



Toll Bar Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106677
Local Authority Doncaster
Inspection number 287584
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Hughes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Askern Road
School category	Community		Toll Bar, Doncaster
Age range of pupils	3–11		South Yorkshire DN5 0QR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01302 874324
Number on roll (school)	135	Fax number	01302 820878
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Robinson
		Headteacher	Mrs Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Toll Bar is a smaller than average school. It serves an area of significant disadvantage and family need. Fourteen nursery age children attend part time, within the Foundation Stage unit. One pupil in five is of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage: almost all other pupils are White British. A larger than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. More pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has experienced much disruption over the past twelve months. Following the resignation of the headteacher in March 2006 an associate headteacher worked with the school between April and October 2006, after which the deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher. The new substantive headteacher takes up post in January 2007. She has been working in school up to two days a week since October. There has been high staff turnover during the same period. The school is supported through the local authority's Intensive Support Programme. It also works in formal collaboration with another local school. Awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2004, the school is currently working towards achieving Healthy School status.

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 a satisfactory and improving school. Frequent changes in leadership and staffing have adversely affected pupils' achievement and the standards they reach. As a result of newly stable and satisfactory leadership and management by the acting headteacher, senior leaders and governors, standards are rising and pupils' achievement is improving from very low starting points. The school has identified as its first priorities to return standards to pre-2005 levels and to accelerate and then sustain the improving rate of pupils' achievement. Inspection findings reflect the school's own judgements of its performance, except for some aspects of care, guidance and support which inspectors judge to be satisfactory rather than good. This is because some newer support systems need time to contribute strongly to pupils' well-being. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The newness of the school's leadership, coupled with an effective response to the last inspection, demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. The high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, equivalent to a whole class in this small school, depresses overall standards because their schooling is often interrupted. Their individual attendance varies considerably from excellent to poor and brings the school's attendance levels down to well below average. Nonetheless, the school's well established links with the Traveller support service enables these pupils to make progress similar to other pupils when they are able to attend lessons. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and links closely to the sound quality of teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and achieve as well as other pupils because they receive skilful support from teaching assistants. Within an overall picture of satisfactory teaching and learning, some is outstanding in the Foundation Stage. Good quality and provision for children in the Foundation Stage ensures them a flying start to school life. This is built upon in Years 1 to 6 through satisfactory and improving teaching and learning based on a sound curriculum. Even so, there is no wet weather provision for children in the Foundation Stage and this restricts their learning outdoors. Some subjects, such as history, do not yet have identified leaders to develop the subjects across the school or to monitor the progress pupils make. The school works well with other organisations to improve pupils' understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles.

The school values and includes all pupils equally. Their personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are satisfactory. This helps pupils to enjoy school and to be active participants in their community. Pupils say the school is getting much better because behaviour is improving and lessons are more interesting. Parents express an increasing confidence that the school equips their children with the skills they need for a secure future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science to national average levels.
- Raise pupils' levels of attendance to the national average.

- Improve the impact of subject leaders so there is a clear focus on raising achievement and standards in all curriculum areas.
- Provide a covered area outdoors for Foundation Stage children so they can choose to learn outside even in wet weather.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the Foundation Stage with very low level skills in all areas of learning but particularly in language. Good teaching throughout the Nursery and Reception mean that they make good progress here and enter Year 1 with skills that are below expectations. At Key Stages 1 and 2, 2006 test results show the achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory, although standards remained below average in English, mathematics and science. This is an improvement on the well below average standards of 2005 when standards plummeted following significant disruption to the school's leadership and staffing. Pupils' rate of progress has accelerated since September. Pupils in Years 2 and 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, now make at least satisfactory progress. Teachers set challenging work based on accurate assessment information. Recent assessment scores show that standards are on course to rise near to the national average in 2007. Pupils acknowledge that their more positive attitudes and improved behaviour are helping them to make better progress. The fractured attendance patterns of many of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils restrict their achievement and the standards they attain. This reduces the overall percentage of pupils attaining higher levels in tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils and their parents say that they enjoy school and form good relationships with staff. Pupils make comments such as, 'I was never any good at maths, but the teachers helped me and I'm good at it now.' The school council improves the pupils' environment. For example, councillors identified a need for more playground equipment and organised fundraising activities to finance this. Older pupils help to supervise younger children at lunchtimes and act as Junior Road Safety Officers. They enjoy this and are keen to become even more active members of the school community. A working party, which includes the cook, a governor and members of the school council, promotes an awareness of healthy eating. The school has recently involved the National Health Service in running a well supported smoking cessation programme for parents, as well as teaching pupils about the dangers of smoking. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They regularly celebrate different customs and cultures. Assemblies allow pupils to reflect on their actions. The school actively promotes good attendance. Even so, high mobility rates of some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils coupled with the frequent absence of some other pupils mean that attendance remains well below the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most pupils work hard, enjoy lessons and understand what is expected of them. This is because lessons are well planned and their purpose is made clear to pupils at the outset. Teachers in the Foundation Stage make children work very hard for each piece of knowledge as they ask challenging questions and expect children to make their own decisions. Teachers are beginning to use pupil assessment effectively in their planning so that the work is pitched appropriately for most, although they do not always stretch higher attaining pupils. High expectations of good behaviour and effective questioning mean that pupils pay attention, collaborate well and think about what they are doing. Skilful teaching assistants ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included in lessons and receive effective support. Pupils are guided verbally in what they need to do next to improve their work. However, teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to move forward with their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The carefully planned curriculum meets pupils' needs, although children in the Foundation Stage cannot learn outdoors during wet weather because there is no covered area. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. More able pupils at both key stages attend booster classes to maximise their results in national tests. The school links subjects wherever possible to make pupils' learning meaningful to them. Interactive whiteboards enhance pupils' learning. Plentiful visits out and visitors into school broaden pupils' experiences. A local environmental centre provides additional resources and hosts weekend camps for younger pupils and week long residentials for the older ones. Pupils eagerly anticipate these trips which enhance their social skills and make learning fun. The school supports regular fundraising. For instance, Year 6 pupils organised, advertised and ran a toy fair to raise funds for charity. Pupils engage in sporting and arts based activities after school. These help pupils to lead healthier lifestyles and to become more involved with the community beyond school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school cares well for a diverse range of pupils. Staff provide pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds with regular support that is carefully tailored by outside agencies to meet their individual needs. Suitable procedures ensure they can access learning either through learning packs or laptops whilst travelling. This helps them to improve, to maintain an interest in their schooling and so to build for a more secure financial future. Procedures to safeguard pupils and to support their health, safety and well-being are in place. Pupils agree that they feel safe and valued and can

rely on adults to look after them. Adults nurture pupils' self-esteem and this has a direct impact on the progress they make. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive well measured guidance. Staff regularly track pupils' progress and usually set challenging activities that are improving the standards pupils reach. Nevertheless, tasks set for higher attaining pupils do not always stretch them sufficiently. Teachers' marking does not always show pupils exactly how to improve their work and this slows improvement. The school's commitment to fostering positive relationships with parents means that their involvement with their children's learning is increasing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher is committed to raising the achievement of all groups of pupils. She is determined the school will rediscover its previous high standards. The school effectively includes all pupils in every aspect of its work. Disruption in leadership has led to discontinuity in the management of the school. Some subject leaders have only just been appointed and have had insufficient time to bring about sustained improvement in their areas of responsibility. The local authority and associate headteacher have guided the school well. Correct development priorities direct the school. Secure monitoring systems ensure challenging targets are set for pupils. The acting headteacher has developed her leadership skills in testing circumstances. She has steered the school well and has already established an effective working partnership with the headteacher designate. Even so, the leadership acknowledges that much remains to be done. The school needs a period of consolidation to catch its breath and then to drive forward initiatives. Governors shouldered a huge workload over the past year while resolving leadership and staffing issues. They offer satisfactory challenge to the school and are increasingly aware of its strengths and areas to improve. With a now stable leadership team, they are able to focus on these.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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.

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	2
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 for your friendly welcome when we visited your school. It was a pleasure to talk with you and hear how much you like school and how it has improved recently. At the moment, we judge it a satisfactory school. We were pleased to see for ourselves and to agree with you that it is improving. You told us that most children behave much better in school because lessons are more interesting and we also agree with you about that. We found that children in Nursery and Reception do well because their teachers encourage them to make their own decisions. You are all starting to reach higher standards in your work and to learn faster because your lessons are improving. This means you will have better skills when you move on to your next school and eventually get jobs. You enjoy school a lot and are learning how to live healthy and safe lives. Those of you with special jobs really enjoy them and many of you would like to do more for the whole school.

As well as finding out about all the good things that happen at Toll Bar, part of our job is to identify what your school needs to do better. We have asked your school's leaders and teachers to help you to reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science. We have also asked for your school to have leaders for other subjects like history so they can make sure you do even better in those subjects too. You can help with both of these by trying your very best in all your lessons. We would also like more of you to come to school every day so you don't miss important work. Children in the Foundation Stage need to be able to learn outside all year round as this helps them experience new ways of working. We have asked your school to provide a covered area outside the Foundation Stage unit so Nursery and Reception children can work out there even in wet weather. As you have been so successful at planning and running other fundraising events, perhaps you could put on your thinking caps and come up with some good ideas for helping to pay for part of this?

We hope you enjoy working with your new headteacher next term and send you our very best wishes for the future.