

Halesowen C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103847
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	323913
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rebecca Horton
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Hannaway
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 February 2006
School address	High Street Halesowen B63 3BB
Telephone number	01384 818885
Fax number	01384 813679
Email address	ahannaway@halesowen.dudley.gov.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data the school has collected on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and procedures for keeping pupils safe.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils with English as an additional language and those who join the school after the normal starting age to determine whether provision for them is sufficiently effective
- pupils' development of basic skills, particularly in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development, to establish whether the school's initiatives are being effective
- the quality of teaching, to see whether the school's focus on improving learning has been effective
- whether the school is meeting all statutory safeguarding and other requirements and, in particular, whether staff training is up to date.

Information about the school

Halesowen Church of England Primary School is smaller than average for a school of this type. A high proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Almost half the pupils are from White British backgrounds, the rest representing a wide range of other ethnic groups, the largest coming from Yemen. More than one in four of the pupils do not speak English as their home language. There are a small number of pupils from refugee and asylum seeking families. Far more pupils than usual leave or join the school at times other than the norm. Two years ago the school faced the prospect of closure, which caused pupil numbers to decline. This threat has been removed and pupil numbers have started to rise again with good numbers in the Nursery and Reception classes. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in a Nursery and Reception class. The headteacher took up her post in January 2008.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school has successfully come through a difficult period when it was under threat of closure. It is now improving quite rapidly and providing a satisfactory quality of education. There is greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and, although it is satisfactory, there needs to be more good or outstanding teaching to accelerate pupils' progress so that they achieve as well as they might.

The support, guidance and care provided for pupils are good. In particular, those pupils joining the school at times other than the usual starting time are supported very well and are quickly able to enjoy all that the school has to offer. Support for those who speak little English is also good and these pupils soon make the same progress as their classmates.

Useful and supportive links have been established with other providers and services. For example, the local authority's expertise has been used well to improve the provision for pupils' learning and to promote higher standards of behaviour. Other links enable pupils to enjoy experiences that they would not otherwise have. For instance, pupils have been involved in learning to perform break-dancing.

Although by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are attaining broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science, these standards are relatively weaker in English and particularly in writing. The school has recognised this and challenging targets have been set for pupils' future progress and attainment. Although progress in the Early Years Foundations Stage is satisfactory, it is not always as good as it could be. For example, when children are choosing activities for themselves, there are often no clear indications of what they are expected to learn.

One of the key reasons for the recent improvements is because the headteacher has communicated well to staff her clear vision of what needs to be done and they share her determination to provide the best for the pupils. School self-evaluation is accurate and is based on rigorous monitoring, carried out by leaders at all levels. Improvement planning sets appropriate targets and the professional development for staff is focused well on these areas. A good start has been made and systems are in place for further improvement, though these are not yet fully embedded, as is seen in the inconsistencies that still exist in some areas. For this reason, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding learning and teaching by:
 - ensuring that systems to assess what pupils have already learnt are used more consistently to plan for their future learning
 - increasing pupils' involvement in assessing their own progress towards their targets
 - ensuring that the introductions to lessons are consistently sharp and snappy so that pupils are actively involved throughout lessons.

- Raise standards in literacy, and particularly in writing, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects
 - putting in place a structured approach to increasing pupils' vocabulary so that they can enliven their writing
 - improving the system for setting targets for pupils to develop their writing so that they know clearly their next steps in learning.

- Improve the progress that children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the focus of learning opportunities during activities which children choose for themselves
 - using the new assessment systems more effectively to ensure that tasks are matched more closely to children's individual learning needs.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

In the majority of lessons observed, pupils generally enjoy their learning and are keen to be involved in the tasks set for them. They benefit particularly from opportunities to work in pairs and small groups, doing so sensibly and effectively. However, their enjoyment lessens, particularly when teachers do not engage them sufficiently in the introductions to lessons. As a result, the progress pupils make, including those with learning difficulties is satisfactory through the school and they attain broadly average standards by the time they leave. Because of the good support for them, pupils with English as an additional language and those who join the school late quickly make the same progress as their classmates. The school is a harmonious community where, as a pupil said, 'It feels like you are part of one big family'.

Pupils feel safe and say that they are confident in sharing any concerns with adults at the school, including the newly appointed learning mentor. Although pupils make a good contribution to the school, taking on positions of responsibility readily and sensibly they do not have the same opportunities within the local community and, as

a result are not so well involved. Behaviour is good in most lessons, reflecting the consistent application of the behaviour policy and because pupils are interested in the tasks they are usually given. However, around the school there are instances where behaviour is not as good and some pupils do not have the skills to resolve conflicts, so behaviour is satisfactory overall.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	3
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	3
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3

The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, having improved significantly in the last year because of the school's initiatives to increasing pupils' learning and progress. Lessons are planned carefully, usually with a good range of activities to interest and engage the pupils. This is not always the case as in some lessons, teachers do not consistently assess accurately what pupils have already learnt in order to match the tasks that they set to meet all pupils' needs. Progress slows when this match is inappropriate. Marking is generally positive and in some classes, particularly those for older pupils gives them an indication of how they can improve, but this is inconsistent across the school. Teaching assistants often play a strong role in aiding pupils' progress. The skilled work of bilingual assistants is particularly helpful to those new to learning English.

Part of the reason for teachers' relatively weak use of assessment is that this is a new initiative in the school. Good records are kept of the progress that pupils are making and these are used well to identify those in danger of falling behind. Effective interventions are put in place to help these pupils catch up. Assessments are used to set clear targets for pupils' next steps in learning, and older pupils know their targets in mathematics. However, setting targets in other subjects is at an early stage. Pupils are therefore not entirely clear how to best improve their work and so their progress is not as good as it could be.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The curriculum is enhanced well through links with other schools. For example, links with a language college have meant that pupils have had expert tuition in French. There are also a number of sporting links that have broadened the curriculum for physical education (PE) and pupils say they enjoy the range of activities available. Developing pupils' basic skills is at the heart of provision and this is beginning to be successful, with pupils more adept at linking sounds and letters and at calculation.

Staff know the pupils and their individual needs well and take good care of them. This is appreciated by parents, who say such things as, 'My child loves school. This is down to the help and encouragement of staff.' Staff are good role models and pupils learn to be caring and respectful of each other. This was noted when a pupil who had joined the school two days before the inspection was sufficiently at ease to contribute significantly in the introduction of a lesson, when pupils were discussing their previous learning with the teacher.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	3
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

It says much for the school's leaders that despite the loss of morale, during the recent threat of closure, this has quickly been re-established. There is now a common sense of purpose and motivation for further improvement.

Focus on improvement clearly dissipated during the uncertainty as there were more pressing issues. One aspect which did not slip, however, was the school's aim to provide equal opportunities for all pupils. There are signs of improvement as a number of initiatives have been put in place, which are beginning to have an impact on improving outcomes for pupils. The governing body has been supportive during this time. They offer expertise and support and challenge leaders well. However, although they know the school's strengths and weaknesses they are not as proactive as they might be.

The school has a good awareness of the context of the local area and the issues that this presents. It is a harmonious community and pupils learn about the faiths and cultures represented within the locality. They do not, however, have a deep understanding of the similarities and differences between these cultures. A start has been made at developing a strategy for promoting community cohesion, but this is in its early stages as other areas have rightly had a higher priority. Good links have been established with parents, particularly with those from minority groups within the locality. However, although the school has developed good systems for informing parents about their children's progress, parents are not often consulted on how they consider the school might be improved. Leaders and managers ensure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are in place.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	3
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They often make good progress when they are involved in activities led by an adult. For example, when they created their 'super hero' dance the adult modelled actions well and enthused the children so more wanted to join in. However, when children are expected to choose for themselves they often wander from one activity to another and there is insufficient focus. Children's social skills are developed satisfactorily and they are beginning to work together happily, though their behaviour, whilst still satisfactory is not as good as it might be.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is overseen by the headteacher at present and there are new structures in place, which mean that the management of the setting is not as effective as it might be. Good systems of assessment have been put in place, though these are not used well to plan for children's next steps in learning. A start has been made and a child was observed talking to an adult about their 'learning journey'.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3

Views of parents and carers

The responses to the questionnaires show that most parents are positive about the school. They are particularly pleased with the way that the school keeps their children safe and prepares them for their future. Parents expressed no major concerns, though a few parents did not regard the school as providing sufficient information on their child's progress. However, others like the practice of sharing

their children's targets with them at parents' evenings so that they can be involved in their learning. The inspection team judges that the school provides sufficient information to parents about their children's progress. A very small minority of parents think that the school does not take enough account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team considers that the school takes all concerns very seriously and other parents gave examples of how this had been done well for them.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007–8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007–8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007–8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007–8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halesowen C of E Primary School, Halesowen B63 3BB

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at all the work you have done. Your school has had a difficult time recently, when it was threatened with being closed down, but it has come through that well and is now giving you a satisfactory education.

These are some of the things we found about your school.

- You are making satisfactory progress, and this is getting better as the quality of teaching is improving.
- The older ones amongst you are developing well into sensible and caring young people. However, not all of you behave well all the time.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school because there is always an adult you can turn to if you are having problems.
- All adults look after you really well. You enjoy lots of activities and you told us that you particularly like the wide variety of things you do in PE.
- We were particularly impressed with the way that all of you, from a wide range of cultures, get on well together.
- Your headteacher and other teachers have good plans to improve your school.

There are three things we have suggested to your school that they should improve.

- Although teaching is improving, there needs to be more good and outstanding teaching to help you make better progress.
- The standards you reach in literacy, and especially in writing, need to be improved to be as good as those in maths and science.
- Those of you in Nursery and Reception need to be helped to make faster progress.

I am sure you will help to make these things happen, by continuing to work hard and helping your teachers.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie
Lead inspector

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