

INSPECTION REPORT

TOLLERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tollerton

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122683

Headteacher: Mr R Thomas

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara Crane
21227

Dates of inspection: 4 – 5 October 2000

Inspection number: 225118

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burnside Grove Tollerton Nottingham
Postcode:	NG12 4ET
Telephone number:	0115 9372944
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Fenton
Date of previous inspection:	10 – 13 December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has an average number of pupils with 191 boys and girls aged between 4 and 11 years. Two per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well below average. Ten per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is below average and there are no pupils with statements of special educational need. There are few pupils from ethnic backgrounds other than white. All of the pupils have English as their first language. When they enter the school, the pupils' attainment is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. The pupils enjoy school and achieve high standards. The teaching is very good. The management of the school is committed to raising standards and creating a positive learning environment for the pupils. There are weaknesses, however, in the school's communication with parents and the headteacher's information for governors. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science as a result of the very good quality of the teaching. The teachers encourage the pupils to think for themselves and use their initiative and so the pupils apply their skills and knowledge to new situations very effectively.
- The school's strong emphasis on the pupils' personal development leads to a high level of confidence and promotes excellent relationships between the pupils.
- The firm moral framework provided results in a very good standard of behaviour.
- The pupils have excellent attitudes to their work because the curriculum is made relevant and lessons are well planned to capture their interest. The pupils enjoy school and so their attendance is excellent.

What could be improved

- The teachers' assessment of the oldest pupils' attainment is inaccurate and, as a result, the school's targets for the end of Key Stage 2 are set too low.
- The school's communication with parents does not always ensure that they have a clear view of their child's progress or the school's work.
- The information that the headteacher provides for governors does not always support their work in monitoring the school's progress towards its priorities for development. The decisions made are not always recorded.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in 1996. The standards achieved by the pupils in English, mathematics and science have improved. The quality of teaching has improved. The school has fully addressed the issues regarding the buildings and playground. The roles and responsibilities of the governors are defined and they support the school's development with appropriate financial planning. The governors' role in monitoring the school's progress towards the priorities in development planning remains a weakness. The school's partnership with the parents is not as strong as it was.

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	A*	C	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	A*	A
Science	B	B	A*	A*

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

These results relate to the pupils who took the tests in 1999. They show that the pupils' performance in English was well above average when compared to all schools and to similar schools. The results in mathematics were in the top 5% of schools nationally and well above those in similar schools. In science the pupils' results were in the top 5% nationally and in similar schools.

The pupils' performance in 2000 was similarly high in science and mathematics. In English, the results were better. These high standards are reflected in the inspection evidence. The improvement in the pupils' performance in English is largely due to the school's analysis of previous performance and adaptations to teaching to improve standards in writing. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. They are very competent readers and enjoy reading for pleasure. They quickly gather information from books and have a very good understanding of what they read. They write with flair and accuracy, adapting the style of their writing confidently to suit different purposes. The pupils have a very good understanding of numbers and calculate mentally both quickly and accurately. They are very good at explaining how they have arrived at answers and find alternative methods. They have a very good breadth and depth of scientific knowledge and a firm understanding of how to devise investigations and experiments.

The school's rate of improvement has kept pace with the national trend. The targets that the school set for its Year 6 pupils in 2000 were considerably exceeded. This was due, in some part, to pupils joining the school in Year 6. An additional factor was the inaccuracy of the teachers' assessment, which did not provide a firm foundation for the school to set its targets. The targets set for the present year are similarly cautious and do not reflect the ability of the year group.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The pupils enjoy their work and are very keen to improve.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils are polite, open and friendly. They know the school's rules and abide by them.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. They display a high level of maturity and consider the needs of others.
Attendance	Excellent. There is very little absence and the pupils are punctual.

The pupils relish a challenge and the many opportunities that they are given to make decisions, work together and find solutions to problems. They play and work co-operatively and respect the views of others. The older pupils take care of the younger ones. The pupils are helpful and willingly take on responsibility. They display a

high level of independence in organising their work and taking responsibility for their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very 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.

All of the lessons seen were good or better. In 69% of the lessons the teaching was very good. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils' work and behaviour. They plan interesting lessons, with work that is appropriate to all abilities. This work builds very well on what the pupils already know and can do. The pupils are expected to think deeply, make decisions and work together to find solutions. Lively debate is promoted through the teachers' probing questions. As a consequence of these strengths in the teaching, the pupils learn at a rapid rate. The atmosphere in the classrooms is lively and industrious. The teachers praise the pupils and give them good guidance on how to improve their work. They value the pupils' efforts and so the pupils grow in confidence.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enriched by a very good range of visits and visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The pupils are well supported.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides a strong moral framework and the pupils are encouraged to think about the consequences of their actions. They reflect on important issues and express their feelings freely. Very good opportunities are provided for the pupils to develop their social and cultural awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school places a high priority on the pupils' well being. They receive good guidance and support. The assessment of their achievement is a weakness.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing a relevant and interesting curriculum. The pupils have many opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities and visits to support their personal and social development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and subject managers leads to adaptations to the curriculum and teaching and this has a positive effect on standards. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school but this is not always communicated effectively to the parents or governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	All statutory requirements are met. The governors' hard-working committees give sound support to the school's work but they are sometimes constrained by the quality of information they receive.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school reviews the standards it achieves effectively and acts to bring about improvement. The review of other provision is more patchy and is not as strong or effective.
The strategic use of resources	The school's priorities are supported by sound financial planning. The school applies the principles of best value appropriately.

The headteacher, governors and staff are committed to raising standards and improving the quality of education that the school provides. In many respects, their efforts are successful and are reflected in the school's positive ethos, high quality teaching and the pupils' excellent personal development. There are however, weaknesses in the school's management of information and communication. The written reports that the headteacher provides for governors lack detail of the pupils' attainment and the school's progress towards its priorities for development. The decisions made by the governors in their committees and in full meetings are often not recorded. This frustrates the work of the governors in tracking the school's progress or following action through to completion. Several of the governors are newly appointed and these shortcomings do not enable them to quickly understand the school's current position.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school. • The standard of behaviour is good. • The teaching is good. • The parents feel that the school is approachable. • The school expects children to work hard and try their best. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework is inconsistent. • The school does not always work closely with them and they do not receive good quality information. • The school's range of activities outside lessons is limited.

The inspection findings support all of the parents' positive views and most of their concerns. The provision for homework is not well managed and the parents are unsure of what happens in each year group. The school has no policy for homework and this leads to inconsistency because the decisions about the timing and quantity of homework are left to individual teachers. The school provides some good information for parents, but the quality of the written reports that parents receive on their children's progress is very variable. There is too little information about attainment in many of the reports and little indication of areas for improvement. This does not provide the parents with a clear idea of how their child is doing, the next steps to be taken and how they can help. This is an example of a missed opportunity to enable the parents to work closely with the school. There are other occasions when the school is slow to provide information about what is happening and it does not seek the views of parents as readily as it might. The inspection evidence does not support the parents' view that there is a limited range of interesting activities outside lessons. The school organises a very good range of activities and several residential visits.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science as a result of the very good quality of the teaching. The teachers encourage the pupils to think for themselves and use their initiative and so they apply their skills and knowledge to new situations very effectively.

- 1 The teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is transmitted to the pupils. The pupils learn at a rapid rate because they are encouraged to think for themselves. They relish the manipulation of numbers and language and enjoy finding different ways to solve problems.
- 2 The teachers have a very good understanding of how to teach the basic skills effectively. They insist that the pupils use what they have learned when they approach new work and so accurate spelling and punctuation, neat presentation and self-correction become habits. The work is challenging and the pupils are encouraged to use their initiative. In a Year 5 science lesson, for example, the pupils devised a fair test to find the most suitable material for a climber's clothing. They first established the criteria for the material through discussion with the teacher. All of the contributions were valued, but some were later discounted by the class as the teacher asked more probing questions or the pupils challenged their classmates' views. This was achieved pleasantly and speedily and all of the pupils were involved. The decisions about how to set up the test and record the results were left to each group. A high level of intellectual effort was evident in this lesson, as pupils debated the relative merits of how to proceed.
- 3 The lessons are well structured, with very good directions and explanations from the teachers and well planned work to extend the pupils' understanding. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher's brief, useful recap on previous learning enabled groups of pupils to decide whether their given shape was a polyhedron or a prism. One group decided that a cuboid fell into both categories and argued their case, using the criteria they had learned, when presenting their opinion to the class.
- 4 By the time they reach Year 6, the pupils think logically and back up their ideas with evidence that is closely reasoned and clearly expressed. They reflect the teachers' very good, specific vocabulary when they give explanations. In a Year 6 English lesson, the teacher's instruction to 'counter that argument with evidence from the text' led to the pupils' sharp analysis of the passage to establish whether fact or opinion was represented. The pupils enjoy the challenging work, whether in English, science or mathematics. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson the pupils worked enthusiastically on converting fractions to decimals and were intrigued by recurring numbers in decimals.

The school's strong emphasis on the pupils' personal development leads to their high level of confidence and promotes excellent relationships between the pupils.

- 5 The pupils have many opportunities to be involved in the daily routines of the school, such as preparing the hall for assemblies and setting out resources for lessons. This starts in the youngest class, where the pupils quickly learn to take responsibility for clearing away activities. The school council provides the pupils with a very good opportunity to express their ideas and voice their opinions about how the school's provision can be improved. The representatives from each class take their responsibilities seriously.
- 6 In lessons, the teachers encourage the pupils to work together to plan their work and find the solutions to problems. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson on shape, for example, the pupils were

required to work in groups to present their ideas about the properties of three-dimensional shapes. The pupils quickly allocated responsibilities within the group and worked diligently to analyse the properties. They then discussed their findings, listening carefully to each other and challenging others' ideas and conclusions in a constructive manner. This high level of independence and organisation led to rapid gains in their understanding.

- 7 All of the pupils take part in the school's annual dramatic production and they talk about their contribution with pride. They look forward to taking part and feel that it is a highlight in the school year. During the inspection, the Year 4 pupils presented a class assembly on the difficulties faced by evacuees during the war. The level of confidence that they displayed was exceptional. The pupils spoke clearly, with a very good sense of timing that drew out the pathos and humour of the evacuees' situation. They moved with poise and surety and used a very good range of gesture and facial expression. The pupils also take part, from an early age, in a wide range of residential visits. They recall these with pleasure. They talk in detail about how these visits build their confidence and extend their ability to get on with other people.

The firm moral framework provided results in a very good standard of behaviour.

- 8 The school sets out its expectations of behaviour very clearly. The pupils understand the rules and why they are necessary. The teachers have consistently high expectations of behaviour in lessons and so the pupils settle quickly to work in a quiet and calm atmosphere. Politeness and consideration for others are the norm. In assemblies, the pupils gather together quietly and listen carefully to what the teachers and other pupils have to say. The pupils' behaviour on the playground and when they are in the dining hall reflects the high standards seen in the classrooms. They show a very good level of responsibility for their actions.

The pupils have excellent attitudes to their work because the curriculum is relevant and lessons are well planned to capture their interest. The pupils enjoy school and so their attendance is excellent.

- 9 The pupils enjoy coming to school and are punctual. Absence is minimal. They take full advantage of what is on offer and are keen to participate in lessons and other activities.
- 10 The teachers plan lessons that build very effectively on what the pupils already know and can do. Consequently, the pupils approach their work confidently. They enjoy the lessons because the work is interesting and relevant. In several of the lessons observed a sense of eager anticipation was evident when the teacher announced the focus for the lesson. In the Reception class, for example, the pupils are keen to 'write' postcards to friends and relatives. They choose the materials they need carefully and take pride in the presentation because they look forward to taking them home to share with parents.
- 11 The school teaches a broad, relevant and interesting curriculum. In a Year 4 lesson on rationing during the war, the teacher's very good use of resources in the introduction stimulated the pupils' interest and they were quickly engaged by the exciting group activities that enabled them to explore the problems faced by families. By the end of the lesson they had gained a deep understanding of the implications of rationing and how people cope in the face of adversity. The Year 6 pupils are creating a multi-media presentation of the school which will form part of the school's website. They are keen to show the different aspects of the school's life through their choice of photographs, animation and text. These pupils learned the necessary skills quickly because of their high level of interest in producing work that could be shared with others.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The teachers' assessment of the oldest pupils' attainment is inaccurate and as a result the school's targets for the end of Key Stage 2 are set too low.

- 12 The teachers' assessments in English and mathematics at the end of both key stages are inaccurate. Too few pupils are assessed as achieving Level 3 in Year 2, or Level 5 in Year 6. The test results for these year groups indicate that more pupils are working at these higher levels than is evident from the teachers' assessments. While this does not lead to any underachievement by the pupils, as the work is planned at an appropriate level, this inaccuracy does lead to the school setting the statutory targets for its Year 6 pupils at a level that is too low. The targets set for English and mathematics in 2000 were greatly exceeded. This is partly explained by three Year 6 pupils joining the school, but this does not wholly account for the discrepancy. In English, for example, the school set a target of 67% of Year 6 pupils to achieve Level 4 and above. In the event, 96% of the pupils achieved Level 4 or above. The school's targets for 2001, whilst higher than the previous year, still underestimate the pupils' ability and the extent of their prior learning.

The school's communication with parents does not always ensure that they have a clear view of their children's progress or the school's work.

- 13 There are examples of good communication between the school and the parents but there are also weaknesses. The reports that teachers write on pupils' attainment and progress are not of a consistently good quality. While some give good detail of the standard of work achieved, others are too vague to be of use to parents in helping them understand how their child is doing. Very few of the reports indicate what needs to be worked on next, or how parents can help with the next steps.
- 14 The school does not do all it can to ensure that the parents have a clear understanding of its work, or how parents can help their children at home. There is no homework policy and decisions about what homework is set and when it will be returned are left to individual teachers. This leads to some confusion on the part of the parents. The school lacks a co-ordinated approach to homework and so it is provided inconsistently. A similar situation exists with the school's stance on the involvement of parents in the classroom. The decision to use parents is left to each teacher. The school lacks a clear direction that is understood by the staff and known to the parents.
- 15 The school does not actively seek the views of parents on important issues. There are occasions when the parents receive too little notice of events in the school, such as the Governors' Annual Meeting. These shortcomings weaken the school's partnership with parents.

The information that the headteacher provides for governors does not always support their work in monitoring the school's progress towards its priorities for development. The decisions made are not always recorded.

- 16 The effectiveness of the governing body in supporting the school's work is limited by the information it receives. The headteacher's written reports to the governing body contain very little information on the standards achieved by the pupils and the school's progress towards the targets in its planning for development. This restricts the governors' ability to check on the school's work and monitor improvement. The governors, several of whom are newly appointed, are unsure of the school's cycle of planning for development because the documentation produced by the school is often unclear.
- 17 The decisions that are made by the full governing body and the recommendations of its hard-working committees are often not clearly or adequately recorded. This leads to some frustration and confusion on the part of the governors. For example, while the headteacher and governors are certain that the budget has been fully discussed and adopted, this decision is not found in the minutes of any meeting. In another example, the finance committee considered the recommendations of the auditor's report in February of this year, but this was not reported to the full governors' meeting held in May. Consequently, the school's response to the report has been delayed. This lack of information is not helpful to new governors as they cannot quickly understand the school's current position or the basis on which they are required to act or advise the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school now needs to:

Improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments so that target setting is more realistic and challenging. (Paragraph 12)

Improve the quality of communication with parents and strengthen their understanding of the school's work by:

- improving the quality of the written reports on pupils' attainment and progress so that the parents are given a clear idea of the standards achieved, what needs to improve and how they can help at home;
- ensuring that the school's approach to homework is consistent and made known to the parents;
- ensuring that parents are better informed about events in school and how they can be involved. (Paragraphs 13 –15)

Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:

- ensuring that they receive better information through the headteacher's reports;
- extending their understanding of the school's planning for development;
- accurately recording the decisions they make. (Paragraphs 16 – 17)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

13

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	69%	31%	0	0	0	0

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)	191
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	4
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	20
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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
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	18	23	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	22	22	23
	Total	39	39	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (89)	95 (100)	98 (100)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	21	21	22
	Total	38	38	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (100)	93 (100)	95 (100)
	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	12	15	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	10	12
	Girls	14	15	15
	Total	25	25	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (78)	93 (86)	100 (77)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	23	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (82)	89 (72)	89 (72)
	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	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	186
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23: 8
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	358759
Total expenditure	360034
Expenditure per pupil	1782
Balance brought forward from previous year	31195
Balance carried forward to next year	29920

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	191
Number of questionnaires returned	134

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	28	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	45	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	38	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	47	19	8	1
The teaching is good.	53	42	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	45	20	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	31	7	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	40	1	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	50	14	6	0
The school is well led and managed.	41	49	7	4	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	49	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	41	19	7	2