

Laurels First School, Worthing, The

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125956
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328429
Inspection date	29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	149
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Fox
Headteacher	Judith James
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2009
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Winterbourne Way West Durrington Worthing BN13 3QH
Telephone number	01903 830901
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Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and looked at the following specific aspects:

- the quality of pupils' writing and science skills
- the quality of the pupils' personal development and well-being
- how well the school cares for its pupils and the way target setting is used to help them improve their learning.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and school documents. Analysis of parents' questionnaires, discussions with pupils, governors, and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified in nearly all areas, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Laurels is a smaller than average school whose pupils are, apart from a very small minority, mainly White British. Many pupils attending are from out of the school's normal catchment area. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is just below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is higher than that seen in most schools. These pupils mainly have speech, language and behavioural difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a Reception class and a mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class. There is a breakfast club run by the school each morning. The school has a number of awards reflecting its commitment to develop pupils' basic skills and healthy living.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Laurels is a good school where enthusiastic and happy pupils make good progress because they are well taught and well cared for. Their emotional needs are given a high profile and all members of the school community recognise the importance of this. The school's welcoming ethos is a key feature that is noticeable to visitors. Parents, pupils, staff and governors are rightly proud of the quality of education all strive to provide. One parent summed up the view of many in the comment, 'My son comes home from school every day with a big smile on his face that says it all!' Parents also commented about the close links fostered between home and school which aid pupils' learning. 'We liked our 'take away' task, making lighthouses with our parents', some pupils told inspectors. Not surprisingly, most pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, although a small minority of parents find it harder to ensure their children attend regularly. There is very effective teamwork promoted between all staff, helped by a clear educational direction set by the senior leaders, including governors. As a result, the school has a good capacity to make further improvement.

Children start school with skills and experience that are lower than those found typically for this age group, particularly in elements of their communication, number knowledge, personal and social skills. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes and their good progress is fostered well as they move up through to Year 3. Although this progress sometimes varies in some subject areas, they make good progress overall through the school.

Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 3. Some subjects such as reading and mathematics are areas of strength and pupils reached slightly better than the expected levels in last year's national assessments for Year 2 pupils. In writing, pupils did not do quite as well, but the school recognises that this is an area for improvement. Staff have successfully concentrated on helping pupils' reading skills become even better. The work to improve pupils' spelling and punctuation and to encourage them use a wider vocabulary is beginning to take effect. There is still scope for pupils to become more accurate in their spelling as this detracts from the quality of their written skills. However, they use their writing skills well within other subjects such as science. Work in art, information and communication technology and music is particularly strong and pupils often reach better than typically expected levels in these areas. Target setting helps some pupils to know what they need to do to improve, but the approaches vary between classes. Some pupils found difficulty in remembering their targets or how these help them gauge improvement. However, pupils of all abilities make good progress, and support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed. It makes sure such pupils achieve as well as their classmates.

Underpinning this good progress is the typically good teaching. The way it promotes positive relationships is a strength, as is the teachers' skill in devising enjoyable and practically based activities. Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop children's basic skills systematically and their independence is fostered well which continues as they move up through the school. Teachers also use technology such as computers, digital cameras and interactive whiteboards effectively to bring lessons alive. In a minority of activities, pupils' thinking is not always fully stretched to aid their progress or demand more in terms of their response to questions or the targets they are set. Pupils benefit from help given by parents and employees from a national energy firm who regularly listen to pupils read. Given these positive aspects, it is not surprising that pupils feel extremely safe, respond well and generally make good progress in lessons. All safeguarding requirements are met.

Steering the success and improvements, senior leaders develop good teamwork and a desire to improve further. The headteacher leads the school well, supported by all staff and governors. Self-evaluation takes into account the views of parents and pupils through structured questionnaires. Governors, who support the school well, also contribute regularly to school initiatives such as the 'Young Enterprise' scheme, as well as playing a part in the school's good promotion of community cohesion. Subject leaders are effective in leading their subjects, and action plans to aid improvement are clear. The checks on teaching and planning are regular and helpful. Observations pick out positive aspects clearly, but are less effective in pinpointing strategies to improve pupils' learning further. Overall, the school's checks on its performance accurately identify strengths and areas for development. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and act as good 'critical friends' to ensure the school continues to improve.

As the senior leaders promote good levels of care, the pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. There are particular strengths in the moral and social aspects, with pupils showing consideration for others and working well together. The school's links with a Caribbean school, as well as local schools, widen their knowledge and awareness of other cultures and pupils from different backgrounds. Recent class-based activities looking at what makes Britain 'Great' widens their national perspective effectively. These aspects, combined with their good knowledge of other faiths and cultures, give pupils a good sense of community awareness. Pupils enjoy influencing improvement in the school through their work on the school council. Through its good curriculum, which includes a modern foreign language, strong art provision, instrumental music tuition, and excellent extra-curricular activities, pupils have a varied diet of academic, cultural and creative activities. Pupils say they are well prepared for their next schools. Initiatives such as the 'Young Enterprise' scheme, which develops pupils' awareness of simple commercial principles, helps them feel ready for the challenges of work and later life.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Excellent pastoral care ensures that children are happy and make a smooth start to school life. Children make good progress in all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum so they reach the typically expected levels when they enter Year 1. Progress in children's personal, social and emotional development is particularly good, with children learning the benefits of taking turns, sharing and helping friends with their work. They enjoy working together and readily respond to adults and classmates. This sets the tone for the effective way pupils work together later in the school. Staff and helpers devise a good balance of indoor activities that children can choose for themselves and those that they are directed to. The outside area supports children's learning, although its size restricts some aspects of their physical play. Children develop good basic communication skills, number and writing skills, such as learning letter sounds using computer-based games to 'zap' chosen letter combinations. Their practical skills develop well, often aided by using stories as starting points. Children were really enthused to make lighthouses connected with one of these. They listen carefully to the teacher and begin to learn simple skills to help them read and write. Links with parents are well developed; parents recognise the good start their children have. This well-managed part of the school makes excellent provision for the children's welfare by having a clear awareness of their individual medical, social and academic needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils in Years 1 to 3 more guidance in spelling to enable them to write more accurately and confidently.
- Improve the consistency of target setting between classes so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how they can guide and improve their work.
- Work with the small minority of parents who find it hard to send their children to school regularly so that attendance levels rise further.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Laurels First School, Worthing BN13 3QH

Thanks for making us feel really welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing all the activities you do. Yours is a good school that is trying to become even better.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- You make good progress in your work and you reach average levels by the end of Year 3.
- The children in the Reception classes have a good start to school and feel happy.
- All of you work hard, behave well and get on with each other, particularly in the playground as well as around the school.
- You said the teachers and assistants make sure that you feel very safe and really look after you. We think you are right.
- You do some really good work in art, music and in your computer work
- Outside visitors such as those who help you with reading give the school good support.
- The teachers make most lessons interesting and fun. The work some of you did in making the lights shine on your lighthouses was really good.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are working together well to make your school a good place to be and for it to get even better.

We have asked the school to look at three things to improve.

- Help you improve spelling in your written work.
- Simplify the way you help set your own targets so you all have a good idea of how to use them to help you improve your work.
- Help some mums, dads and carers make sure that some of you, who don't attend as often as you could, come to school as regularly as other children.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard and by helping the staff spot where even more improvements can be made.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector