



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Hall Green Primary School

Sandwell Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 30 June-1 July 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Hall Green Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Ms K Heng
Address of school:	Westminster Road West Bromwich West Midlands B71 2JQ
Telephone:	0121 588 2080
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr D Prosser
Local education authority area:	Sandwell
Unique reference number:	103977
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr A Watters HMI
Dates of inspection:	30 June-1 July 2004

Introduction

1. Hall Green Primary School is situated in the Stone Cross area of West Bromwich in the West Midlands. There are 358 pupils on roll aged between 4 and 11 years. The pupils' attainment on entry is low and often very low in literacy. Thirty three per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and four per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language. There are five pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Need and 23 per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs. The rate of pupil mobility is nine per cent; in Year 6 it is 29 per cent, which is similar to the most recent national average.

2. The school was inspected in April 2000. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of April 2000. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on 12 occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In June and July 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of April 2000.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- in each key stage standards are rising and more pupils are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in improving basic skills in English and mathematics. The school's results in the most recent end-of-key stage national tests are expected to show improvement from the previous year, and reflect the continuing upward trend in the pupils' levels of attainment;
- nevertheless, standards overall are too low and the levels of residual underachievement in each key stage are too high. The gap between the pupils' current attainment and what is expected for their age is closing, but not at a sufficiently speedy rate;
- the pupils' personal development, which includes the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is broadly satisfactory, but has weaknesses. Assemblies, for example, do not make a sufficiently positive contribution to the school's ethos and sense of community;
- the pupils' behaviour and their attitudes are very good. Attendance is currently 92.7 per cent, which represents a significant increase from the previous year;

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- the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably and is satisfactory overall. Nevertheless there are too many lessons where the pupils make barely satisfactory progress in improving their basic skills. The proportion of lessons where the teaching and learning were good and better is too low;
 - curriculum planning is satisfactory with an appropriate emphasis given to literacy and numeracy. The procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress in English and mathematics are very good, although they are underdeveloped in science. The assessment co-ordinator, who is currently on maternity leave, provides good leadership and has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of education;
 - the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory with some good features; learning support assistants are making a good contribution to this important area of the school's work;
 - the Foundation Stage curriculum is broadly satisfactory although the day-to-day organisation of lessons is not giving a sufficiently strong emphasis to meeting the pupils' specific learning needs, particularly in speaking, reading and writing;
 - the leadership and management are secure and satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides good leadership. She has ensured that there is a clear sense of educational direction and an increasingly rigorous focus on raising standards. Subject leaders are making an increasingly positive contribution to enable the pupils achieve higher standards;
 - strategic planning and the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are good. Budgetary planning is prudent and very good; governance is satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to raising standards and a clear demonstration of the capacity to make further improvements;
 - the local education authority (LEA) has provided a comprehensive range of advice and training, which has recently begun to make an important and positive contribution to improving the quality of education. The school's development adviser gives good help to the headteacher, and the LEA's support and monitoring of the school's budget are very good.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- raise standards further and eliminate underachievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
- increase the proportion of good and better teaching, eliminate remaining weaknesses and rigorously monitor the impact of the teaching on the quality of the pupils' learning;

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- strengthen the provision in the Foundation Stage to provide a curriculum that is matched more closely to the pupils' specific learning needs;
 - improve the pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. In each key stage standards are rising and more pupils are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in improving basic skills in English and mathematics. The results of non-statutory tests in reading, writing and numeracy show that many pupils are consolidating their learning and beginning to acquire new skills. The results of the most recent end-of-key stage national tests show improvement from the previous year, and reflect the continuing upward trend in the pupils' levels of attainment. In Key Stage 1, compared with the previous year, the proportion of the pupils who reached the level expected for seven-year-olds increased by 11 per cent in reading, 12 per cent in writing and stayed broadly the same in mathematics. At Key Stage 2 in English, 64 per cent of the pupils attained the level expected for 11-year-olds, an increase of nine per cent from the previous year. Fifty eight per cent of the pupils reached the expected level for their age in mathematics, an increase of eight per cent since the 2003 national tests. Standards in science remained broadly the same as the previous year with 69 per cent of the pupils achieving the age-related expectation.

8. Despite the encouraging signs of rising standards, the pupils' attainment remains persistently low when compared with what they are expected to achieve for their age. More pupils are capable of achieving higher standards and making faster progress, and the levels of residual underachievement in each key stage are too high.

9. The pupils' attainment in reading and writing is improving at a faster rate than previously, although standards in spelling remain too low. Standards in handwriting have improved considerably and are close to what is expected for the pupils' ages; many pupils write neatly and legibly, forming their letters correctly. Some of the pupils' handwriting is of a high standard. An increasing proportion of the pupils in each key stage write sentences that are sequenced and punctuated accurately. Many of the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are writing at length using interesting phrases, complex sentences and a varied vocabulary although weaknesses remain in their use of grammar, particularly the use of the correct tense. In some year groups, such as in Years 2, 3 and 4, there are too few opportunities to write at length. Standards in speaking and listening are too low although an increasing number of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, achieve satisfactory and sometimes very good standards. While nearly all the pupils are eager to contribute to discussions, much of their response is often poorly structured, containing many basic errors in pronunciation and grammar.

10. Standards in mathematics reflect the overall rising trend in attainment; although they remain too low, more pupils are making sound progress and beginning to achieve standards that are close to or in line with what is expected for their age. In Years 3 and 4 the higher attaining pupils use the mental recall of multiplication facts to double two-digit numbers. In a Year 3 lesson the pupils understood the function of a pictogram and explained how to create one. Nevertheless, despite the increased and generally effective focus on improving the quality of teaching in mathematics, much remains to be done to raise standards further,

particularly in relation to mental calculations and the use of different strategies to solve number problems.

11. Standards in science show some signs of improvement but remain well below what is expected for the pupils' ages. The quality of resources and planning systems are being improved to give greater emphasis to scientific investigation and enquiry. Currently the lack of regular and systematic assessment to track the pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning is impeding the rate of improvement.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They were very good in three lessons, good in 13 and satisfactory in six other lessons. The pupils' behaviour around the school was consistently satisfactory and frequently very good. In all lessons the pupils behaved well, persevered with their work and showed good levels of concentration, even when some of their tasks were not explained sufficiently or were too easy. The pupils are courteous, polite, good-humoured and always welcoming to visitors. In lessons where the quality of teaching was good and very good, the pupils were motivated to succeed and relished the challenge provided by their work.

13. The pupils have increasingly positive attitudes to their life in school. Some of the older pupils in Key Stage 2 spoke extremely well about the improvements in the quality of their education, and were appreciative of the efforts of their teachers and other adults with whom they work. Some of the pupils engage in conversation easily and with confidence and, when given the opportunity, offer their opinions in a mature and sensible manner. The school council has made a positive contribution to increasing the pupils' self-esteem and has given them a greater involvement in helping to improve the quality of education. This is a very positive development that has recently been neglected.

14. The pupils' personal development, which includes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is broadly satisfactory. Some pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and respect the views of others, although insufficient attention is given to enabling the pupils to consider their aspirations, understand their place in the local community and make sense of the wider world. While this does occur in some classes it is not a consistent feature in each key stage. The pupils are taught about respect and kindness but on occasions at a very superficial level.

15. Assemblies are not yet making a sufficiently positive contribution to developing and improving the school's ethos and sense of community. They do not provide adequate time for reflection and consideration of the pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

16. The pupils' attendance is currently 92.7 per cent, and represents a significant increase from the previous year. However, it is below the national average of 94.1 per cent for primary schools. The pupils' attendance is monitored rigorously by an administrative assistant; there are good systems to improve the pupils' attendance and these are having a positive impact in each key stage.

The quality of education

17. The quality of teaching was very good in one lesson, good in five and satisfactory in 13 other lessons. The quality of teaching was stronger in Key Stage 2 than in the Foundation

Stage and Key Stage 1; all of the good and better teaching was in Key Stage 2 and there were no unsatisfactory lessons in this key stage. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in three out of five lessons in Key Stage 1 and in two out of three sessions in the Foundation Stage. In six of the satisfactory lessons, mostly in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, strengths in the teaching just outweighed the weaknesses. The quality of the pupils' learning was consistently satisfactory and better at Key Stage 2 but was more fragile in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.

18. In the best lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge was good and their expectations of the pupils' attainment, rates of progress and behaviour were high. There was a very good pace of learning and thorough planning; the teachers' instructions were very clear and helped the pupils know exactly what they were required to learn. Important concepts were explained carefully and skills were taught effectively. The pupils' tasks were matched accurately to their different prior attainment and questions challenged the pupils' thinking and probed their understanding. The pupils were given time to complete their tasks and to share their learning with their classmates.

19. In the weaker and unsatisfactory lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge was inadequate and the pace of learning was too slow. The pupils sat passively for too long and were praised for work that was not good enough. Learning objectives were confused with the pupils' activities and assessment was not used well to inform future planning and to match the pupils' work to their different learning needs.

20. Two advanced skills teachers, who have been deployed at the school over the previous two years, have made a very important contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards in information and communication technology and in mathematics.

21. Curriculum planning is satisfactory with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Nationally produced schemes of work are used to guide the teachers' long, medium and short-term plans; weekly lesson planning draws coherently on these schemes to ensure that the pupils receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum and that they are taught an appropriate range of work and deepen their understanding. The teachers' short-term planning is generally consistent although too many confuse learning objectives with the pupils' activities. The proposed revised schemes of work in science give greater emphasis to teaching scientific enquiry although there is insufficient guidance for teachers to help them match the different activities to the pupils' prior attainment.

22. The procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress in English and mathematics are very good, although they are underdeveloped in science. The assessment co-ordinator, who is currently on maternity leave, provides good leadership in this important area of the school's work. There is an increasingly good range of assessment information that is used well to set targets for improvement in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. Long, medium and short-term targets for individual pupils and year groups are helping the governors, the headteacher and senior teachers to: measure the rate of the pupils' progress; ensure that teachers are clear about their role in lifting the pupils' attainment levels; and establish accountability for raising standards. In most classes day-to-day assessment is used well to match the pupils' work to their different learning needs but this is not yet a sufficiently consistent feature in each key stage. The pupils' written work is checked and

marked regularly, with most comments providing useful guidance to help the pupils know what they need to do next to improve their work.

23. The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory with some good features. The pupils' individual education plans are used by class teachers to guide the pupils' work in lessons; the special educational needs co-ordinator expects to monitor this process from the beginning of the autumn term 2004. Assessments to check pupils' progress against the targets in their individual education plans, at three and six week intervals, are beginning to be used to review and set new targets, although this is not yet monitored consistently in all classes. The results of the most recent statutory and non-statutory tests show that many pupils are making sound and sometimes good progress to improve their basic skills. The recent training provided for learning support assistants has been successful; each is making an increasingly positive contribution to raising standards, particularly through questioning to challenge the pupils' thinking and the more effective use of resources.

24. The Foundation Stage curriculum is broadly satisfactory, although the day-to-day organisation of lessons is not giving a sufficiently strong emphasis to meeting the pupils' specific learning needs, particularly in speaking, reading and writing. When the pupils are taught in small groups by the teacher or other adults they receive generally satisfactory support and guidance. However, when the pupils are asked to choose their activities and play independently the quality of their learning becomes unsatisfactory. There is not enough attention given to the pupils' different starting points, to build on what they can already do; much of the content of their work does not match their varying needs and the independent activities do not provide sufficient opportunities for teaching and learning. Teaching time is not always used to best effect.

25. While much of the curriculum planned for the pupils in the Foundation Stage is detailed, thorough and generally satisfactory, there is a lack of understanding about how these pupils might learn through play, and a failure to ensure that independent activities have a clear purpose and outcome. For much of the day the pupils freely choose their tasks, which has led to an imbalance between direct teaching and pupil-initiated activities.

Leadership and management

26. Leadership and management are secure and satisfactory overall. Subject leaders are making an increasingly positive contribution to help the pupils achieve higher standards and they have produced useful action plans to guide improvement in their subjects. The core subject co-ordinators have a clear focus on raising standards and they have been successful in ensuring that all teachers have a better understanding of how to assess the pupils' work in relation to the attainment levels in the National Curriculum.

27. The headteacher provides good and determined leadership. She has ensured that there is a clear sense of educational direction, an increasingly rigorous focus on raising standards and she has established strong foundations for further improvement; these include a commitment to eliminating underachievement and raising the expectations and aspirations of all pupils and staff. The school's self-evaluation of its performance is thorough and comprehensive; it provides an accurate appraisal of strengths and weaknesses and clear priorities for improvement.

28. The school development plan has been revised and provides a good framework for improvement; the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are good. The headteacher has initiated a very rigorous and systematic programme to observe lessons, scrutinise the pupils' written work and check the teachers' planning. She has taken a strong lead in this process, which has been pivotal in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are given clear and unequivocal feedback about the quality of their practice; their personal agendas, which set priorities for development each month and include targets for improvement with dates for reviewing progress, have made a significant contribution to improving the quality of education.

29. Strategic planning is good. Budgetary planning is prudent and very good. A deficit-recovery plan is well on course to meet its target of a balanced budget by the year 2007 – 2008; changes and reductions in staffing, and a fall in the number of pupils on roll are being managed well by the headteacher and the governors. Improving the quality of the curriculum, raising standards and increasing the rate of the pupils' progress remain central to the process of long-term and strategic planning. The school has the capacity to make further improvements and build on the good progress made in recent months.

30. Governance is satisfactory; the work of governors continues to improve and their role in monitoring and evaluation has been strengthened. The governing body receives regular progress reports from the headteacher and other senior teachers and is clearly focused on holding the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils. The chair of governors, with good support from the vice-chair, provides steady and determined leadership. He meets regularly with the headteacher and is a strong advocate of the school.

31. The LEA has provided a comprehensive range of advice and training, which has recently begun to make an important contribution to improving the quality of education. The school's development adviser is a regular and frequent visitor and has taken a strong lead in promoting the LEA's statutory role of intervention, challenge and support. She has established a productive and effective dialogue with the headteacher and given very good support to establish a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation. The LEA's head of budgetary services provides strong support and has been instrumental in helping the governors maintain a robust focus on eliminating the school's budget deficit.

Implementation of the action plan

32. The inspection report of April 2000 required the school to address five key issues. These principally related to: raising standards; improving the quality of teaching; improving leadership and management; developing the curriculum; and ensuring that the school provided equal opportunity for all pupils. Good progress has been made to improve the quality of leadership and management and reasonable progress in all other areas.

33. Although standards are rising, too many pupils still leave the school achieving levels below those expected for their age, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The quality of teaching has improved and is satisfactory overall. The leadership and management of the school are secure and satisfactory; the headteacher provides good leadership. The curriculum has improved and meets statutory requirements; there is equal opportunity for all pupils to access the full National Curriculum.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in April 2000. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in November 2000; February, June and October 2001; January, March, June and November 2002; March, June and December 2003; and March 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of April 2000.

In June and July 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty two lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair and vice-chair of governors, the school's development adviser from the LEA and the LEA's head of school budgetary services. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of April 2000 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.