

# Tolleshunt d'Arcy St Nicholas CE VA Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115187
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311871
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert McKeown HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	141
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs C Page
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L S Spencer-Campbell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Tollesbury Road Tolleshunt d'Arcy Maldon Essex CM9 8UB
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Tolleshunt d'Arcy Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is situated in the village of Tolleshunt d'Arcy, near Maldon, in Essex. It is smaller than average and has six classes. The number on roll has fallen markedly since the last inspection. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are from the local Traveller community, some of whom are absent from school at certain times in the year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little higher than is typical for this size of school. A small number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most children start school in the Reception class with skills and aptitudes that match those expected for their age. At the time of the inspection, temporary leadership and management arrangements were in place to cover the absence of the substantive headteacher. An executive headteacher was supporting the acting headteacher and assistant headteacher on two days each week.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

Since it was last inspected in 2003, the quality of education provided at Tolleshunt d'Arcy Primary School has declined. Issues identified at the time of the last inspection have not been tackled successfully. Although staff are now working positively together with a temporary leadership team, outcomes for pupils have not improved enough for the school's overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. The continued momentum of improvement rests crucially on resolving the temporary arrangements that surround the leadership of the school.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards, achievement and in aspects of leadership and management.

Pupils at Tolleshunt d'Arcy have noticed several positive improvements in their school in the last few weeks. They are pleased with the changes to their learning environment and the raised expectations for better behaviour. Most pupils say they enjoy school, although attendance is below the national average with pupils taking time off, which is unauthorised. Pupils learn about how to lead healthy lifestyles and many eat the nutritious school lunches. The frequent meetings of the school council enable pupils to express their views and make suggestions for improving the school. Behaviour is satisfactory and most pupils get on well together.

Children get a good start in the Reception class and most pupils then make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. After that, progress is too inconsistent and for many pupils is inadequate. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, standards are too low. Positive changes have been introduced since the beginning of the term to raise standards quickly and keep a thorough check on pupils' progress.

The improved checking systems have exposed the lack of progress made by many pupils. Since the start of this term, teachers have been working on improving aspects of their teaching to enhance the overall quality of lessons, but not enough good teaching is in place to ensure all pupils make suitable progress. The curriculum is satisfactory. A greater emphasis on raising standards in English and mathematics has led to the setting up of booster sessions and intervention programmes to help pupils fill gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Satisfactory care, guidance and support are given to pupils by all staff.

Leadership and management are currently satisfactory. This is because the temporary leadership arrangement set up at the start of the spring term has begun to tackle a number of inadequacies. These had been allowed to develop unchecked over several terms. Subject leaders have started to gather evidence to support the evaluations of their subjects but improvements in this work are still required. The effectiveness of governance has improved noticeably since September and it is now satisfactory. Governors recognise that they still have some way to go to ensure they are playing their role of critical friend to full capacity.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children get a good start in the Reception class, where they are very enthusiastic learners and get on well with the adults who work with them. They enjoy the rewards they receive for their achievements. Regular assessments are made of children's progress which show that children

make good progress and achieve well in their first year in school. Children develop a good foundation of early literacy and numeracy skills, attaining above national expectations. Teaching is good and the curriculum covers a full range of learning experiences. Good emphasis is placed on children gaining key personal skills. The indoor learning environment is spacious and stimulating but the school acknowledges that more could be made of the dedicated outside space to develop children's learning outdoors. The Foundation Stage is managed well and staff teamwork is good. Productive links are being developed between the Reception and Year 1 classes to ensure a smooth transition across the key stages.

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

- Raise standards in Key Stage 2 and ensure all pupils make at least satisfactory progress.
- Continue to support improvements in teaching and learning so that all lessons are at least satisfactory and a significant proportion are good or better.
- Strengthen leadership and management by improving the contribution made by subject leaders to school improvement.
- Strengthen the role played by governors in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and in challenging it to improve.
- Improve attendance and reduce unauthorised absence.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 4**

Children make good progress in their Reception year but this is not built on sufficiently as they move through the school. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is mostly satisfactory. In the last two years, standards have improved in Year 2 and in 2007 matched the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and those from the Traveller community achieved well. Although the overall picture is satisfactory, a significant minority of pupils did not manage to achieve the expected Level 2 in reading and writing. In contrast, progress for pupils in Years 3 to 6 has been very inconsistent and remains inadequate. Progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are from the Traveller community is variable; for some pupils it is good and for others it is inadequate. Standards in Year 6 have fallen since the last inspection and the latest national test results in 2007 were below average in English and mathematics and exceptionally low in science. The proportions of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in mathematics and science were well below the national levels. Boys' results in all three subjects were also exceptionally low. Although pupils currently in Year 6 are benefiting from good teaching which is helping them to recover some of the lost ground, their targets indicate that standards will remain below average this year. Since the beginning of the year, booster sessions and precise learning targets have been introduced to help pupils achieve more.

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

#### **Grade: 3**

Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are mostly good, although some pupils show a lack of enthusiasm and engagement when their lessons are less stimulating and not matched well to their needs. Pupils say they feel safe at school but individuals reported occasional incidences when they felt they were bullied, believing the school responds firmly most of the time. Pupils are taught about internet safety and refrain from making racist comments. They know about what they need to do to adopt healthy lifestyles, such as eating a balanced diet and taking

exercise and about avoiding harmful substances and risk. Year 6 pupils take some responsibility for doing simple tasks around the school. Pupils raise funds for various charities. Most pupils are developing suitable information and communication technology (ICT) skills but many do not make enough progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' good spiritual development. The school acknowledges that attendance and punctuality are not as good as they should be.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are now satisfactory. The lessons observed during the inspection ranged from good to inadequate. The good lessons engage pupils well and match their learning needs. They are interesting and conducted at a good pace. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas in response to teachers' questions and particular emphasis is placed on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Interactive whiteboards are used in most lessons and sometimes successfully to enhance learning, such as in the Year 2 lesson where pupils were learning about lions. Teachers are beginning to involve pupils in assessing their own learning but more work is needed on this to make it effective. In less successful lessons, pupils are not sufficiently engaged and occasionally are restless, interrupting the flow of teaching. Sometimes pupils sit for too long listening to the teacher. In weaker lessons, the pitch of learning is not matched well enough to pupils' needs so that some are insufficiently challenged and others struggle to understand. The support provided by teaching assistants varies from good to satisfactory. Pupils' books are usually marked regularly but only recently have teachers begun to make suggestions for how work might be improved. Presentation in books is variable, and in some classes untidy; younger pupils are not joining their handwriting.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

An overall plan clearly outlines the topics and activities taught in each term. Pupils say they have regular sessions in the ICT suite but that there are fewer opportunities to use the suite of laptops to develop their ICT skills in other subjects. Older children are encouraged to test their learning by undertaking regular individual computer assessments in English, mathematics and science. Recently, pupils have been doing more practical investigations in science. Pupils have two hours of timetabled physical education (PE), which contributes to their fitness. Those who are particularly able are identified and now receive additional challenges to boost their achievements. All classes have the opportunity to make educational visits to support their learning, such as the recent visit by Year 6 to Colchester Zoo to see and learn about their adopted orang-utan, Rajang. Strong links exist with the local church. Assemblies are led by representatives from the local faith communities and pupils take part in festival celebrations throughout the year. Pupils say they enjoy attending a satisfactory number of enrichment activities but they would like more.

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

#### **Grade: 3**

Relationships between staff and pupils are good and all adults in the school show appropriate concern for pupils' welfare. Lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and circle

time are used to help guide pupils' personal development. Staff have received training in managing behaviour and pupils have noticed the difference in their lessons. Appropriate safeguarding policies and records are in place but training for all staff on managing child protection issues is overdue. The school acknowledges that attendance requires improvement and is working with local support agencies to draw up a plan to reduce absence and lateness. Tracking of pupil's progress has improved in the last few months and this has helped leaders to identify underachievement. Teachers now set appropriate learning targets for pupils in English and mathematics and these are shared with parents. A plan has recently been drawn up to record the many intervention programmes put in place to help pupils make better progress. The success of these support programmes has yet to be tested. 'Gym trail' sessions are also helping a small number of pupils to improve their coordination skills.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are currently satisfactory. Since January, the assistant headteachers have worked together well with the executive headteacher to draw up a precise action plan for improvement. They have set up systems for keeping a close check on how well pupils are doing and have regularly observed lessons to promote improvements in teaching. A target has been set to improve the overall quality of teaching but the school is still some way from reaching it. Leaders acknowledge that more emphasis is now required on checking the outcomes of pupils' learning and the effectiveness of teachers' assessments. Local authority staff have given the school intensive support to help improve standards in English and mathematics. Targets for improvement are recorded in a tightly focussed raising attainment plan, which has superseded the current school development plan. Actions to improve teaching and raise standards demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

A new office manager has been appointed and has set about establishing effective procedures for financial management and administration. Governors are taking a more active interest in the school's work and starting to ask questions about how well it is doing. A useful audit of parents' views was completed and parents were given feedback on the outcomes. Governors have also been paired-up with subject leaders and have started to make visits to the school to see it in action. Governors acknowledge that they need to be more involved in school self-evaluation and strategic planning.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
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	4
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?	Yes

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

14 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Tolleshunt d'Arcy St Nicholas CE VA Primary School, Tolleshunt d'Arcy, CM9 8UB

Thank you for helping me with my inspection work when I visited your school. I enjoyed my two days at Tolleshunt d'Arcy. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their views of the school. You told me that you thought the school was getting better and that your learning activities and behaviour had improved in 2008. I agree with you but I also believe that things need to improve some more.

I thought everyone I met was polite and friendly and that most of you behaved well and got on well together. I enjoyed sharing a healthy lunch with you and seeing some of the things you do in lessons. I noticed that not everyone concentrates enough sometimes and that the work in some of your books could be improved. I like the idea of having targets to help you. It is a good idea having a school council to represent your views. I passed on your suggestions that you would like more clubs to choose from and have more opportunities to use the laptop computers.

Your teachers and the governors have made some positive changes in the last few weeks and your parents have noticed the difference, but as I said, there still some more improvements to make. I made some requests before I left. I asked the governors to keep a close eye on how well the school is doing. I asked your teachers to make sure all your lessons are good ones, to help you improve your work in English, mathematics and science. I also asked them to keep a check on what is provided for you in all the different subjects. Lastly, I would like you to give 100% in all your lessons and try to be at school as much as possible and avoid taking days off unless you are unwell.

I will be asking another inspector to come back to your school in about six months to see how well you are doing.

With best wishes,

Rob McKeown

Her Majesty's Inspector