

Tonge Moor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105164
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287142
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Scowcroft
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Read
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002
School address	Stott Lane Bolton Lancashire BL2 2LR
Telephone number	01204 333755
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school is situated to the north-east of Bolton and serves an area of significant social disadvantage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage but there is an increasing number from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and there are eight pupils with a statement of special educational need. Tonge Moor is actively involved in the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) and was awarded Healthy School status in March 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school, which provides a satisfactory quality of education and in which pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support provided for them are good.

Standards are improving, particularly in mathematics, but are well below average in English and science by the time pupils leave for the secondary school. Standards at Key Stage 2 have improved at a faster rate than nationally in the last two years. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress given their low skill levels on entry to the school. Standards in English, and writing in particular, remain low. Initiatives to improve performance, such as an emphasis on guided reading as a preparation for putting pen to paper, are beginning to raise pupils' confidence in their ability to write stories and poems. Pupils in Year 3, for example, have produced thought-provoking poems on Castle Drac and show them to visitors with immense pride.

The dramatic improvement in attendance shows just how much pupils enjoy their school. Indeed, their personal development is fostered from the moment they enter the Foundation Stage and these social skills develop well as they move up the school. They behave well, have the highest regard for their teachers and support assistants and have a keen sense of their responsibility to their peers and to both the local and global communities. The school council is proactive and members represent their constituents with skill and verve. The care and guidance offered to pupils is satisfactory overall and they respond well to the excellent pastoral support provided by the school.

Teaching is satisfactory and in many lessons, pupils are fully engaged in the activities. They enjoy their lessons, but on occasions learning is directed too much by their teachers, which does not develop pupils' natural inquisitiveness to find things out for themselves. The curriculum plays a major part in fostering pupils' personal development and key features such as Spanish for all, the wide variety of extra-curricular activities and the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme PYP programme are popular amongst both pupils and staff.

The school is emerging from a very difficult period in its history and, because of outstanding leadership by the headteacher, is approaching the future with a renewed sense of optimism and confidence. There is a total commitment to improving standards in all areas of school life and both teaching and non-teaching staff comment, 'We are all steering in the right direction now and we can see the results of our work and of the efforts of our pupils.' Parents agree, and in the words of one parent, 'The school has made great progress in so many aspects and staff go out of the way to help our sons and daughters.' Middle leaders are fully aware of their responsibilities but their skills in monitoring and analysing subject performance are underdeveloped. Nonetheless, at senior level in particular, accurate evaluation of provision and the rapid establishment of effective strategies for development are already bearing fruit: the school provides satisfactory value for money but demonstrates good capacity to improve further. Tonge Moor is most certainly a school in which its pupils come first.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best.
- Improve standards, particularly in writing, in both key stages.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation skills of middle managers.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has correctly identified raising attainment as its key priority. As a result of its emphasis on developing pupils' key skills, standards are improving and pupils now make satisfactory progress across the school. Attainment remains well below average, with writing a particular focus for the school. However the trend for improvement has risen faster than the national rate since 2004. Pupils with learning difficulties and those considered to be vulnerable make similar progress to their peers because of the impressive support provided by teaching assistants.

Children enter school with very low levels of skill and there are particular weaknesses in their communication, language and social development. By the end of the Foundation Stage, standards are still below those expected nationally. Their achievement in personal development is good because teachers recognise the vital importance of improving children's emotional well-being if academic attainment is to rise too.

Key Stage 1 assessments in 2007 demonstrate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising. Pupils' progress over time remains satisfactory but its rate is improving because of the recently introduced but rigorous tracking system and a whole-school focus on raising expectations of what pupils can do. As a result, attainment in mathematics in particular has improved markedly.

The school's assessment information in Key Stage 2 shows that pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach their challenging targets. Although attainment still remains well below that expected nationally, the school's precise focus on pupils' confidence with the written word has brought about a steady improvement in writing over the last two years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and like the good range of activities provided for them. They get on well together and their behaviour and attitudes to work are good. Pupils know how to stay safe, fit and healthy and appreciate the many sporting activities which contribute well to this. The school has worked very hard to promote the importance of regular attendance on pupils' progress and this has resulted in marked improvement, with attendance now broadly average. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and provide good support for others through their work as playground pals and peer mediators. School councillors take their role seriously and say, 'We feel privileged to represent our classmates.' They are also very proud of the contribution they make to decision making, especially the introduction of a healthy tuck shop and their support of the Rainbow House charity. They develop a keen understanding of the wider community through links to local churches and businesses and through their musical performances at local venues. Pupils are delighted to organise events, such as the recent second-hand book sale to raise money for their chosen charity. These well-developed personal qualities and the school's emphasis on enhancing key skills provide a sound basis for pupils' life after formal education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with elements of good practice. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are a strength. In good lessons, such as a Year 6 session on Philosophy for Children, pupils are fully engaged, express their opinions with confidence and listen intently to the views of their peers. In a significant number of lessons, teachers direct activities too much and pupils have few opportunities to find things out for themselves. The challenge for more able pupils to reach higher standards is not consistently appropriate in all classes. Nonetheless, pupils behave well, speak highly of the adults who work with them and are also delighted when their classmates succeed. The hard working and committed team of teaching assistants provides focused support for pupils with learning difficulties and all staff treat their pupils with dignity and respect.

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory overall, with good levels of challenge particularly in the Reception classes, where pupils are encouraged, at such an early age, to justify their answers to questions. The school works well and effectively here to foster children's personal, social and emotional development.

Assessment is improving and tracking systems to identify progress and where pupils are experiencing difficulty are developing well. The quality of marking is inconsistent and ranges from detailed information on how pupils may improve their work to little more than cursory comment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall but has innovative elements, which do much to enhance pupils' personal development. There is an appropriate emphasis on the core subjects. Involvement in the International Baccalaureate PYP initiative and also the Philosophy for Children programme is beginning, albeit slowly, to foster pupils' thinking and questioning skills. However, there is not always sufficient emphasis on encouraging pupils to transfer skills learned in one area to other parts of the curriculum. Similarly, although provision for information and communication technology is improving, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning habits.

A current focus for the school, to develop pupils' writing, is evident in wall displays of pupils' work in this area. In addition, there are impressive creative elements of the curriculum too: art work is impressive and the school resounds with high-quality singing, instrumental and steel band music. Spanish is taught in all years and older pupils benefit from a variety of work-related programmes such as mini-enterprise initiatives. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and pupils speak highly of the Friendship Club, the street dancing and the many sporting opportunities open to them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Every child really does matter in Tonge Moor and this is reflected in the outstanding level of pastoral care, guidance and support provided for all. Relationships are very good. Pupils feel

safe and secure and know there is always an adult there for them to advise about any worries they might have. All checks to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being, including child protection, are in place and meet current requirements. Highly committed and able support staff, together with outside specialists, support pupils with learning difficulties very effectively, enabling them to be fully included in all that the school has to offer. Other skilled staff, such as the pastoral learning mentor, support the more vulnerable pupils and their families with real sensitivity and these pupils also make good progress in their personal development. Pupils' academic progress is carefully tracked. However, target-setting is used inconsistently across the school. Pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in assessing their own learning and are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Leadership by the headteacher is having a positive impact and, in a very short time, she has begun to make the school believe in itself. In partnership with an able and committed deputy headteacher, she has ensured that expectations are higher, behaviour and attendance are better and that standards are beginning to rise. There is a clear vision for the school's future that is firmly based on the overarching desire to raise standards and achievement. This vision is shared and supported by all staff and parents.

Curriculum coordinators are beginning to have a positive impact in their subject areas but some of their skills in monitoring and evaluation are at an early stage of development. The governing body is increasingly aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and is fully supportive of what teachers are trying to do. However, levels of challenge to the leadership are sometimes less than what is required if school improvement is to continue at the current pace.

School self-evaluation, particularly amongst senior staff, is developing strength. The leadership team knows the school well and is aware of what is needed to raise standards and achievement further. The impressive systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the rigorous procedures to track pupils' achievement are just two examples of effective strategies which have already had such a positive effect on pupils' personal and academic performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all so much for the lovely welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting and talking to you. We also thought your singing and the way you play in the steel band were marvellous! We would now like to tell you the good points about your school.

Tonge Moor is an improving school and the standards you are reaching in your work, especially in mathematics, are getting better and better. You behave well and you try hard to look after each other. The playground mentors, peer mediators and the school council do a lot to make everyone feel happy and they offer ideas about how to make your school an even nicer place to attend. Your teachers and teaching assistants care a lot for you and the things they have done to get you to attend school more regularly have worked well. Your attendance is now much better than it was!

You get lots of opportunities to play sport. You also know why it is important to live a healthy lifestyle and how to do it. You are very concerned to support charities and Rainbow House is very grateful for what you do for them. Those of you who are a bit older take full advantage of the trips to help you understand the world of work and you enjoy discussing some interesting topics about philosophy.

Your headteacher and all the other staff are very proud of you and we have asked them to do a few things to make Tonge Moor an even better school. We would like them to make their teaching even better so that you can get higher levels and improve your writing in particular. Your teachers are working hard for you and they are going to take an even closer look at how well you are doing in all your subjects so that they can help you even more. You have a big part to play in all this! Please continue to behave well, attend school regularly and do your best in everything!