

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **TOFT HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Toft Hill, Bishop Auckland

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114107

Head teacher: Mr R Whitfield

Reporting inspector: Miss WLR Hunter  
3277

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 224310

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Toft Hill Bishop Auckland County Durham
Postcode:	DL14 0JA
Telephone number:	01388 832 393
Fax number:	01388 835 200
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Bell
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Toft Hill Primary is a smaller than average primary school in a rural setting in County Durham. Many pupils come from local villages and hamlets but the school has started to draw from further afield, including the local town of Bishop Auckland. This changing nature of the school's intake has also caused some mobility for the first time, with some pupils joining the school part-way through their education and others leaving before Year 6. The school is steadily increasing in size. There are 154 pupils (82 boys and 72 girls) of whom 38 are identified with special educational needs, including 2 pupils with statements of specific need. Almost one quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals – this is marginally higher than the national average. There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Children come into the reception class with a variety of pre-school experiences, ranging from none to private nursery provision. This gives a very broad mix where children's attainment covers the full spectrum, but boys are much weaker than girls in their writing and mathematics skills when they start at the school.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an effective school where pupils reach high standards in the national tests for 11 year olds, especially in mathematics. Teaching is generally good, but is better in some classes than others. The school is led and managed well by the head teacher and governors. There has been a heavy investment in information and communication technology but this has not yet had sufficient impact – standards in this subject are still low. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards in mathematics are high.
- The school is led and managed well by the head teacher and governors.
- This is a happy and welcoming school – pupils have good attitudes and relationships.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in information and communication technology are too low.
- Standards in reading could be higher in Key Stage 1.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

In the last inspection (June 1996) the school was set eight key issues. Since then, there have been changes in staffing and the school has been re-organised to reduce the number of mixed-age classes. Teachers have had a broad range of training and staff have worked together to develop and improve the school's planning and assessment systems. The quality of teaching has improved in Key Stage 2 and standards have risen. The deputy head teacher now has a clearly defined role and takes responsibility for key areas of the school, such as literacy. The school now provides a wide range of information for parents and has established a home-school partnership with clear guidelines on homework. The school has made good progress by successfully tackling a lot of issues and is well placed to continue to improve.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	D	B	A
mathematics	A	B	A*	A*
science	A	C	B	A

Key	
Top 5% of Schools	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The school performed well in the national tests for 11 year olds in 1999. The English and science results were above the national averages, and the school's performance in mathematics was in the highest 5 per cent of schools nationally. The school fared even better when compared to other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In this case, the English and science results were well above average while the mathematics results were still in the top 5 per cent of similar schools. The school's performance fluctuates from year to year, but this is due to the relatively small numbers in each year group and variations in the range of attainment in these classes. The targets set for the current year are realistic and challenging enough for the current Year 6.

Children make good progress during their time in the reception class. As a result, they develop their basic skills to the point where they are working at the levels expected for five year olds by the time they transfer into Year 1. Pupils build steadily on their learning through Key Stage 1 but standards could be higher by the end of Year 2, particularly in reading. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 2 and reach high standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics are particularly high by the end of Year 6. This is due to good teaching linked to a carefully structured programme of preparation and revision for the tests. The school took part in a pilot project where the 'numeracy hour' was introduced to all classes a year earlier than in most schools – this has benefited the school and given staff greater confidence in this subject.

Standards in information and communication technology are low. Many staff do not yet have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach this effectively.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to learn and work well together.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. This starts in the reception class where children quickly learn to understand and follow the school's code of conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The school has a 'family' feel about it – pupils care for and respect each other.

Attendance	Satisfactory.
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Pupils behave very well. They settle quickly to work during lessons and play happily together at break and lunchtimes. The reception class children are welcomed into the school and quickly become part of the school's 'family' – their behaviour was excellent considering this was only their second week in the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Twelve lessons were seen. Teaching was satisfactory in 26 per cent of these lessons and good in 58 per cent. Teaching was very good in one lesson (8 per cent) but was also unsatisfactory in another lesson (8 per cent). In the unsatisfactory lesson, the work was too hard for the class and too many pupils were unsure about what they were trying to do.

Teaching in the reception class is good. The classroom is well organised and the teacher and classroom assistant work well together. They place a strong emphasis on developing children's language skills by asking carefully framed questions. They make thorough assessments of what each individual child can actually do. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory but is not quite as focused or sharp as other classes. Despite this, teachers have good classroom organisation and management skills – they achieve their aims and move pupils along steadily in their learning. However, teachers do not keep sufficiently detailed records to track pupils' progress in reading. As a result, they sometimes assume that a child can do something that they have not yet mastered sufficiently well. Teaching is good in Key Stage 2, where work is pitched more accurately at the right levels for the pupils. Teachers in Key Stage 2 handle mixed-age classes for part of each day, and they do this well. Teaching is particularly good in Year 6. In this class the teacher expects pupils to strive for improvement and uses incisive questions to evaluate their progress. She makes the aim of each lesson so clear to pupils that they know precisely what they should be doing and what they are learning, and this helps them to understand the progress they are making.

English and mathematics are taught well. Numeracy skills are taught particularly well and this contributes to the high standards by the end of Year 6. Literacy skills are also taught well, but teachers need to tighten up their planning and recording to make sure that pupils build systematically on their reading skills at a faster pace. The use of a part-time teacher to provide single aged classes in Key Stage 2, for literacy and numeracy, is a new approach that seems to be making a positive difference by reducing the range of ages and abilities in each class.

Most teachers do not have the confidence, skills or expertise to teach information and communication technology effectively, but they know this and there are plans for suitable training over the next few months.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and offers sufficient experiences in all areas except information and communication technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils' needs are carefully identified and they are given sufficient support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' moral and social development is promoted well – this underpins the good relationships and very good behaviour in the school. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school where pupils' needs are put first. Some health and safety issues were identified but they were all dealt with immediately.

There are gaps in the school's information and communication technology curriculum but these have already been identified and prioritised as areas for development. The rest of the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils and offers a broad range of experiences. This is supplemented by an adequate range of extra-curricular activities. The school has good links with parents, who support their children's learning at home.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. The school has a strong and effective management team and is led well by the head teacher.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of what is happening in the school and have established an effective partnership with the head teacher, staff and parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is done well. The head teacher knows where the school's strengths lie and has accurately identified where it needs to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Money has been used wisely to provide additional staff to reduce class sizes and to ease the problems of mixed-age classes for part of the time. Grants for equipment and resources have been spent carefully and money earmarked for training has been identified to target weaknesses in teachers' information and communication technology skills.

Governors have established a stable senior management team since the last inspection and this has been a big factor in the progress and development of the school to date. The head teacher works well with the governors and other staff, and knows the school's strengths and needs. The budget is

managed carefully and decisions are based on providing the best value for the pupils.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• The teaching is good and their children make good progress.</li><li>• The school is well managed and staff are approachable.</li><li>• Their children are taught to be responsible and their behaviour is good.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A consistent approach to homework.</li><li>• Clearer communication from the school about how their children are progressing.</li><li>• A wider range of extra-curricular activities.</li></ul>

Most parents have positive views of the school and are right to do so. However, some parents have particular concerns about links with the school, including homework and communications. These concerns are unjustified. The school provides a good range of information for parents (in writing and through regular meetings) to keep them informed of their child's progress and up-to-date with the school's developments. Every class has a clear system for homework and pupils are given regular activities to complete at home. The school offers an adequate range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and bell ringing.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Standards in mathematics are high.**

1 The school took part in a pilot project where the numeracy hour was introduced a year earlier than most other schools. This has been beneficial and has helped teachers to develop an interest and enthusiasm for mathematics, and to gain confidence in their teaching. As a result, mathematics is taught well and standards are high. The school's performance in the national tests for 11 year olds has been above the national average for the last three years and was in the top 5 per cent of all schools in 1999.

2 Teachers plan their mathematics lessons carefully. They make good use of the time set aside at the start of each lesson for mental mathematical activities. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils had to quickly find the products and multiples of given numbers, and carried out division sums in their heads. Pupils respond well to the challenge of these mental tasks. For instance, during a Year 4 lesson where the teacher's tightly structured questions encouraged them to use a wide range of mathematical language to explain their answers. The school is well resourced for mathematics and this means that teachers have ready access to bright, attractive materials and equipment to support their lessons.

3 Pupils in Year 6 are prepared particularly well to sit the national tests for 11 year olds. They practice using previous years' test papers, and this allows the teacher to diagnose precisely where they need some extra help and support. In addition, the school uses another teacher to work alongside the Year 6 class-teacher to provide 'booster' classes for pupils prior to the tests. The mathematics co-ordinator has taken on this role in the past and this has been helpful to the school in several ways. For example, the subject knowledge and expertise of the co-ordinator has helped to support pupils' preparation for the tests, and this arrangement has also given the co-ordinator the chance to work with a different age range and to gain an insight into how mathematics is developing throughout the school.

#### **The school is led and managed well by the head teacher and governors.**

4 The school has established a stable senior management team. The role of the deputy head teacher has been clearly defined and her partnership with the head teacher has had a big influence on the good rate of progress that the school has made since the last inspection. There were a lot of issues to tackle following this inspection, and these have been handled systematically by the head teacher, with the deputy head underpinning developments in key areas, including literacy, planning and assessment.

5 The head teacher knows the school very well and has accurately pinpointed where its strengths lie, and which areas require some attention. He keeps the governing body well informed and up-to-date with developments in the school. Consequently, governors have a good understanding of what is happening and why. They keep themselves up-to-date by regular formal meetings supplemented by informal gatherings where they involve themselves in training relevant to their roles and responsibilities as governors. The mix of experienced and newly appointed governors works well. Parent governors keep the governing body in touch with the day-to-day situation in the school while other long-standing governors have a good overview of outside factors that could influence decisions they need to make, such as the impact that over-subscription of other local schools may have on future staffing needs.

### **This is a happy and welcoming school – pupils have good attitudes and relationships.**

6 Pupils are very proud of their school. They welcome visitors, want to talk about their school and wear their uniform with pride. For example, when the reception class came into assembly for the first time at the start of their school year, they sat with great pride and dignity waiting patiently for the rest of the school to line up and sit behind them in the hall. These children knew that they were part of a bigger ‘family’ and that they were welcome in the school.

7 The school actively promotes strong moral and social values. As a result, pupils have good attitudes. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are keen to work hard and learn. They listen carefully to their teachers and respond well to questions. For instance, in a Year 1 English lesson, pupils enthusiastically suggested their versions of spellings for different words. Pupils behave well – they fully understand and accept the school’s code, and play well together at break and lunchtimes where older pupils look after their younger school-mates. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons is also good. For instance, in a science lesson, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were investigating which objects would sink and float, and then had to mould some shapes from plasticine for themselves. This offered plenty of opportunities for them to spill water and misbehave but they all tackled their practical work seriously and responsibly. Similarly, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils responded well to the teacher’s humour as they investigated the effect of friction on different surfaces.

8 The school has good links with parents and the local community. There is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the school and this makes it a pleasant place to work and learn.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

#### **Standards in information and communication technology are too low.**

9 Information and communication technology is identified as one of the current priority areas for development in the school. The head teacher is the co-ordinator for this subject and knows where the school is in its stage of development, and what needs to be done to move it forward.

10 Standards are low because the school does not have a clear programme for teaching pupils the skills they need. Staff do not all have the necessary skills and expertise in this subject, and the school is lacking some resources to teach the full range of experiences pupils should have. By the end of Year 6, pupils can use a word processing package to produce short pieces of work but they lack the knowledge and skills to manipulate their text and to combine it with other forms of information. Pupils have very little understanding of how to handle information using databases and spreadsheets, and have not had experience of using computers to monitor, measure, sense or control the environment.

11 There has been a large investment in computer equipment but staff have not yet had the training to help them make effective use of these machines – suitable training is planned for later this year. Teachers currently use information and communication technology to support basic work in literacy and numeracy, but pupils’ information and communication technology skills are not being systematically or progressively developed. The school does not yet have a scheme of work to support this subject, but is working with support staff from the local education authority later this term to establish a scheme and look at ways of teaching pupils the skills they need.

## **Standards in reading could be higher in Key Stage 1.**

12 Standards in reading are currently high enough by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. However, from the number of pupils that reached the level expected for seven year olds in the tests at the end of Year 2 in 1999, it is unlikely that the school will be able to maintain its standards as these pupils move through Key Stage 2, without some intervention now.

13 Since the introduction of the literacy hour, the school has placed on emphasis on developing pupils' writing. This has been effective but has also meant that teachers have given less priority to teaching reading. As a result, teachers in Years 1 and 2 have not continued to build as quickly as they could on pupils' reading skills when they leave the reception class. This is mainly due to the fact that their reading records do not keep sufficient information on what individual pupils can actually read or identify the areas where they are struggling. As a result, there have been times when teachers have assumed that pupils have gained certain reading skills when they have not really mastered them well enough. For example, when reading an extract from 'The Kidnappers', a pupil in Year 2 stumbled over the sound of the letter 'v' in words such as 'never' and 'live'. This same pupil read reasonably fluently but then had difficulty explaining the story or understanding the meaning of what he had just read.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

14 To improve the quality of education and raise standards, the school should:

(A) Raise standards in information and communication technology by:

- training teachers to improve their knowledge, confidence and skills in this subject;
- developing a scheme of work to cover the full National Curriculum requirements;
- identifying the skills that pupils should be taught;
- planning how and when to teach these skills so that pupils are able to use information and communication technology to support their work in other subjects;
- providing suitable resources to fill the gaps in the areas of measuring, sensing, monitoring and control.

(B) Raise standards in reading in Key Stage 1 by:

- making sure that teachers systematically teach pupils to develop their reading skills;
- keeping records that are very specific about what pupils can and cannot do, and allow their progress to be tracked;
- using the information from these records to plan lessons that move pupils forward at a faster pace.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	12
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
-	8%	58%	26%	8%	-	-

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	154
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	37

#### **Special educational needs**

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	38

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.04
National comparative data	5.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	7	10	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	15	16	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88% (87%)	94% (90%)	94% (87%)
	National	82% (80%)	83% (91%)	87% (85%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	6	6
	Girls	5	6	5
	Total	11	12	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65% (80%)	71% (90%)	65% (63%)
	National	82% (81%)	86% (85%)	87% (86%)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	11	7	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	6	7	6
	Total	15	17	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83% (56%)	94% (72%)	89% (72%)
	National	70% (65%)	69% (59%)	78% (69%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	9	10
	Girls	6	7	7
	Total	12	16	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67% (60%)	89% (80%)	94% (92%)
	National	68% (65%)	69% (65%)	75% (72%)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	154
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5
Average class size	26

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: nursery**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999 – 2000
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	£
Total income	264,879
Total expenditure	271,773
Expenditure per pupil	1,721
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,523
Balance carried forward to next year	15,629

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	154
Number of questionnaires returned	81

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	43	4	1	4
My child is making good progress in school.	45	47	3	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	48	4	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	49	19	3	4
The teaching is good.	44	48	1	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	40	24	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	35	5	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	44	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	28	47	23	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	47	37	6	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	52	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	33	26	9	18

### **Other issues raised by parents**

A small number of parents raised questions about the school's arrangements for swimming. The school follows the local education authority's policy and provides adequate opportunities for pupils to attend swimming lessons until they reach the required standard, at which time their place becomes available for other non-swimmers.