

Tollgate Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114458
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311609
Inspection dates	13–14 February 2008
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Salmon
Headteacher	Louise Holyoake
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Winston Crescent Seaside Eastbourne BN23 6NL
Telephone number	01323 723298
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average urban junior school serving its local area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than that found nationally with very few pupils who speak English as a second language. Most children come from one infant school and have broadly average ability when they start in Year 3. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at an average level although the proportion who have a statement of special educational need is low. There have been some changes in staff over the last few years which, because this has caused changes to the senior team, has particularly affected the continuity of developments.

Amongst other commendations, the school has received the Active Sportsmark award, the Healthy Schools Silver award, a Travel Plan award, The Bishop's Commendation and a Royal Society award in 2004, 2006 and 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. There are both good and outstanding features but also areas in need of further development. These centre on the academic achievement for those pupils who are mainly at the top end of the middle ability range. All pupils are developing into very confident, articulate and enthusiastic learners who are being prepared well for their future lives. Academically, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress through the school and reach standards in line with those expected of 11-year-olds by the time they leave in Year 6. Parents' views of the school broadly match the inspection findings.

The school's major aim is to produce individuals who have an enquiring mind and are ready to take on life's challenges. This has resulted in excellent personal development. There are extensive opportunities for the pupils to take part in themed weeks, master classes, sporting and creative clubs as well as music events and competitions. In many of these, there has been considerable success. For example during the inspection, a group came first in the local music and arts festival for their choral speaking. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. This has been recognised through a national award and can be seen in the way that pupils take care to choose the correct diet and by being careful when using tools such as when lino-cutting. As one pupil said, 'I knew that I had to keep my hand behind the cutter in case it slipped.'

Standards have risen since the last inspection. There are some examples where progress has significantly improved such as in information and communication technology (ICT), a key issue at the last inspection. Progress being made now in the basic skills of writing, reading and mathematics is satisfactory. This is due to the implementation of the renewed framework for mathematics and a 'Big Writing' programme. In the past, the school has rightly recognised there was underachievement in these subjects. This was because teaching was not consistently challenging, the consequence being most noticeable in national tests. While the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 was similar to those nationally, pupils' prior attainment suggested that more should be reaching the higher Level 5. A very thorough analysis has unearthed where this was occurring and good specialist support has provided the momentum to improve individual teachers' expertise. Consequently, day-to-day lessons are now of much better quality, with pupils making satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Nevertheless, it is taking time to resolve the legacy of underachievement. The school's most recent analysis, substantiated by inspection evidence, shows that pupils in the top end of the middle ability range are the ones whose progress rates need to be improved and this is where support is now being targeted.

The atmosphere in lessons is one of concerted effort and strong relationships between both adults and the pupils and where behaviour is always good and often exemplary. Particularly strong is the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For instance, the school supports another school in Uganda. It was also the first school to receive Church Partnership Status. All this has come about through the good pastoral care of pupils and the improving and better focused development of academic achievement.

The restructuring of the leadership team has been used to good effect, drawing attention to the improved progress of pupils. Extensive analysis of ongoing assessments has resulted in a broadly satisfactory self-evaluation. Generally, it accurately assesses the quality of provision but, because of the recent improvement in pupils' progress, it is overgenerous in terms of the

actual academic outcomes over time. This results in a school development plan that outlines the necessary improvements but does not have sufficiently stringent ways of measuring how successful these have been. Consequently, the governors are able to provide satisfactory support but their role in challenging the school is not based on a thorough understanding of how effective the improvements have been.

What the school should do to improve further

- Eliminate the pockets of underachievement in English and mathematics and so raise standards overall by ensuring teaching is consistently good in every class.
- Ensure that the school development plan contains measurable outcomes so that improvements can be monitored robustly and there is a realistic understanding of the outcomes for pupils.
- Ensure that governors use the right level of information to enable them to hold the school to account for its performance.

A small proportion of the 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

For the past four years, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected and above expected levels in the national tests for English, mathematics and science has been at least similar to that nationally. Since the school's own assessments, supported by inspection evidence, indicate that pupils start Year 3 with at least average levels, this represents satisfactory progress overall. There are indications that with the stronger and more consistently good teaching in each class, pupils' progress over the longer term is gradually improving. This is being enhanced by better use of targeted support groups for those who are not doing as well as they should and by focusing teachers' lessons on providing different levels of challenge for all abilities. Pupils' books this year show that extended writing, using mathematical knowledge in unfamiliar situations and combining subjects across a range of basic skills has improved achievement. Nevertheless, the pupils' targets set in some classes indicate there are more pupils capable of achieving these higher levels of progress and reaching higher standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' behaviour is always good and often exemplary. They are extremely keen to join in with any opportunities that are offered and many of the extensive out of class activities are oversubscribed. Relationships across the school are excellent and pupils are a pleasure to be with. They willingly offer suggestions, are able to reflect on their actions within small groups and talk about their own perceived shortcomings with humour and realism. They raise extensive amounts for local and international causes and have 'adopted' a child in an African school. They are highly involved in events such as local community arts projects and through their school newspaper, distributed locally. The 'Global Citizenship week' demonstrated how pupils have a good understanding of world issues and try hard not to stereotype different cultures. In fact, they celebrate these by trying out different foods and customs without any prejudice. There are many examples of very strong independent attitudes to work as well as basic work skills such as in ICT, problem-solving, researching, report writing and minute-taking. These, along with generally secure literacy and numeracy skills, and their own high aspirations and connections

with a local Business Partnership indicate that pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Day-to-day lessons are delivered well using interesting activities and exciting resources. The opportunity given to take responsibility and to work independently ensures that pupils are well motivated learners. There is good classroom management of behaviour, which is never an issue, and teachers work hard to ensure pupils make progress. For example, teachers often ask paired groups to discuss their decisions and to share these within the whole group. Teaching over the longer term is satisfactory. The development of individual teachers' expertise has been a high priority and is being improved successfully. Nevertheless, there is still inconsistency partly due to extensive changes of staff. For example, marking and the setting of pupil targets ranges from very good to satisfactory. As a result, not all pupils are set more challenging work and this restricts them making more rapid progress as they move through the school. These inconsistencies are the major reason why pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory rather than good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The breadth and range of activities and learning opportunities is extremely extensive. There are very many links with the community, outside agencies and other schools. For example, a group of pupils, both from this school and others, worked in a pottery class with a teacher expert. The school has focused its attention on 'learning to learn' and this has enabled many initiatives to be created including using a science engineer and specialists for music, dance and French. All these initiatives have contributed to producing well-rounded individuals who are ready and able to continue their education. A new governor has just started work to develop the school's own radio station, which will include researching, financing and pupils producing their own programmes. Extra-curricular activities are equally varied with many clubs and visits. Pupils say they find it 'hard to fit everything in'. Plans are just starting to link these very wide-ranging opportunities with the core skills in English and mathematics to support the school's drive to raise achievement in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care and support of pupils is very strong. All adults are highly supportive of those they are in charge of. Safeguarding of pupils is secure and correct procedures are fully in place. The school has successfully adopted nationally recognised support materials to enhance pupils' social and emotional needs. These are guiding pupils' personal development particularly well. Pupils' individual academic needs in English and mathematics are identified early and tracked closely, particularly when they enter in Year 3. The findings are used to identify where pupils have not or are not making enough progress. This is not as stringent in other subjects especially as pupils move up the school. The school has developed a number of booster classes and clubs to help pupils improve at a better pace and, in discussion, pupils recognise how this has helped them. Their books also show how any missed concepts are being addressed. At a whole school

level, the extremely thorough analysis of assessments has been completed but the findings have not been used to determine how best to measure the success of any new initiatives and so address any whole school issues.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School improvement has been impeded by staffing difficulties. However, restructuring has enabled the school to spread its expertise across year groups and to use it to greater effect. Systems for tracking pupil achievement are good and constantly being developed. The outcomes are being used well at an individual pupil and teacher level although only satisfactorily deal with any significant trends that are apparent year on year. This is the reason why the school's self-evaluation is overgenerous. The school development plan, while indicating the right actions for improvement, does not have specific small steps or measurable outcomes that enable the next actions to be decided. The governing body has shown some recent improvements, particularly in the structure of its committees. However, while governors are supportive and have some understanding of the school, they have not, until recently, had sufficient expertise to enable them to ask pertinent and challenging questions. The capacity for improvement is satisfactory. The actions chosen are appropriate. There are some clearly emerging strengths in terms of the leadership team and, while there is still some underachievement to address, the track record shows an improvement in standards since the last inspection.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

18 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tollgate Community Junior School, Eastbourne BN23 6NL

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We really did enjoy talking to so many of you and seeing what you were getting up to. I have said that while everything is satisfactory, there are some good and outstanding things happening at your school but also some areas that still need developing. As I promised some of you, I have included the main points of our report below.

- You told us how much you enjoyed school and felt you had lots of exciting things to do; we agree; we can see that your teachers plan lots of interesting lessons and we have said that we think you respond very well to all the many things that go on.
- We have also said that we think your behaviour is excellent; you get on really well with each other and the staff; you have a great understanding of many issues affecting our society; we saw this in all that was being done during your 'Global Awareness Week'.
- There is so much to do, I know you find it difficult to fit it all in; however, these opportunities are giving you a good understanding about how to get the best from your education.
- In your SATs tests you reach standards that are similar to those in other schools; we think that these could be improved by making sure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones; this would also help you to do as well as you possibly can across all subjects.
- Your headteacher and the rest of the staff and the governors are working on trying to make sure that they can measure how any new developments have worked; this will help them plan better in the future.

Finally, we wish you all the best for your future education. Make sure you work hard and put forward suggestions for how things could be made even better.

Best wishes

David Collard Lead inspector

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Lead inspector