



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Dines Green Primary School

Worcestershire Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 9-10 June 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:	Dines Green Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mr S Gough
Address of school:	Tudor Way Dines Green Worcester WR2 5QH
Telephone:	01905 423228
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body at the above address
Chair of governors:	Mrs A Clay
Local education authority area:	Worcestershire
Unique reference number:	116751
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs L McGill HMI
Dates of inspection:	9-10 June 2004

Introduction

1. Dines Green Primary School is situated in Dines Green, on the western outskirts of the city of Worcester. Most of the 230 pupils come from the nearby council estate and their socio-economic circumstances are not favourable; about one third of them are eligible for free school meals. There is little ethnic diversity in the school's intake, reflecting the local population. The school has a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and there are six pupils who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. On entry to the school, the pupils' attainment is below average, particularly in their speaking and listening skills, and in their social development. In recent years, there has been a high degree of mobility of pupils, but this has recently begun to settle down.

2. The school was inspected in February 2002. 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 February 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on five occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In June 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 February 2002.

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:

- the results of national tests at the end of 2003 were well below those of schools nationally at both key stages, and below the results of schools in similar contexts. A great deal of effort has been put into boosting the attainment of the current Year 6 and, while results are not expected to improve this year, the school expects to meet its targets and is in a stronger position for future years;
 - standards in lessons are beginning to improve, but overall, remain below what is expected nationally at both key stages. However, where the pupils receive consistently satisfactory or good teaching, they make at least sound progress from their low starting points. The oldest pupils have had a turbulent passage through the school and there are many gaps in their learning, but the younger pupils' experience has been more consistent and their attainment is generally higher;
 - the pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved and were nearly always satisfactory and frequently good; in over half of the lessons they behaved well and had positive attitudes to their work. However, good work habits are not well established for some pupils;
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- attendance levels are just below the national figure. Unauthorised absence is low. The school makes good efforts to work with families where attendance causes concern;
 - the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development is well fostered. The school's ethos is one of co-operation and respect, and the pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for their own behaviour;
 - the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one of the lessons. The teaching in half of the lessons was good, and this consistency is helping to ensure that the pupils make steadier progress. Recent new appointments at Key Stage 2 have helped to strengthen and improve the teaching for the older pupils; however, the proportion of good teaching is not yet great enough to help pupils make up some of the ground they have lost;
 - teaching and learning support assistants make a valuable contribution in lessons and work effectively in partnership with class teachers to help those who have special educational needs. Their skills and confidence have been boosted by training;
 - the school's curriculum is suitably broad and, in the light of the generally low level of literacy skills, gives an appropriate emphasis to English. The school is taking steps to enrich the curriculum; for example, by staging productions and taking part in sporting events. There is a growing range of assessment information which is used to track progress and to identify those in need of particular support;
 - the headteacher has worked effectively over the past two years to secure the improvements which were needed in teaching, behaviour and leadership and management. He provides secure leadership and has handled sensitive issues with care. The deputy headteacher has successfully led developments to strengthen the teaching at Key Stage 2. The school's draft plan for improvement should form a useful tool to help make further progress. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have developed well and curriculum leaders are playing a stronger part in managing their subjects. There is scope to develop further their roles and that of the deputy headteacher;
 - the governing body has been unswerving in its support for the school and a core group of committed governors spends time in school, working with the pupils and evaluating aspects of the school's work. The deficit in the school's budget has been repaid and the school is secure financially;
 - the local education authority (LEA) has given the school sustained support over the past two years, which has helped to bring about improvement, and has also kept the school's progress under close review.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:
- continue to work to raise standards and improve the rate of progress;
 - further strengthen the quality of teaching;
 - build on the improvements in the pupils' behaviour, in particular to develop good work habits;
 - develop the roles of the deputy headteacher and curriculum leaders.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The results of national tests at the end of 2003 were well below those of schools nationally at both key stages, and below the results of schools in similar contexts. Nevertheless, the school achieved its target of 65 per cent of pupils to achieve the expected Level 4 in English, and fell just short of this in science. The results in mathematics were very low, however. At Key Stage 1, although three quarters of the pupils achieved the expected Level 2 in mathematics, the results in reading and writing were much lower. A great deal of effort has been put into boosting the attainment of the current Year 6 and, while results are not expected to improve this year, the school expects to meet its targets and is in a stronger position for future years.

8. Standards in lessons are beginning to improve, although, overall, they are below what is expected nationally at both key stages. Where the pupils receive consistently satisfactory or good teaching, they make at least sound progress from their low starting points. Some are beginning to recover lost ground. The oldest pupils have had a turbulent passage through the school and there are many gaps in their learning, but the younger pupils' experience has been more consistent and their attainment is generally higher.

9. Standards in English at both key stages are low. However, in well-taught literacy lessons, the pupils made good progress. For example in a good lesson in Year 6, the pupils confidently and accurately identified the imperative verbs that their classmates had used to write instructions. The pupils achieved well.

10. In all classes, there is a wide range of ability in reading. Some younger Key Stage 2 pupils, still at the early stages of reading, made use of their phonic knowledge to read words but were less skilled at using other strategies, such as looking at what they had just read to make a meaningful deduction of an unknown word. Similarly, the more able readers sometimes hazarded guesses at words and so did not fully understand what they read. In contrast, some read fluently and with appropriate expression.

11. There are weaknesses in the pupils' abilities to speak confidently and clearly and to listen attentively, many of which stem from their low levels of attainment on entry to the school. The school has implemented a specific programme to address these weaknesses. The

structured small group work observed with younger pupils was effective. Early evaluations of the success of this programme show that there have been good gains in the pupils' ability to make longer oral contributions, listen to each other and take turns to speak. The teachers' skills at developing speaking and listening in lessons varied, but, where the teachers encouraged the pupils to develop and extend their responses and gave them time to think, good progress was made.

12. The pupils' writing skills are weak and opportunities to develop extended pieces of writing are generally underdeveloped. In some cases, expectations of the standard of presentation were too low and mistakes in the spelling of important subject vocabulary and common words were ignored. The subject co-ordinator is well aware of where weaknesses lie and has a clear plan to bring about improvements.

13. Although standards in mathematics are generally low, there are some encouraging signs of improvement. By the end of the Foundation Stage, many pupils are close to the goals expected for their learning in number work. They count confidently forwards and backwards, and understand the idea of "one more" and "one less". In the rest of the school, the pupils' facility with number and their recall of facts, including times tables, is better. Their confidence in their ability as mathematicians is growing; the pupils tackle problems more thoughtfully and willingly. The pupils use mathematical vocabulary more readily and accurately; for example, when working on coordinates using grid references. However, there is sometimes a gap between the pupils' ability to talk knowledgeably with the teacher about a topic as a group, and the application of this knowledge to their individual work. The recently appointed co-ordinator has already gained a good grasp of what needs to be done to build on the recent improvements which individual teachers have effected.

14. Those pupils who have special educational needs are given good support in lessons and in groups when they are withdrawn from class, and they make progress in line with their classmates.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The pupils' behaviour has improved a good deal since the school was inspected in 2002. Changing the pupils' behaviour and attitudes for the better was crucial to improving learning and accelerating progress. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are nearly always satisfactory and frequently good; they were good in just over half of the lessons. The younger pupils especially showed a keen desire to learn and responded with enthusiasm to stimulating teaching. A few of the older pupils were harder to motivate and quicker to lose their concentration; a legacy of weaker teaching in the past. All of the pupils were quiet and respectful in assemblies, socialised well with each other in the dining hall, and played purposefully at break times. However, good work habits are not well established in some classes and the pupils find changes from one part of a lesson to another difficult to manage without fuss. Concentration can also slip, but the more vigilant teachers manage this effectively and unobtrusively, insisting that the pupils follow the guidelines for looking and listening.

16. The teachers and support assistants manage well the behaviour of a few pupils who continue to present a challenge; expectations are explicit and consistently applied. The school takes good care of its vulnerable pupils, using its knowledge of individuals and families to ensure that all are included and account is taken of different needs. For example, a

small group of pupils was given a specially modified programme of induction to the local secondary school.

17. At just under 93 per cent, the school's overall attendance figure is below the national median. Rates of unauthorised absence are low. The school has continued to make good efforts to improve attendance and works with those families where attendance falls below an acceptable level.

18. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well fostered. The school promotes an ethos of co-operation and respect for others, and has formed a social skills club for a group of pupils who need support in developing and sustaining their relationships with others. The pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for their own behaviour. The school's code of conduct is well known, and the "zone board" system, which gives the pupils feedback on how they are behaving, is well established. The pupils clearly understand, and usually comply with, the rules and they know what sanctions will be applied if they misbehave. The breakfast club also gives some pupils a friendly, sociable start to the day. Pupils are given responsibilities in class and older pupils help in assembly; for example, by operating the overhead projector and CD player. In assemblies, the pupils reflect on important matters and their spiritual development is also fostered in lessons; for example, when they show a keen interest in examining plants in science, or talk about faith in religious education. Many classrooms contain bright and stimulating displays which present different religious beliefs and practices in a positive light.

The quality of education

19. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one of the lessons, and was good in half of these. The growing proportion of lessons that are well taught is a significant contributory factor to the improvement that is showing in the pupils' rates of progress, which are accelerating and show fewer fluctuations than before. Recently, there have been new appointments made in Key Stage 2 which have helped to address the long-standing weaknesses there. The proportion of good teaching is not yet large enough to ensure that all of the pupils make up the ground they have lost, at a sufficiently speedy rate. However, there is a renewed enthusiasm and desire to continue to improve teaching skills.

20. Where the teaching was good, the intentions for the pupils' learning were clear and appropriate. The teachers took account of the wide range of ability and prior attainment of their pupils, and tailored their plans accordingly. They devised suitable tasks which helped the pupils achieve the desired objectives. The teaching in the reception class is lively and captures the pupils' imagination and motivates them. Other teachers have a brisk and confident manner and engage well with their classes, managing them unobtrusively and keeping them focused on the task in hand. Occasionally, the focus on using a variety of teaching styles and methods to make sure that the pupils were motivated meant that there was not enough emphasis on their learning, and the potential for learning to be good, rather than satisfactory, was missed.

21. The pupils benefit from a high level of support from teaching assistants and learning support assistants. These members of staff make a valuable contribution to the school's work and to the achievement of the pupils with whom they work. There are some good examples of effective partnership between the class teachers and assistants. Some of the assistants have

received training; for example, to teach the speaking and listening programme, and this has boosted their confidence and skill.

22. In the past, the school sensibly focused the curriculum on improving the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy but maintained breadth in that all subjects of the National Curriculum were taught. The school has now come to the point where it is beginning to enrich and enliven the curriculum, and is strengthening cross-curricular links; for example, the suite of computers is used well in project work and for research. The range of extracurricular activities is growing, sporting opportunities are offered and the school has embarked upon its first staged production in a long time. The pupils have responded well to this, many are taking part, and the school's choir is very large indeed.

23. Procedures for assessment have improved. The teachers have always kept detailed records on the attainment of individual pupils across a range of subjects, but recent innovations to tracking procedures mean that progress, or lack of it, is much more easily demonstrated. Targeting support at individuals and groups is more accurate and the impact of intervention strategies can more readily be evaluated. The teachers' skill at identifying progress within lessons is growing, and the use of assessment information to help with planning is strengthening.

Leadership and management

24. The headteacher has worked effectively over the past two years and provides secure and determined leadership. He had been in post only a short time before the school was made subject to special measures. From the outset he showed determination to tackle the significant weaknesses which were identified, initially shouldering much of the work himself. The support of an advisory teacher and, latterly, a new deputy headteacher was instrumental in consolidating and building on the improvements. It is clear that the senior staff have the pupils' educational, social and care needs at the forefront of their thinking and they work well together. The school's approach to monitoring and evaluating its own work has developed well: it is more analytical and self-evaluation is more accurate; the school knows its own strengths and weaknesses. The draft plan for development for the next three years demonstrates a clear strategic vision for the future, building on successes and tackling remaining areas of weakness.

25. The deputy headteacher has had much to do in modelling and developing effective teaching in Key Stage 2, and has met with a good degree of success. There is now scope to further develop her leadership role and to broaden her management responsibilities. Curriculum co-ordinators have taken a stronger lead in their subjects, and their work in monitoring teaching, learning and standards is programmed into the school's overall schedule for checking its work. The headteacher sensibly focused his classroom observations more on those teachers who required particular support and this approach was successful in bringing about improvements.

26. The governing body has remained unswerving in its loyalty and commitment to the school; some governors are frequent visitors and provide support as well as undertaking evaluative exercises; for example, assessing how the needs of higher attaining pupils are met in the classroom. The governing body is also beginning to ask more challenging questions of the school and to make demands of the LEA, with the school's best interests at heart. There

is a clear determination to see further improvement. The deficit in the school's budget has been repaid and arrangements for monitoring spending are sound.

27. The LEA has given the school sustained support over the past two years. It was particularly effective in helping to bolster the quality of teaching through the secondment of an experienced advisory teacher. The school has also valued the regular support of its link inspector and consultants for literacy and numeracy, and the other support services who have worked with staff on the key issues. The LEA's input has been instrumental in bringing about improvement and it has also kept the school's progress under close scrutiny.

Implementation of the action plan

28. The inspection report of February 2002 required the school to address five key issues: to raise standards of achievement in many subjects; to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in the junior classes and for those who had special educational needs in the then Year 1; to improve the curriculum; to improve strategic planning; and to address the weaknesses in the pupils' behaviour.

29. The school made swift progress in improving the standards of behaviour overall, while continuing to tackle the specific needs of individual pupils who presented particularly challenging behaviour. Provision for meeting the pupils' special educational needs was quickly improved and is good; the particular needs of the cohort of pupils identified in the key issue are kept under close review. The quality of the curriculum and of strategic planning improved steadily. Improvements to the quality of teaching were slower to come; although the school consistently had a secure core of satisfactory and good teaching, weaknesses were harder to eradicate. The determination of the headteacher to address the weaknesses in teaching, with the support of the LEA, has led more recently to a considerable strengthening of the quality of the teaching, especially in Key Stage 2 classes.

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 February 2002. 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 October 2002, in February, May and October 2003, and in February 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of February 2002.

In June 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.

Nineteen lessons or parts of lessons, three assemblies and two 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 of governors and a representative of the LEA. 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 February 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.