why it is important for you to succeed in your future lives and get good jobs. You explained all about your targets to me brilliantly. This showed me what good ambassadors you are for your school. Those of you with special responsibilities work hard and help to make sure everyone is happy and confident at playtimes. Your hard work means that you are all making good progress and achieving much better in the tests you take throughout the year. I know you enjoy school. You like the rewards you receive for good attendance, especially the trips out.

I have suggested that the staff make sure that those of you who find your work easy are given work that is challenging to enable you to achieve even better. I have also asked them to help you improve your writing skills. You can help by always trying hard with the presentation of your work, and by using dictionaries to help spell words you do not know.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector