

# Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 117388               |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Hertfordshire        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 379409               |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 27–28 September 2011 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Anna Coyle           |

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 controlled                     |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                                     |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                    |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 38                                       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                       |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Diana Howarth                            |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Alan Wright                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 04 March 2009                            |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Ware Road<br>Tonwell<br>Ware<br>SG12 0HN |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01920 462894                             |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01920 469606                             |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | admin@tonwell.herts.sch.uk               |

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 3–11                 |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 27–28 September 2011 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 379409               |

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. The inspector visited 10 lessons and observed three teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils, parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including assessment and tracking information, the school development plan, monitoring reports and pupils' workbooks. The inspection questionnaires were analysed, including 28 from parents and carers.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Does teaching promote consistent progress in writing and mathematics, especially for the more-able pupils and girls?
- Do teachers use assessment effectively to match work to the needs of different pupils in lessons?
- How effective is the leadership of the school, and of English and mathematics?

## Information about the school

This very small, voluntary controlled, primary school is situated in the heart of the village, close to the towns of Ware and Hertford. All pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average and very few pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school has a Sports Mark, and is working toward an Eco-schools award.

The school organises its pupils into three mixed-age classes: Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children are in Ash class; Years 2, 3 and 4 pupils are in Beech class; and Years 5 and 6 pupils are in Oak class.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school, which functions as a happy, harmonious and cohesive community. It has improved since the last inspection under the good leadership of the headteacher, who is supported well by the governing body. Good local links and partnerships with parents and carers aid pupils' learning. Parental comments endorse this and one said, 'I feel extremely privileged to have such a fantastic village school', while another confirmed, 'This is a true community school.'

Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils' moral and social development are excellent. Their spiritual and cultural development and understanding of the diversity of the modern world are good. Pupils show very mature attitudes to learning by the time they reach Years 5 and 6. They take on responsibilities willingly and look after the younger ones very sensitively. The pupils achieve well. Children make good progress in the Reception class and build effectively on their skills and knowledge in the excellent environment provided for them, indoors and outside. Throughout the rest of the school, most girls and boys make good progress and reach the levels expected of them by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. However, a very small number of the more-able pupils are not always challenged enough because there are too few opportunities for them to apply their skills through mathematical investigations and independent research. There are also some inconsistencies in pupils' handwriting and in their use of grammar and punctuation. Attendance is improving, and is currently average, but absences limit learning when pupils miss lessons.

The quality of teaching is good. Staff treat pupils with great respect and provide them with good care, support and guidance in lessons. Teachers ensure that pupils have equal access to a good curriculum, which is enriched by a wide range of after-school clubs. Leadership of English is good but the roles of other subject leaders are not fully developed in relation to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. Assessment to support learning is satisfactory. The school has introduced a new system for tracking progress, and pupils have clear targets to help them learn, but data is not always used well enough to plan challenging work for the more-able. Marking does not consistently identify what pupils need to do next to improve their work. Nevertheless, based on its good track record, good outcomes, and effective leadership and governance, the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 so that a larger proportion of pupils reach the highest levels at the end of Year 6 by:
  - improving pupils' handwriting and their use of grammar and punctuation
  - increasing the opportunities for the more able pupils to conduct their own mathematical investigations and independent research
  - reducing the number of absences and lateness so that pupils do not miss lessons.
  
- Extend the use of assessment by:
  - making better use of data to plan challenging work for the more able
  - improving marking so that pupils know what they have to do next to improve their work.
  
- Develop the roles of the subject leaders by:
  - providing more opportunities for them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms
  - ensuring that they keep a close check on the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Outcomes are good because pupils are well prepared for their future lives and they behave exceedingly well. They have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and show very mature attitudes to learning by the time they reach Years 5 and 6. These attributes stand them in good stead and help them to concentrate well on learning. Attainment varies from year-to-year because the school has extremely small cohorts of pupils. There is a clear upward trend in the pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. A very small number of the more-able pupils in the upper years are capable of higher standards, but their learning is held back sometimes by untidy handwriting and a lack of understanding of how to use more sophisticated grammar and punctuation. In addition, they do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills through their own investigations.

Pupils enjoy learning enormously, especially when lessons are filled with fun, such as when Year 1 pretended to go on a 'wobbly' boat ride with their teacher. They work and play together in harmony and are very tolerant of each other, with the oldest pupils taking great care of the younger ones at playtimes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are integrated well in lessons and supported closely by the staff and their peers to help them make good progress. For instance, they, and their classmates, benefited considerably in Years 5 and 6 from the teacher's skilled questioning techniques when designing Anderson air-raid shelters as

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part of their work about the Second World War. Pupils say that they feel safe and they understand how to live healthily by taking regular exercise and eating wholesome food during breakfast club and at lunchtime, although lunchboxes occasionally contain unhealthy items. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities in the school and local community by acting as play leaders, school councillors and monitors. They participate well in fundraising for charities, such as Red Nose Day and Children in Need, and in supporting children in Africa.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 3        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | 2        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 2        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 3        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>2</b> |

## How effective is the provision?

Parents agree that there is 'a calm supportive atmosphere' in the school. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and a cheerful rapport with them, particularly during practical activities. For example, in a good lesson with Years 2, 3 and 4 pupils, on the story of 'The Borrowers', the teacher's good use of the interactive whiteboard and gentle humour made learning enjoyable for everyone. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work closely with teaching assistants to guide small groups of pupils carefully, giving close attention to those who require the most help. For instance, in Years 5 and 6, the teacher's excellent knowledge of Spanish and lively manner meant that pupils were enthralled, and all groups achieved well, culminating with his cry of, 'Estupendo!' to celebrate their successes. Assessment is used satisfactorily to organise activities, but data is not always used effectively enough to extend and challenge the more-able pupils. Activities are occasionally over-directed when teachers talk for too long. Marking makes effective use of praise, but it does not identify the next steps pupils are to learn or tell them

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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how to improve their work so that they can reach the next level.

The school's good curriculum has been improved well since the last inspection. It provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities based on a topic approach to learning and a good focus upon their personal, social and health education. There are strong links between subjects such as English and history, and activities are adapted well for pupils with special educational needs so that they have equal access to the curriculum. Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended, such as science club, gardening and football.

The care, guidance and support of pupils is good because all staff know them and their families well and are vigilant in making sure that they are safe, settled and happy at school. The school monitors attendance carefully and liaises appropriately with the local authority to follow up any issues concerning pupils' absences, where necessary. Transition arrangements are well established for pupils joining or leaving the school. One parent summed up the views of many, 'The teachers at Tonwell really take time to look after the individual needs of the children.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| The use of assessment to support learning  | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>2</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear sense of ambition and drive for the school. He is highly committed to the pupils and their families, and has successfully overseen the recent staffing changes and refurbishments to the buildings. One parent commented: 'The school is very well run, (with) great improvements.' The school is a highly colourful and exciting environment in which pupils learn, and money has been set aside to improve the facilities even further. Self-evaluation processes are well-established and any perceived areas for improvement, like mathematics, are rightly incorporated into the detailed school development plan. Most of the monitoring has been done effectively by the headteacher in the past but the management of the curriculum has been re-organised fairly recently. English is led and managed well by the headteacher, but the subject leaders for mathematics and science have not yet developed their roles. For instance, they do not check on the quality of teaching and learning by visiting lessons and they do not use assessment data rigorously enough to track pupils' attainment and progress. Nevertheless, the governing body has improved its role effectively since the last inspection. It fulfils all of its statutory requirements, and individual governors are regular visitors. They keep a close check on the school to make sure that it provides good value for money.

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Good procedures for safeguarding and child protection mean that the school ensures the safety of its pupils and supports those whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable than others. Effective procedures for the safe recruitment of staff, regular training opportunities and systematic risk assessments help to ensure that pupils have a safe place in which to learn. Equality and diversity are promoted well, and all pupils are encouraged to strive for success. They are all integrated well in activities and there is no discrimination. Community cohesion is promoted effectively through good links with local schools and with businesses such as a national savings bank. The school’s growing links with a school in Dominica, as part of the church’s Caribbean work, enhance pupils’ understanding of the diversity of the modern world in which they live.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 3        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>2</b> |

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities vary greatly from year-to-year when they first start school and are sometimes below the expectations for their age. All make good progress and achieve well and most attain the expected learning goals by the time they begin Year 1. All children show curiosity and they explore the world around them eagerly. Most settle happily at the beginning of the day and all play well together, listening carefully to adults’ instructions. Children’s personal and social skills are good. They behave sensibly and really enjoy using the high-quality resources provided to help them achieve well in creative and physical development; such as construction toys, sand trays, paints and the climbing frame. Excellent facilities, indoors and outside, mean that children receive a safe start to their education in which they learn effectively in a highly colourful environment. For example, the lovely, bright yellow blinds and golden carpet bring the colour of sunshine into the



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classroom even on a cloudy day.

All adults who work with the children are very calm, caring and patient. Teachers and teaching assistants work together as a good team to support and engage the children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who find learning easier than others. The good teaching means that children develop their early literacy and numeracy skills effectively. Plenty of exciting activities encourage children to join in with their peers and develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, such as those based on the story of 'The Boat Ride'. Assessment is used carefully to guide planning, and children's successes are recorded regularly and shared with parents and carers. Leadership and management of this phase of learning are good because the provision is well organised and planned.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>                   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage                          | 2        |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage                       | 2        |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2        |

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, and all were pleased with the education provided by the school. They all agree that the school is led and managed well and that their children are kept safe. Parental comments included praise for the headteacher and the staff, and confirmed that their children enjoy school. There were no significant concerns raised by parents and carers.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 38 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |   | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | % | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 22             | 79 | 6     | 21 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 24             | 86 | 4     | 14 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child’s progress   | 21             | 75 | 7     | 25 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 22             | 79 | 6     | 21 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 23             | 82 | 5     | 18 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child’s learning  | 22             | 79 | 6     | 21 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 17             | 61 | 10    | 36 | 1        | 4 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 17             | 61 | 11    | 39 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child’s particular needs  | 19             | 68 | 9     | 32 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 19             | 68 | 9     | 32 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 22             | 79 | 6     | 21 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 22             | 79 | 6     | 21 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school   | 25             | 89 | 3     | 11 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 43  | 47   | 10           | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 6   | 46   | 42           | 6          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 36   | 41           | 9          |
| Sixth forms          | 15  | 42   | 41           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 30  | 48   | 19           | 3          |
| Pupil referral units | 14  | 50   | 31           | 5          |
| All schools          | 10  | 44   | 39           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.  |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.  |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul> |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.   |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Ware, SG12 0HN**

Hello everyone! You may remember when I came to visit your school recently. Thank you for being so kind to me and helping me to learn about everything that you do. Here are some of the things I found out.

- You go to a good school and make good progress in your learning. Most of you achieve well by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, although some of you could do a bit better in writing and mathematics, especially those of who find learning easy.
- Your behaviour is outstanding, and your understanding of how to be kind and thoughtful towards others is excellent. Well done!
- You told me that you know eating wholesome food and taking regular exercise help you to keep fit and healthy.
- You contribute well to the school and its local community. I was pleased to hear that you have raised money for charities and have links with a school in Africa.
- The teaching is good and lessons are interesting.
- All adults take good care of you and make sure that you are safe when you are in school.
- The headteacher leads and manages the school well.

I have asked your teachers to help you do better in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, and make sure that they tell you how to improve your work when they mark your books. I have also asked the subject leaders to keep a closer check on teaching and learning in lessons. You can help too by making sure that you work hard and always come to school every day during term-time so that you do not miss any lessons.

Yours sincerely

Anna Coyle  
Lead inspector

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