

# Tollgate Primary School

Tollgate Lane, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6DG

## Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils enjoy going to school, where they feel happy and well looked after.
- The large majority of parents are delighted about the work of the school. They are particularly pleased about the significant improvement in behaviour over the past 18 months.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are nurtured carefully. They make good progress.
- Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Children have fun and achieve well, although outcomes in phonics require some consolidation.
- Staff are proud to work at the school. They form a cohesive and enthusiastic team who place children at the centre of everything they do. This is one of the reasons why the school is a good school despite the many changes of leadership.
- Senior and key stage leaders know what the school does well and what they need to do to sort out the weaknesses. They have the necessary skills and commitment to improve the school further.
- Teaching is effective and good practice is shared across the school. However, not all adults in the class are effective enough at helping pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Strong pastoral support systems ensure that pupils are safe.
- Relationships are positive. Pupils get on well with each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Governors know the school very well. They check provision and outcomes carefully and challenge leaders on the school's performance.
- The curriculum and extra-curricular activities, provided through the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust, are varied and made accessible to all pupils.
- Considerable improvement in teaching and learning is now ensuring that most pupils are making good progress.
- Outcomes are not yet good because weaker teaching in the past and turbulence in staffing have led to gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders of subjects are not sufficiently active in helping to raise standards in their areas of responsibility.
- The most able pupils, including those in the early years, underachieve in writing.
- Although many pupils love school and attend regularly, the low attendance of some pupils slows their progress. The school's overall attendance is below average.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes more rapidly by:
  - providing more opportunity for the most able pupils to write creatively and at length across subjects
  - ensuring that all adults contribute to accelerating pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and across subjects of the curriculum
  - reinforcing phonics more systematically in the early years and Year 1.
- Improve the effectiveness of subject leaders so that they raise standards of work by:
  - checking that staff develop pupils' numeracy and literacy skills in their subject
  - monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their subject areas so that it is consistently effective in challenging and extending pupils, especially the most able.
- Work even more closely with some families to improve attendance.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Parents, pupils and governors told inspectors that this school, failing in the past, is now significantly better. Parents praised leaders and teachers, in particular, for the significant improvement in the behaviour of pupils. Inspectors agree with their views. This school is now effective in most aspects of its provision.
- Staff changes, although worrying for some parents, are managed well. The new substantive headteacher, who is due to join the school in September 2017, is liaising effectively with senior leaders to ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities.
- Following the recent departure of the headteacher, the trust board asked an experienced school leader, referred to as the head of campus, to lead the school for the summer term 2017. He is doing this very effectively with much enthusiasm, total dedication and energy, ably supported by the trust's dynamic lead headteacher.
- The acting deputy headteacher, the head of campus and key stage leaders are working well together to maintain high staff morale, good communication with parents and effective teaching and learning. The support of the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust is invaluable as it increases leaders' capacity to sustain improvement. Good teaching is ensuring that most pupils make good progress. However, this is not yet rapid enough to enable pupils to make up for lost ground due to weaker teaching in the past.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The funding is used well to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. Consequently, they make good progress and are included in all the school's activities.
- The chair of the local governing board has used his professional expertise to develop a bespoke assessment system (the termly dashboard). This system, used across other schools in the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust, enables staff to check that their assessment of pupils' progress in English and mathematics is accurate. The recording of pupils' achievements against the objectives of the curriculum shows very clearly who is doing well and who is falling behind. This tool was introduced fairly recently. It is, therefore, too soon to judge its full impact on pupils' progress.
- Through the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust, leaders ensure that the curriculum is exciting, rich and balanced. The provision across the wider curriculum is particularly strong for pupils who have a particular talent and those who are most able as they can join in many specific learning activities, such as modern foreign languages, poetry and humanities.
- The curriculum gives much emphasis to English and mathematics. Leaders consider this as necessary considering the below-average attainment. Subject leaders' planning in mathematics and their mapping of literacy and numeracy skills across subjects are not precise enough to accelerate learning and to ensure that pupils catch up rapidly to where they should be. Leaders and staff are giving pupils a wide range of practical experiences to bring learning to life. In the early years, children love to learn about nature and the world, for example by looking after the school's own chickens and learning in the forest school.

- Central to the school's curricular provision are the school's ethos and vision to ensure that all pupils are given the chance to experience the many opportunities available beyond their local community. This includes learning with older pupils from other schools and participating in high-quality events at the trust's outstanding upper school, such as in the creative arts, science and cultural and sporting events. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- The use of the physical education and sports funding is very good. Pupils' levels of skills and participation have increased as a result of the wide range of activities on offer after school, such as dance, gymnastics and trampolining. Pupils enjoy representing the school in the many inter-school fixtures and the multisport festivals. The visits of international athletes, such as in hockey, raise the aspirations of pupils with a particular sporting talent.
- The acting deputy headteacher manages the pupil premium funding effectively. The leader for inclusion, in charge of leading the work of support staff concerning the management of pupils' behaviour, is a specialist leader in education. She uses her leadership skills well to clarify this particular area of the responsibilities of teaching assistants. They, in turn, form a cohesive team of professionals who want the best for their pupils. Teaching assistants are effective in developing pupils' social skills and promoting their well-being, but less so in ensuring that pupils reach the highest possible standards across subjects.
- The leadership of early years is effective. An action plan is in place to develop provision further. The early years leader is knowledgeable about children's development. She has set up robust systems to gather evidence of children's progress and achievement over time.
- The role of subject leader is underdeveloped. A package of training is available, but implementation has suffered from the high turnover of staff. This means that, although subject leaders are keen to monitor progress in their subject areas, they have not yet had sufficient influence on raising standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning relies too heavily on senior leaders.
- Leaders and governors are successful in communicating with parents. Inspectors read several letters from parents who were highly complimentary about the school's work. Parents like receiving positive messages about their children. One parent said that 'staff deserve a medal.' The school takes every chance to celebrate pupils' achievements. This is making a significant difference to pupils' behaviour and self-confidence.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors have an accurate view of the school's performance. They know the local community well and make themselves accessible to parents and staff. They check whether policies are being implemented. For example, governors check that the behaviour policy is making a difference to pupils' well-being. Governors also spoke to pupils in the large Year 3 class. They are aware of some parents' concerns and ensure that good progress in this year group is maintained until an additional teacher is appointed.
- Governors are aware of the needs to accelerate the rate of progress and improve attainment, particularly for pupils who are supported through the pupil premium

funding. Inspectors are not recommending a review of provision for these pupils because governors are already working on how to maximise the impact of spending on outcomes so that these pupils do as well as others nationally.

- Governors support senior leaders' management of the performance of staff. They ensure that teachers have met their targets before pay rises are granted. They hold leaders to account and have a well-informed view of how well the school is performing. Governors are rightly proud of the school's success since an inspection of the predecessor school judged it to be inadequate in November 2012. They are aware that some of these improvements are fairly recent and that consolidation of outcomes in some subjects and for some groups of pupils is required.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's caring ethos ensures that all staff are fully committed to ensuring the safety of pupils at all times. Staff are vigilant and know what to do should they have a concern about a child. Pupils' arrival at school and departure at the end of the day are managed safely and effectively. Staff manage the few cases of challenging behaviour well.
- Senior leaders ensure that all adults working with children are suitably checked, and governors verify that safeguarding arrangements are robust. Referrals to social care services are followed up in a timely manner, and work with external professionals is rigorous. Case files are kept in good order. The family support coordinator provides effective guidance so that families get the help that they need quickly.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Over time, leaders have managed to recruit a team of teachers who know their roles well and are willing to improve their performance continually. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, so they can teach all aspects of the curriculum with confidence. The legacy of weak teaching from the past has resulted in pupils needing intensive support to fill gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust is successfully helping teachers to reflect on, and improve, their own practice. Teachers meet with colleagues from other of the trust's schools to check that their judgements of pupils' progress are accurate. Teachers from the trust, who are specialists in a range of curriculum areas such as art and design, French, physical education and science, offer their expertise to deepen teachers' skills and understanding of the subjects they teach.
- Teaching in English and mathematics, and the effective teaching in the early years, is enabling most pupils and children to progress well from their low starting points at the beginning of the school year. Teachers are assisted effectively in classrooms by some well-trained teaching assistants. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped with their work particularly well when their learning support assistant is assigned to them as part of a funded plan.
- The teaching of pupils who are disadvantaged helps most of them to catch up, but there is more to do to ensure that they do as well as their peers. The focus is often on particular aspects of English or mathematics where they are struggling. Some classes

have one or two general assistants who support the class teacher. This support is, at times, too focused on managing behaviour instead of reinforcing learning. The impact of all additional support is not yet demonstrated fully, especially at key stage 1. The school has started to use qualified teachers to improve the effectiveness of interventions.

- Teachers organise their classrooms carefully so that resources support pupils well in their learning. Teachers use practical equipment and images well to deepen pupils' learning in English and mathematics. Classrooms are packed with examples of words that pupils can use to strengthen the quality of their writing. Others have number lines and counting squares available so that pupils can get quick reminders of things they have learned already.
- The library is stocked with a good range of fiction and non-fiction books, but leaders acknowledge that it is not used enough to develop pupils' love of reading. Pupils take readers home regularly and parents are encouraged to hear their children read. The book corners in each classroom encourage pupils to read for pleasure.
- Phonics is taught systematically from the early years onwards, but the impact of effective phonics teaching is not yet evident. Not enough key stage 1 pupils are proficient in applying their knowledge to read and write unfamiliar words. The time allocated to the systematic teaching of phonics is insufficient, especially when other activities are allowed to encroach on the time dedicated to this important area of work.
- The school's policy on home learning is followed by all. This includes learning spellings and solving problems. It does not yet include sufficient work for the most able pupils to extend purposefully what they have learned in class.
- The school's assessment policy is followed by all teachers. Pupils assess their own work and occasionally the work of their classmates. The quality of their own self-assessment is frequently accurate and enables them to take the next steps quickly and be proud of their success. Teachers follow the policy carefully to provide pupils with useful feedback about how they can improve.
- Teachers regularly discuss with senior leaders the progress that individuals and groups of pupils are making in English and mathematics. This identifies any pupils who are falling behind, but not enough the progress of those who could do better across subjects of the curriculum. Subject leaders do not yet have a robust system for gathering performance information about how well pupils are applying their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Parents praise the staff for the way they are now managing behaviour in class. During this inspection, staff were observed sensitively redirecting the rare moments of off-task behaviour so that learning could proceed without interruption. Parents receive regular information about their children's progress, as confirmed by their responses in Parent View, through the frequent parents' meetings and the comprehensive end-of-year reports.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils respond well in class and are proud of their work. They say that they like their school and were observed trying their best. One pupil, referring to the departure of a teacher in Year 3, said that a new teacher should come to the school to 'see what a good place it is to work'.
- Pupils are happy because they feel safe and are well cared for. They say that staff are always willing to help them, should they be worried about something. Pupils understand how to stay safe, including when using social media and the internet.
- The personal, social, health and citizenship programme helps pupils understand issues such as how to maintain positive relationships and respect the views of others. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's and British values. The oldest pupils like to volunteer for jobs and help younger children. Members of the school council, in particular, enjoy the responsibilities that they are given.
- Displays around the school show pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example in learning about different faiths and taking part in high-profile events with other schools. The participation of the school in the Shakespeare for Schools festival at the Apex in Bury St Edmunds and other important celebrations makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are very active. Many love physical education and sports. Some pupils were able to explain to one inspector the impact of sport on their heart rate and general well-being. Pupils were observed to be very active over the lunch break and doing very well in a physical education lesson.
- Pupils' personal development is not yet outstanding because pupils are not often curious about their learning and rarely ask questions to further their understanding. In addition, many pupils rely heavily on the support of additional adults. These pupils are not self-assured learners.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils listen attentively to adults and to each other. The school is a calm and orderly environment. From the school's own records and from the parents' comments, this is a significant improvement.
- In the early years, children quickly learn about the school's routines. They respond well to instructions. Older pupils were observed behaving very safely on the school's playground and in the dining hall. The way they walked around the school's long corridors is exemplary.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, and incidents are rare. Pupils say that they have no hesitation in telling an adult if they need help. A very small number of parents who met the inspectors or provided additional comments to the lead inspector are concerned about a few cases of bullying and the fixed-term exclusions. Inspectors

found that bullying incidents are investigated thoroughly and the few exclusions, concerning a very small number of pupils, are used for the right reasons and as a last resort.

- Staff work very hard to manage the few instances of challenging behaviour so that it does not affect the learning of the whole class. The school is making special provision for some pupils, such as specific part-time timetables with gradual reintegration to a full day at school. This provision is closely monitored and teachers provide additional work to complete at home.
- Pupils want to attend school, and the 'Not In Miss Out' (NIMO) strategy works well for the large majority of them. However, attendance is below average. The school and families must continue their efforts to reduce persistent absence because in some classes it is too high. This is affecting pupils' progress and achievement.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- The school has been through a challenging period of time where the many changes of staff, including headteachers, have affected pupils' attainment and progress. The school is now a welcoming place where pupils want to learn. Attainment is below average and, despite effective teaching, previous gaps in pupils' basic knowledge are one of the reasons why outcomes for current pupils are still not good enough.
- In 2016, results in phonics were well below average. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard at key stage 1 in reading and mathematics was also well below average. Staffing is stabilising but outcomes have not caught up to where they should be, especially at key stage 1 and in mathematics, where pupils' problem-solving skills are weak.
- Intensive support is being provided to Year 2, as senior leaders are concerned about the progress of this cohort. A high proportion of boys have been assessed as being well below the required standard to be entered for the national tests. Results by the end of Year 2 in 2017 are unlikely to show a trend of improvement.
- Current pupils do well in the early years and at key stage 2. A few parents and pupils are concerned about the large Year 3 class. Inspectors checked pupils' outcomes in this class. Evidence shows that pupils are making good progress. The class teacher works well with a group of additional adults. They ensure that support is prompt and targeted effectively.
- Improving pupils' reading and writing is a key priority for the school. Pupils who read to the inspectors did this well. They said that they enjoyed reading and they could explain the meaning of the story. At key stage 1, the books are not matched well enough to pupils' ability, being either too hard or too easy.
- The written work seen in pupils' books shows that pupils are becoming more secure in spelling words correctly and understanding how to use grammar and punctuation. Writing skills, however, do not yet match those expected, and the proportion of pupils who write at the higher levels is too low. Pupils do not use their writing skills enough across subjects because teachers' overdependence on worksheets, most often requiring single-word answers, is not encouraging pupils to write at length and creatively.



- Pupils make steady progress in mathematics. In Years 3 and 4, pupils enjoy solving problems. They respond well to tricky challenges and persevere. At key stage 1, books show that work is matched to pupils' ages but it is not always challenging enough. The progress of key stage 2 pupils is, at times, slowed because they have not mastered basic knowledge at key stage 1, such as the times tables.
- The progress and outcomes of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Pupils who have social and emotional needs progress well, as they receive a lot of care and attention. Those who experience difficulties academically also do well thanks to targeted support, clear targets and specific plans that support their learning.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are lower than those of their classmates and other pupils nationally, although these differences are beginning to reduce. Current disadvantaged pupils are doing better than outcomes in previous years would indicate. There is room for further improvement, however, considering the number of adults in some classes. Disadvantaged boys require more targeted input to enable them to catch up rapidly.
- At key stage 2, pupils are making steady progress across subjects of the curriculum. This is not always the case in topic work at key stage 1, especially for most-able pupils. A low proportion of pupils produce work at greater depth and most-able pupils do not yet reach the high standards they are capable of. Pupils do well where teaching is stimulating and complex work is offered to them. For example, as part of the topic on the Wild West, a pupil explained very clearly why people should own a home and also why public places were very important.
- Pupils demonstrate high outcomes when they work as part of the trust provision. These successes are noticeable in art, physical education and sport, dance, science, music and singing. Hands-on work in chromatography and DNA at the science festival shows that pupils rise to the challenge and achieve very well when given the opportunities to work and learn with specialists.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children have a lot of fun in the early years. The learning environment is exciting. The school's well-maintained grounds, allotments and chicken pen enable children to explore and develop their understanding of the world around them.
- Some children join Reception from the school's own Nursery and some have had no prior formal learning experience. In the recent past, most were at a lower stage of development than is typical. This is changing and a higher proportion of children now enter Reception at a level of development that is typical for their age. Children learn well and make good progress from their varied starting points.
- The proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of Reception has risen steadily over time. In 2016, it was just below the national average. Data for the current cohort predicts further improvement, although boys still struggle in speech and language.
- The leadership of the early years is effective. The early years leader is well organised and determined to do her best for children and parents. She ensures that children are

kept safe and well cared for. The classes are well resourced with a good range of equipment, indoors and out, to support children's learning through play.

- Children behave well. They quickly learn about the school's routine. They share toys and play together sensibly. They learn to respect older pupils ('the teenagers') who visit weekly from a trust middle school.
- Teaching is good. Staff engage children in conversation to develop their speaking and listening skills. Children who lack confidence in speaking benefit from precise questioning and modelling that adults provide through their interaction with children.
- Staff give opportunities for children to read, write and use numbers, but do not give children enough time to practise these skills, especially writing. This is because the balance between children deciding what they want to do and adults guiding them in specific activities is not quite right. More direction is necessary to accelerate the progress of boys and the most able children.
- Children are well prepared for Year 1 in some aspects of their development but not all. Their personal and social development is good. They learn to listen and speak with confidence. They are less well prepared to apply their skills in writing. In 2016, many children did not go on to achieve the expected standards in the phonics screening check.
- Parents are pleased about the provision in the early years. They are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning. The learning journals and work kept electronically can easily be shared with families, who are kept well informed of their children's development.

## School details

Unique reference number	140998
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10031341

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr C Pamplin
Head of campus (acting as headteacher)	J Neale
Telephone number	01284 752742
Website	<a href="http://www.burytrust.org/tollgate">www.burytrust.org/tollgate</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@tollgateschool.org">admin@tollgateschool.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Tollgate Primary School became an academy on 1 July 2014 and joined the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust.
- The predecessor school, also called Tollgate Primary School, was inspected in November 2012 and judged inadequate.
- Significant changes in staffing and leadership occurred after the 2012 inspection and since the school's conversion to academy status. Over two thirds of staff have joined the school over the past three years. A headteacher was appointed in 2014 and left after one year. The acting headteacher was appointed in October 2015, but was not at the school at the time of the inspection. A head of campus is currently leading the school for one term until the new substantive headteacher joins the school in September 2017.
- Tollgate is a school of average size providing education for pupils aged three to nine. It has one Nursery class and two classes for each year group, except in Year 3 where there is one. Pupils transfer to middle school at the end of Year 4.

- The vast majority of pupils are White British. About 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is low.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school club.
- A pre-school (Little Bears Pre-school) shares the school site, but it is not run by the governing body and is inspected separately. It was last inspected in 2013 and judged to be outstanding. This pre-school is due to close in July 2017.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and several sessions were jointly observed with the head of campus and the acting deputy headteacher.
- Throughout the two days of the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils, individually and in groups, about their learning and safety.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They reviewed pupils' work in lessons and analysed samples of work in books, on display in classrooms and around the school.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. She also met the lead of the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, phase and subject leaders and other staff, including the coordinator for special educational needs and the lead for inclusion.
- Inspectors looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors analysed 24 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). An additional 22 comments, including some detailed letters, were sent to the lead inspector.
- There were 13 staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Hackett	Ofsted Inspector

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