



# Tollesbury School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114925  
**Local Authority** ESSEX  
**Inspection number** 290076  
**Inspection dates** 14–15 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Martin Beale

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	East Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		Tollesbury, Tollesbury
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Maldon, Essex CM9 8QE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01621869242
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	201	<b>Fax number</b>	01621868637
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr. Andrew Gilbert
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Pamela Gee
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 14–15 September 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 290076
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Tollesbury School is an average-sized primary school serving a small village in a rural area of south-east Essex. All but a very few pupils are of White British heritage. Free school meal entitlement is low. Attainment on entry fluctuates but is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Tollesbury School provides a good education for its pupils. It is well led and managed and it plays an integral part in the life of the tight-knit village community, which it serves well. Parents are very supportive of all that the school does and are keen to see it become even better. Their perceptions of the school have become much more positive over the last few years and they are kept fully informed about events and developments. The school has a happy and purposeful atmosphere where every pupil is valued and encouraged to do his or her best. Parents are very pleased with the good care, guidance and support their children receive. Pupils like coming to school because all staff know them well. They report that they feel cared for and well looked after. Pupils are keen to try new things and to answer in lessons because they know that what they say and do is valued. They are polite, friendly, and proud of their school. They behave well and participate enthusiastically in all that is offered to them. Many of the activities contribute effectively to the development of the basic skills for their future lives. Pupils undertake their responsibilities well and make an outstanding contribution to the school, the wider community and, especially, to village life. They have a growing voice in school about matters that affect them. They have a good understanding of healthy living, the importance of eating a balanced diet and regular exercise. The school successfully promotes high levels of attendance and good punctuality. The pupils' experiences in physical education and the creative arts are considerably enhanced through the well-established links with local specialist secondary schools and Colchester United Football Club. Achievement is good. Standards have risen in recent years at Year 6 but have shown little change for Year 2 pupils. Pupils make good progress during their time at Tollesbury School and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. This is largely because the pupils respond well to lessons that interest, challenge and build clearly on what they have done before. Teaching is good overall, but not consistently so across the school. Brisk and lively teaching reflecting the teachers' high expectations of the pupils is leading to very rapid progress in the upper years. However, this quality is not always seen across Years 1 and 2, where pupils make only satisfactory progress. The school met its challenging targets for Level 4 performance in 2006, but missed them at Level 5 in English because writing standards are not as high as they should be. Pupils do not consistently practise and develop their writing in all subjects. The youngest children are catered for well. There are very effective arrangements to help the children in Reception to settle quickly into the school routines. They respond well to the good teaching and interesting curriculum, adopting a positive attitude to learning, and behaving well. The two teachers who share the class provide the children with secure and welcoming surroundings and good opportunities to develop their physical, social, mathematical and language skills. As a result, the children achieve well and the vast majority reach nationally expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress because teachers are quick to identify specific learning needs, and adopt a wide range of strategies to ensure that they achieve well. Teaching assistants and additional teachers are well trained and provide effective support. Provision for these pupils is monitored thoroughly and managed well. The headteacher

provides effective leadership which is focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all of the pupils. She is ably assisted by other members of the management team and subject coordinators, who do much to provide training and guidance to colleagues. The governing body is well led and has effective systems in place to help it support the school. Governors challenge the school to do better and help to plan for its future, although targets for performance at Year 2 are not high enough, particularly for the more able pupils. Planning for improvement is now based more closely on self-evaluation which is honest, accurate and rigorous. While the school knows itself well, planning has not been consistently challenging of teachers and pupils in Years 1 and 2. Funding is used well to meet the school's priorities of maintaining high staff numbers and providing modern resources such as the recently installed interactive whiteboards. The difficulties in appointing full-time staff are managed well, although the large number of classes shared by two teachers is far from ideal. Governors and the headteacher echo the concerns of some parents and do all that they can to minimise the impact on the pupils, such as by providing extra teaching groups for English and mathematics in Years 3 to 6. There are some benefits from this problem, such as the way teachers plan carefully together and, in some cases, learn new skills from each other. The main shortcomings identified at the last inspection have been dealt with successfully. The school is well placed to build on its many strong features and provides good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Reinforce the development of writing skills in all subjects. - Raise teacher expectations and provide greater challenge in Years 1 and 2, particularly for the more able.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress during their time at the school, although there is some room for improvement. Virtually all pupils reach, and many exceed, nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they go on to secondary school. Standards are rising, particularly in science, where a very high proportion reach above expected levels by Year 6. More limited progress has been made in improving the pupils' writing, where standards fall behind other basic skills. Furthermore, pupils make only satisfactory progress across Years 1 and 2, where expectations of the more able and the targets they are set are not sufficiently high.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say that they like coming to school, 'because it's a friendly place'. This is reflected in their positive attitudes to their work, good behaviour, punctuality and regular attendance. While pupils generally behave well, a few older pupils can be a little boisterous, particularly in the playground, although this is dealt with effectively by the staff. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The

vast majority of pupils treat their peers and adults with respect and know whom to ask if they need help or have a concern. Through the school, they are fully involved in the village. This includes participating in, and organising their own village fundraising activities. They are also keen to promote environmental initiatives and regularly entertain older members of the community at school events.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils respond well to the good teaching in most classes and to the consistent expectations of teachers for their behaviour and approach to learning. Much skilled questioning makes the pupils think about their responses as well as how they might improve their work. There is some highly constructive marking such as the 'Thinking Bubbles' used by the teachers in Year 6, which leads to a dialogue between teacher and pupil about how work can be improved. However, this quality is not evident throughout the school. Teachers have a good picture of what the pupils know and understand, but do not consistently use this to plan activities and modify their teaching to provide challenge for the more able younger pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good and well-planned curriculum is supported and extended by a wide range of clubs, educational visits and visitors to the school. Programmes are well matched to the needs of the average and less able pupils, but not for the more able pupils in Years 1 and 2. Basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are re-enforced through other subjects, but this is not consistent throughout the school, especially in writing. Teachers are starting to utilise new technology more to support learning as they become more confident with the use of the recently installed interactive whiteboards.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and comply with the latest government requirements. Health and safety checks are rigorous. The arrangements to help the pupils settle into their new school make them quickly feel welcome and secure. Teachers use assessment information well to track progress and to set suitably challenging targets in the Reception class and in Years 3 to 6, so that pupils are familiar with their targets for improvement. Links with parents have been strengthened; the annual written report is informative and provides clear guidance for improvement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has skilfully led the school through its development and improvement since the last inspection, with good support from a committed and knowledgeable governing body. The school knows itself well, consults others and keeps them fully informed about proposed developments. Effective systems are in place to make sure that all staff do their jobs as well as possible. Actions for improvement are largely effective. The systematic analysis and use of assessment information ensures that pupils' progress is tracked, with effective interventions adopted whenever necessary for those falling behind standards expected for their age.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

15 September 2006 Dear Pupils Tollesbury School, East Street, Tollesbury, Essex, CM9 8QE I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very kind and helpful to us and showed how proud you are of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school. You make good progress during your time at the school and almost all of you achieve or often exceed the standards expected of you by the time you leave. You work hard and with enjoyment, attend regularly and behave well even though some of you are rather overexcited at times in the playground. You are cared for and looked after well, and the youngest of you are given good support to help you settle in. You have an interesting range of activities in which to take part, both in lessons and after school. The links with Plume and Thurstable Schools as well as Colchester United Football Club are particularly exciting and much valued. Those of you who need extra help with learning are given good support to do so. You make an outstanding contribution to school and village life. We are very pleased to see how your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There are two areas where we all agree that improvements could be made. You need to develop your writing skills more and those of you in Years 1 and 2 could do better in all subjects if you were pushed slightly harder. We wish you well for the future. Best wishes  
Martin Beale Lead inspector