

# Tolleshunt D'Arcy St Nicholas CofE VA Primary School

Tolleshunt Road, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Maldon, CM9 8UB

**Inspection dates** 24–25 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching and achievement require improvement. There is not enough good or better teaching to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well year-on-year.
- Teaching provided by additional adults in the Reception class requires improvement.
- Teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with clear comments on how to improve their work. Pupils are not always given enough time to respond to comments written by teachers.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as good as in reading and writing. They do not have enough opportunities for practical mathematical experiences to help them develop a secure understanding of concepts such as multiplication and division.
- Teachers' planning does not always make sure activities are planned to suit the abilities of all pupils.
- During lessons, teachers do not always check to see if pupils are finding their tasks too easy or too hard.

### The school has the following strengths

- Progress from pupils' starting points is improving at a good rate, particularly in reading and writing. In 2013, pupils in Year 6 made better than expected progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils are very positive about learning. They behave well and enjoy coming to school.
- The headteacher has robust systems for checking on the work of the school, which have led to improved teaching and an increase in the rate of pupils' progress, especially those supported by pupil premium funding.
- Strong links with local schools provide good opportunities for staff to share professional development.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, as well as small groups or individual pupils working with learning support assistants. Almost half the observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked closely at pupils' work and heard some pupils from Year 1 read.
- The inspector held meetings with staff, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, groups of pupils from the learning council, play leaders and Year 6. She spoke informally with many pupils during lessons and at break times.
- The inspector looked carefully at safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress, self-evaluation documents and development plans.
- The views of the 23 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into consideration as were the views of parents who wrote and spoke to the inspector.

## Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average school. It serves the local village and four other villages.
- There are four mixed age classes. The Reception children are taught with Year 1.
- There are considerably more girls than boys on the school roll.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This extra funding is for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor standards for attainment and progress.
- In the past eighteen months there has been a change of half of the teaching staff. Two teachers are at the early stage of their teaching career. A new special educational needs coordinator was appointed in June 2013.
- The governing body has several vacancies.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of pupils, especially in mathematics, to a consistently good or better level by:
  - improving the quality of teaching so it is all consistent with the very best in the school
  - reviewing the mathematics curriculum to include a wide range of practical activities to underpin pupils' development of mathematical concepts
  - always planning tasks that build on what pupils already know and are able to do
  - adjusting teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils during each lesson and moving them on to more demanding tasks
  - ensuring that all the marking of pupils' work is consistent with the best examples in the school
  - improving the quality of teaching by additional adults for the Reception group.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress is not yet consistently good across the school.
- When children start school in Reception, their level of skills and personal development can be very wide ranging. The starting point of the current Reception children is broadly typical of the age group, with a small number well above that.
- Over the past three years, pupils' attainment levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 vary considerably from year-to-year. Contributory factors include the relatively small number of pupils in each year group, together with the proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. In the main, attainment is broadly average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2012 was significantly below average. Attainment in mathematics, although improving steadily is not as good as in reading and writing.
- The results of the 2012 and 2013 national check on how well pupils in Year 1 can understand and use phonics in reading and writing were broadly average. Year 1 pupils have made good progress from their start in Reception and this good progress currently continues in Year 2. All pupils in Year 1 are making expected progress with approximately half making outstanding progress in writing.
- In the past two years, as a result of the headteacher's strong focus on improving teaching, the rate of pupils' progress has improved considerably, most noticeably in reading and writing. Indeed, in reading and writing, pupils in Year 6, Year 4 and Year 3 made much better than the expected progress last year. In mathematics, fewer pupils make better than expected progress than in reading and writing; pupils are not sufficiently confident in applying mathematical concepts in different situations.
- There remains inconsistency in pupils' progress. This inconsistency is closely related to the quality of teaching. In the majority of classes, where teachers are experienced and have benefited from good professional development opportunities, pupils make good progress. In other classes, pupils' progress requires improvement. The most able pupils make similar progress to their peers.
- The current Reception group have settled happily into school. They are making good progress in learning early literacy skills, such as using letter sounds. The most able Reception children are making outstanding progress in developing early literacy skills. They easily write simple words such as 'sit' and 'dog'. They make very good attempts at writing more difficult words such as 'the' and 'stop'.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of their peers. Where teaching is good, these pupils make good progress but this is not consistent across the school. Staff quickly note pupils' difficulties and put in support and/or seek guidance from other professionals. The school is particularly successful in the pastoral support it provides for pupils and their families. Parents speak highly of the support for their children.
- In each year group there are not enough pupils eligible for the pupil premium to comment on their attainment and progress without identifying them. However, the school's use of pupil premium funding has had a good impact both on pupils' progress in English and mathematics and on their personal development. The school's recent data on pupils' progress shows that

pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium do as well or, in some year groups, better than their peers.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but requires further improvement because pupils' rate of progress is not good in all classes.
- Teachers do not always make explicit use of assessments to plan work that is suitably matched to the wide range of abilities in their class, particularly in mathematics. As a result, pupils do not always work at the right level to secure faster rates of progress.
- Teaching for the Reception group is good and often outstanding when taught by their teacher. When teaching is undertaken by additional adults in the class, not enough attention is paid to appropriate questioning to encourage children to think hard and develop their language skills. Furthermore, when working with additional adults, because expectations are not as high, children's behaviour is not as good as it is when taught by their teacher.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books and discussions with them show that they do not always have enough opportunities to undertake practical activities to underpin their understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge of multiplication tables but not all pupils are able to use this knowledge effectively to solve problems involving division.
- The quality of marking of pupils' work has improved considerably since the last inspection. The best marking is outstanding. Where this is the case, as in Year 1 and Year 2, pupils know exactly what to do to improve their work, are very keen to do this and are given time to respond to their teachers' comments. However, this is not the norm across the school.
- Much has been achieved in strengthening the quality of teaching within the school but a change of half the teaching staff has slowed the impact. The headteacher identified areas for improvement and implemented systems for holding teachers to account for the progress their pupils make. For example, half termly pupil progress meetings are held with each teacher to check if pupils are making enough progress.
- Learning support assistants provide good support for pupils when they have clear guidance from teachers. In line with the headteacher's focus on improving reading and writing, they have had good opportunities for developing their skills in supporting pupils in these areas. Their input in group work has had a good impact on pupils' progress, particularly in reading.
- Teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is mostly effective. The special educational needs coordinator makes sure the planning of pupils' work is linked closely to the skills they need to develop. In the best practice, good links with specialist teachers and parents ensure that pupils' learning is reviewed frequently and any necessary changes are made promptly to planning. Learning support assistants provide excellent pastoral support for pupils.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They take pride in their work. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and listen carefully to what adults say. When the work

is challenging, they work hard and take pride in completing their work to a good standard.

- Behaviour around the school is good; it is a harmonious community where relationships are good. Pupils are polite and friendly to those they know and are welcoming to visitors. Lunchtimes are very social occasions where good manners are taught and used.
- Pupils develop strong values and a high level of respect for others. Older pupils know how to voice their opinions and provide reasoned arguments. They enjoy their responsibilities as play leaders and members of the school learning council.
- Pupils say they really enjoy the after-school clubs, trips and residential visits.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are well aware of safety issues when using the internet and mobile phones.
- Pupils are very aware of different types of bullying, such as what is meant by cyber or racist bullying. They are confident that, should they have concerns, any member of staff will help them.
- Attendance figures are just above average. The headteacher takes a firm line and does not authorise holiday absence in term time.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have a very clear understanding of how well the school is doing and what needs to improve. School improvement planning is precise, has realistic timescales and is linked carefully to a well-planned programme of training for staff.
- The headteacher has brought about good improvements since the last inspection. For example, the rate of children's progress in the Reception group has been at a good level in the past two years. The impact is also notable in the good development of the senior leaders' roles.
- Senior leaders and the headteacher monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' learning rigorously. They set good examples with their own teaching and have coached teachers new to the profession and helped them develop their teaching skills further. This input has ensured that progress is at least good in reading and writing.
- The improvement has not been so rapid in mathematics but, nevertheless, pupils now make expected progress. The proportion making better than expected progress in mathematics is increasing, but is not yet evident across all classes. Leaders know what needs to be done, have appropriate plans in place and training is under way.
- In joint observations undertaken with the inspector, the headteacher demonstrated an astute understanding of what teachers needed to do to improve their practice. When areas for improvement are noted, support is organised promptly. This support is either from the senior team or through the partnership schools, for example, advanced skills teachers visit to work alongside staff to demonstrate good practice.
- The headteacher has established very profitable partnership links with four local schools and a nearby Teaching Alliance school. These links provide good opportunities for professional development for all staff. Pupils benefit also when, for example, they have opportunities to meet

with pupils from other primary schools at the nearby secondary school for mathematics challenge days.

- Through good performance management procedures, areas for professional development are identified. These areas are frequently improved through courses held at the partnership schools. Visits to the partnership schools or advanced skills teachers working alongside staff in their classes have also contributed considerably to improvements in teaching.
- The local authority has provided good support, especially for newly qualified teachers and the governing body.
- The learning opportunities the school provides require improvement in mathematics. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use mathematical apparatus or practical tasks to develop and secure their understanding of mathematical concepts. In other areas of the curriculum, the learning opportunities are good, especially for reading and writing. The school has good quality resources for these subjects which are used well.
- The primary school sport funding has been used towards expanding the use of the established sports partnership. It is providing even more sporting opportunities for pupils, such as tag rugby and multi-sports for Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils and parents have very positive views about the new opportunities.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. For example, there are ample opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills within the school. Links with a Kenyan school provide opportunities for pupils to compare similarities and differences in cultures.
- Links with parents are good. Parents spoken with were confident that their concerns were taken noted and dealt with. The 'Learning Journey' booklets in which Reception children's progress is tracked are shared with parents each week. The booklets show that parents are valued as co-educators of their child. Home/school diaries are used well across the school as they provide an easy way of promoting easy day-to-day communication.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Although the governing body finds it difficult to recruit members, there is a strong and knowledgeable core of governors. These governors have a good understanding of what school data tells them about pupils' performance and what needs to be improved. When they visit the school, they have a focus for their visit related to the school development plan. Consequently, they have first-hand evidence of improvement and where shortcomings remain. They challenge the headteacher if they consider progress too slow. Governors' knowledge of how well teachers perform has helped them ensure that they hold them to account. However, they have yet to check that good teaching is rewarded. Governors are thorough in making sure that they perform their legal duties, including the safe recruiting and vetting of staff.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115187
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	425238

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	109
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tina Cutler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sophie Massey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01621 860253
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