

Tollgate Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114458
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	357544
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	366
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Neighbour
Headteacher	Stephen Dennis
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons and 15 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, monitoring records, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 76 parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively teaching challenges all groups of learners to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- The effectiveness of marking and feedback and pupils' involvement in self-evaluation.
- How well the school is improving achievement in English, particularly writing, to mirror the success evident in improving mathematics.
- How effectively leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate the capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Tollgate Community Junior is larger than the average-sized junior school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that found nationally, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties. The school has gained an Activemark award and The Bishop's Commendation.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors are rightly very proud of their good school. The school motto, 'Together Everyone Achieves More', is reflected in all aspects of its work. Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown in above-average attendance, good attitudes to learning and their excellent contribution to the school and wider community. Good, trusting relationships between pupils and adults reflect the outstanding care, guidance and support that enable pupils to develop as well- rounded individuals who are happy and confident and excited by their experiences at school. The school works exceptionally well with parents and carers, particularly in helping them to support children's learning. One parent wrote, 'My child has flourished in an excellent environment with helpful, caring and supportive teachers.'

Strong links with the church and thought-provoking assemblies contribute considerably to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is recognised by The Bishop's Commendation. The school's links with the village of Kabubbu in Uganda make a significant contribution to pupils' awareness of different cultures, values and experiences. They spoke with great enthusiasm, empathy, maturity and respect about a visit by a choir of secondary-aged pupils from Uganda. One pupil said, 'It made us realise how lucky we are and also how much we can learn from other people.'

Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, with a good variety of interesting activities. Clear learning outcomes and success criteria ensure pupils are clear about the purpose of their learning and what they need to do to achieve their goals. Skilled questioning extends pupils' thinking and helps them explain their learning. On occasion, however, when all pupils start their lessons from the same point, more able pupils in particular do not have enough time to extend their learning and make the progress of which they are capable in reading and writing. In some lessons, pupils have opportunities to take responsibility for the pace and direction of their learning, but this is not embedded in teaching or consistent across the school.

By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is average. The school has raised expectations and worked hard to overturn successfully a legacy of significant underachievement. As a result, most pupils are now making good progress and achieving well from their starting points, although this improvement has yet to be reflected in overall attainment by the end of Year 6. The school has correctly identified the need to raise attainment in English to match the success seen in mathematics. The current focus on punctuation and spelling and increased opportunities to write for a range of purposes are beginning to improve writing skills and enjoyment of writing for all pupils, and boys in particular. Leaders have correctly identified the need to ensure progress in reading keeps pace with writing improvements. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others because their needs

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are identified at an early stage and effective, well-planned support is provided in class and in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

Clear and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have enabled the headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body to focus on the most important aspects for development and take effective action to bring about improvements. For example, the focus on mathematics has increased the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher levels in the subject by the end of Year 6 and narrowed the gap between boys' and girls' attainment. One parent commented, 'One of my children really struggled in maths and, due to the school and teaching staff, my child is now doing really well and enjoying it.' The school has moved forward from its satisfactory position at the last inspection, driven by the ambition and highly effective leadership and management of the headteacher and has demonstrated a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading and writing by ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities, particularly for more able pupils, to take more responsibility and be independent, resourceful learners in order to further accelerate the pace of their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy learning and this, along with their positive attitudes and good behaviour, makes an important contribution to their good achievement. Working collaboratively and learning through practical and problem-solving activities contribute to their good progress. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils worked well in pairs and made good progress in a practical activity to explore and understand fractions. In mathematics lessons across the school, pupils made good use of a range of resources to help them achieve well. Research skills, effective displays and 'working walls' in classrooms and opportunities to share and articulate their learning processes help pupils develop skills. For example, pupils used their research findings to write about the water cycle. The use of the 'working walls' helped to enrich their vocabulary and use language features appropriate for the type of writing. As a result, they made good progress in writing good quality explanatory texts. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective learners. They celebrate their own and others' academic and personal successes, and impressive class books document their achievements and aspirations.

Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in class and around the school, such as being playground and eco buddies, and take them seriously. The work of the school council is exemplary. Its members give excellent direction to all pupils. They know their voice is valued and listened to by the staff. Ideas which are creative but realistic result in improvements for the whole school. Fundraising activities are impressive, most notably linked to the sponsorship of a child in the Ugandan village. Pupils raised substantial funds for living accommodation for the child and her family as well as a generator for the village. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. The Activemark award reflects the high take-up and enjoyment of a wide range of physical activity. Girls in Years 5 and 6 initiated a well-attended before-school hockey club. Pupils take great delight in the school goats, rabbits and snails. They develop a sense of care and responsibility as well as the health and safety issues involved in looking after animals. One parent commented, 'Having

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the animals at the school is a real incentive for children, my daughter loves seeing the animals.' Pupils stay very focused and try hard even when work is challenging. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make similar progress to others in the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Themed and creative approaches to learning, including well-planned links across a range of subjects, are used well to stimulate pupils' interests and learning, while maintaining an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy and the development of skills. One parent commented, 'Recently we enjoyed the Year 4 Bollywood show, a culmination of their topic on India last term. It's obvious how hard the staff and children worked. It was fantastic. We are very happy.' The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of enrichment opportunities, including clubs, trips and visitors. These activities broaden pupils' experience and interests very effectively, as well as promoting good personal skills. As a result, pupils make good progress, and learning is mostly challenging and memorable for them. For example, pupils spoke with much enthusiasm about their involvement in Tollgate radio broadcasts and live broadcasts on Eastbourne Youth Radio and how this helped their writing skills as they had to prepare exactly what they were going to say. Good and effective marking and feedback give pupils useful information to help improve

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their work. They know their targets for learning and develop strategies to evaluate their progress towards meeting them.

The school is innovative, resourceful and thorough in its provision for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good communication between staff, parents, carers and appropriate agencies leads to clear plans to improve progress and appropriate action is taken. Where barriers to learning continue to prevent progress, the school is tireless, resourceful and determined in adapting and intensifying support.

The needs of pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are met very effectively and support is extended to families. Exceptionally well-targeted support ensures these pupils integrate very well and make good progress relative to their starting points. Liaison with the main feeder infant school and local secondary schools ensures a very smooth transition for pupils into the junior school and into the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's drive and ambition to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils and raise expectations are significant factors in the improvements evident in the school since the last inspection. With good support from the deputy headteacher, he motivates and inspires everyone in the school. One teacher commented that it was 'exciting and rewarding pulling together for an understood and shared goal although I've never worked so hard'. There is a real and growing sense of shared responsibility and commitment among staff. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and has led to improvements as leaders are knowledgeable in their subjects as well as effective in their leadership roles. The inclusive ethos of the school and its clear, detailed policies ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and develop without fear of discrimination. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are rigorous and leaders analyse data and hold regular reviews to ensure individual needs are being met.

The governing body discharges its responsibilities well and, with staff, ensures the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures which are well established, are up to date, meet all requirements and are applied across all aspects of the school's work. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure. The school benefits from the skills and expertise of governors who support the school effectively and hold it to account well for its performance.

Communication with parents and carers is excellent, both formally and informally, through a range of channels. One parent commented, 'Communication with teachers is great.'

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Initiatives such as the Parents' Forum engage parents and carers well in decision-making. For example, the format of school reports was changed as a result of consultation through this forum. The school works very effectively in supporting parents and carers to help their children's learning through, for example, well-attended curriculum information sessions, formal consultations and providing computer-based learning and revision opportunities for families to access at home. Involvement in a local authority project, Achievement for All, is effectively increasing the positive engagement of parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Good partnerships with local schools and organisations are well established, enrich the curriculum and contribute significantly to pupils' well-being and learning opportunities through well-targeted support. Leaders have developed the school as a cohesive community in which pupils have a deep sense of belonging and show tolerance, respect and understanding for others. There are good links with the local community, for example sharing harvest produce with homeless groups and designing posters for the borough council. International links are well established and a link with another school in the United Kingdom has recently been initiated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was below average. Of these, all agree that the school meets their children's needs well and helps them to support their children's learning. Questionnaire responses show a high level of satisfaction with most areas and are a reflection of the excellent links the school has with parents and carers. The main concern from a very small minority was the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and

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that the school has very effective systems to manage any inconsiderate behaviour should it arise.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tollgate Community Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 366 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	47	36	47	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	68	21	28	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	53	32	42	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	55	32	42	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	61	29	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	50	38	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	42	41	54	2	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	34	45	38	50	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	49	39	51	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	46	31	41	6	8	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	43	37	49	4	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	49	64	26	34	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	62	25	33	3	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

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.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tollgate Community Junior School, Eastbourne BN23 6NL

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school and for talking to us about your work. You are very polite and friendly and we appreciated the way you helped us to find out about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to Tollgate Community because it is a good school. These are some of the things that really stood out.

- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This means that you learn to understand and respect the cultures and beliefs of people from different backgrounds as well as your own. You know the difference between right and wrong, you care for each other, get on well together and you are interested in learning new and exciting things.
- You are proud of your school and help to improve it for everyone, particularly through the excellent work of the school council. We were very impressed with the work that you do to help your sponsored child and her family and all the people who live in Kabubbu.
- The school works very well with your parents and carers.
- You have worked hard to improve your mathematics; well done for this.
- It is a caring school and everyone looks after you extremely well.

These are the important things we would like the school to do.

- Help you do as well in English as you now do in mathematics.
- Teaching is good in your school but sometimes lessons are not quite as good as they should be. To make sure they are always good or even better, teachers should always give you opportunities to take responsibility and be independent, resourceful learners so that you have time to extend your learning and consistently make the progress of which you are capable.

Thank you again for being so interesting and friendly to talk to. You can all help your teachers by always working hard and keeping your enthusiasm for learning.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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