

# Down Hall Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 114936          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Essex           |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 326094          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 6–7 May 2009    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Rob McKeown HMI |

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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community                                      |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 314  |
| 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  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body                             |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Mr Barry Dimond                                |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Mrs Lou Reck                                   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 13 June 2006                                   |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                       |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                       |
| <b>School address</b>  | Brooklyn Drive<br>Rayleigh<br>Essex<br>SS6 9LW |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01268 780018                                   |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01268 783427                                   |

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|--------------------------|--------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Down Hall is a larger than average sized primary school situated in Rayleigh, in Essex. Almost all pupils come from White British families and only a few are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average; a handful of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There is very little movement in and out of the school during the year. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start school in the Reception classes in September and January and attend full-time in the term in which they are five. They come from a number of different pre-school settings and enter with skills and aptitudes that match those expected for their age. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status and holds the Activemark for pupils' positive participation in physical activities. The headteacher has been in post since September 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Down Hall Primary School provides its pupils with a stimulating and caring learning environment in which children can enjoy an enriched curriculum. Pupils' personal development and well-being are strong. Parents' views of the school, recorded in the returned inspection questionnaires, were almost all positive and parents rightly believe that their children are happy at school. Although Down Hall has many good features, its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This is because, although satisfactory, standards and achievement have slipped back since the last inspection and several pupils, particularly those in the younger classes, do not make enough progress.

Pupils develop well-rounded personal skills at Down Hall. They enjoy learning and say teachers make lessons fun. They value the wide range of opportunities the school provides for them, consequently attendance is above average. Behaviour is good in and out of lessons. Pupils are polite and keen to talk to visitors about their school. They are encouraged to contribute their views; rights and responsibilities are embedded in the school's ethos and this helps develop pupils' awareness of positive citizenship.

Pupils make satisfactory progress. Although the school's improved tracking data reveals that progress in English and mathematics is good in some year groups, in particular at the end of Key Stage 2, overall it is too inconsistent. Teachers' assessments and test results show that the standards reached by boys, particularly in English, are comparatively low, and some pupils who fall behind do not catch up quickly enough. Progress is affected by inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Although lessons are never less than satisfactory, learning activities are not always matched precisely enough to the needs of all pupils. There are also inconsistencies in teachers' marking and in the way they involve pupils in evaluating their own learning.

An undoubted strength of the school is the enriched and stimulating curriculum. Pupils benefit from learning through undertaking projects in the local area and through school-based theme days, such as the Tudor day for Years 5 and 6. Provision in physical education is enhanced through the employment of specialist sports coaches. Pupils enjoy working in the Ladybird garden and attending a wide range of clubs organised before and after school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has quickly established a good working relationship with all members of the school community. Together with the leadership team she has identified some key priorities to bring about improvements to teaching and learning and to tackle underachievement. This demonstrates the school's overall good capacity for improvement. More robust systems for tracking pupils' progress have been introduced and performance management procedures have been strengthened. Suitably challenging targets have been set for pupils' achievement at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but action is still required to improve standards and increase rates of progress in other year groups. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the school well and give the staff good support. Although governors have suitable monitoring systems in place, there has been insufficient emphasis since the last inspection on finding out why standards and achievement have declined.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children join the Reception classes at different times during the year and the older children tend to make better

progress. By the time they move into Year 1, most children have progressed to the expected level of development, although outcomes for children in creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world are better. Lower achievement in the key areas of literacy and numeracy, in particular for younger children and boys, means that several pupils enter Year 1 behind where they should be. The school is taking action to change its admission procedures so that all children will have three terms in Reception and better prospects of reaching higher standards.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers provide a suitable range of activities, including for learning in the outdoor area, which children enjoy. Good use is made of role play, and support staff are suitably deployed to guide learning. Activities are planned to link learning to specific themes but sometimes they are not pitched at the right level or challenging enough. Children's learning is observed, assessed and recorded in personal folders. The recording and collation of these assessments however, is inconsistent and is not used strategically to target the next steps in learning.

Children's personal development and the care staff take to ensure their welfare are good. Children build good relationships and are good at sharing, collaborating and listening. They have positive attitudes and very good behaviour. Children enjoy learning and can talk about their experiences, such as meeting a member of the local police force or making road safety walks. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has identified a number of areas for development, such as introducing more inspiring writing opportunities for boys and more learning activities in the outdoor area, but these have not yet been introduced.

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

- Strengthen provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to enable all children to make better progress and reach higher standards by the time they enter Year 1.
- Raise standards and improve the rates of progress in English and mathematics, particularly for pupils in Years 1 to 4, and especially for boys and for those who have learning difficulties.

Improve assessment procedures by:

- sharpening the approach to identifying and tackling underachievement so that all pupils make expected progress in each year group
- ensuring that teachers adopt consistent approaches to assessing learning through involving pupils in evaluating their learning and through informative marking.

A small proportion of the 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.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Since the last inspection, standards in Key Stage 1 have been drifting downward. In 2008 they were broadly average, although girls' strong performance boosted the overall outcome. Boys' attainment and the attainment of pupils identified with learning difficulties were comparatively low. Pupils' achievement from Year 2 to 6 had also been declining since the last inspection but improved in 2008. Results in the Year 6 tests were much better in English and mathematics than they were in 2007. Good improvements were also recorded in the proportion of pupils making two levels progress from their starting points in Year 2. As in Key Stage 1, outcomes

for girls were better than for boys, although not as marked. The targets set for Year 6 in 2009 are suitably challenging, and if met as predicted, should result in above average standards again this year. The results achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 are a distinct contrast to the irregular progress and low standards reached by some younger pupils. The school has recognised that further action is required to bring about improvements in assessment, in progress tracking and analysis and in targeted intervention, to ensure that all pupils make better progress. A number of positive changes have been introduced recently to strengthen the teaching of early literacy skills and to assess and identify pupils who may be underachieving.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a strength of the school. Pupils care for one another well; 'we are like one big team; we all care about and always help each other'. Pupils feel valued and listened to, and have the chance to put forward their views through the school council. They know that adults support them and give them help when they need it. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles, are active in their physical education lessons and in sports clubs. They grow vegetables in the school garden and these are prepared by kitchen staff for pupils to eat at lunchtime. Some of the snacks eaten by pupils at break times, however, are not so healthy. Older pupils also learn about risk and harmful substances in their personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils feel safe and secure; inspectors received no reports of bullying or racist incidents. Older pupils take responsibility for helping the school run smoothly through their roles as monitors; they also act as play leaders for younger pupils. Pupils contribute well to community events and take part in many local sports activities. They show their generosity in their support of good causes and charity collections. Pupils' understanding of community cohesion and their awareness and links with the wider national and global community is an aspect of their personal development that the school wishes to extend.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Throughout the school, relationships between teachers and pupils are a real strength. Teaching assistants know the pupils well and are usually deployed effectively to support learning. In better lessons, teachers plan interesting activities which pupils engage with enthusiastically. They organise and use resources well to support pupils' learning, such as the interactive whiteboards, and make good use of the school environment. They use their good subject knowledge to help pupils develop their skills and understanding and match the work to their learning needs. Opportunities are provided for pupils to share their ideas and in these lessons they make good progress. In the less effective lessons, groups of pupils are not making enough progress. Although teachers take account of pupils' different abilities, learning activities are not matched precisely enough to individual needs. Opportunities are missed to assess pupils' learning, and some disengage when teachers talk for too long. Too little emphasis is placed on involving pupils in evaluating their learning. There are inconsistencies too in the quality of presentation in pupils' books and teachers' marking does not always help pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils experience a very broad and enriched curriculum. There is specialist teaching for physical education, music and Spanish. The attractive displays around the school and in classrooms reflect the high quality outcomes of pupils' work in subjects, such as design and technology, art and design, and information and communication technology. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of extended activities both within and outside of lessons. The Year 6 visit to the Isle of Wight and the Year 3 and 4 visit to the Hindu Temple are examples of how the school extends pupils' personal and cultural development. There are effective links with local partner schools and the community. Local Sixth Form pupils come into the school as part of the 'Champion Reading Scheme' which is helping to give boys greater interest and involvement in reading. Pupils have the chance to participate in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include numerous sports and creative arts clubs. The school also has a successful choir that sings in competitions and at community events.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and safety are a high priority and staff care for pupils very well. Child protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Staff have undergone safeguarding training this year and many have undertaken first-aid training. Pupils have the chance to express their feelings in lessons and there are 'worry boxes' in which they can drop their concerns. Posters and displays remind pupils that help is always available should they need it. There are good systems in place to keep a check on pupils' attendance and any persistent absenteeism. Leaders acknowledge that tighter checks are required on pupils taking holidays in term time. Good links are established with local agencies to support pupils and their families. The inclusion manager is in the process of establishing a more systematic approach to mapping provision for pupils who have learning difficulties or need to catch up. This is intended to lead to the early identification of those pupils who are falling behind and the introduction of more sharply focused intervention programmes to speed up progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and leadership team know which aspects of the school's work require improvement. Communication with parents is good and the school has an active parent council which meets with the headteacher each half term. Parents and pupils are asked to contribute their views on the school's effectiveness and these are included in the planning for school improvement. The school runs efficiently and classrooms are well equipped and resourced. Links with outside agencies and other local schools are good and community groups use the school premises for their activities. The appointment of an inclusion manager has strengthened the leadership team and the management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties. Subject leaders have reported to senior leaders on the quality and consistency in teachers' planning but have not extended their roles to include the monitoring and evaluation of standards and progress and the quality of teaching and learning. The school has yet to produce a plan to demonstrate how it will promote community cohesion but pupils have the opportunity to learn about their rights and responsibilities and about different faiths

and cultures in their lessons. The committee system for managing governor business is well organised. Key governors make visits to the school to see it in action and report their findings at governing body meetings.



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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 |
|---|----------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3   |
| 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?              | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve?   | 3 |
| 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?                     | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?                          | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?                                 | 3 |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress                           | 3 |

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 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   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

## The quality of provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 3 |
| 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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   |
| 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  | 3   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 2   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 3   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   |
| 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**

8 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Down Hall Primary School, Rayleigh, SS6 9LW

Thank you for helping us with our inspection work when we visited your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their views of the school.

It is our opinion that Down Hall Primary School is satisfactory. Some things are good and some things need improving. We were impressed by your behaviour and how well you get on together. Everyone was very polite and friendly, and a pleasure to talk to. All the adults care for you very well and want you to be successful. Mrs Reck and the staff encourage you to share your views and respect each other. You have many interesting activities to enjoy in lessons, in special theme days and on your trips to places of interest outside of school. We were pleased to see that you have the chance to attend a good range of club activities. We liked the idea of having a school garden in which you can grow healthy foods, but we also noticed a few less healthy snacks being eaten at break time. We had a close look at a sample of your books, which contained a lot of work, but in some cases it was not presented very tidily.

At the end of the inspection, we asked Mrs Reck, the staff and governors to make some improvements. We would like to see everyone, including the youngest children, making good progress, so that you all reach the standards you are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics. We would like your teachers to make sure that your lessons are exactly right for you, that you understand how you can improve your work, and that you are involved more in discussing your learning. We also want Mrs Reck and the governors to continue to keep a close check on how much progress you are making.

You have much to look forward to in the rest of the year. I hope you do your best and enjoy it.

With best wishes

Rob McKeown

Her Majesty's Inspector