

# Towers Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	102313
<b>Local authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	376693
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	228
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Adams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marilyn Whiskerd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Windsor Road Hornchurch Essex RM11 1PD
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<b>Fax number</b>	01708 478926
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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	5–6 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	376693



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Additional inspector

David Webster

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by eight teachers and talked with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and to the questionnaires returned by 81 parents and carers during the inspection. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with safeguarding procedures and self-evaluation. They examined data and other information about pupils' progress, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of their work. The inspectors scrutinised the school's improvement plans as well as the curriculum and teachers' planning for lessons.

## Information about the school

The vast majority of the pupils who attend this average-sized primary school come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. Many of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs. The school meets the current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has gained National Healthy School status, Activemark, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Facility Award, The Transport for London sustainable travel award (outstanding) and the intermediate International School award.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Overall effectiveness is not considered good because tracking and assessment data are not always used well enough to drive improvements with sufficient urgency. The senior leadership team provides a unified sense of purpose and is committed to raising standards. Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 3 to 6, but make better progress in English than in mathematics. Overall attainment is above average. School records and work in pupils’ exercise books show an upward trend in pupils’ attainment by the end of Year 6 in both subjects.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall but, where it is good, high expectations ensure pupils learn quickly. The teaching of basic literacy and communications skills has been a high and successful priority for the school, although there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in different subjects. The school is working to resolve remaining issues in mathematics teaching, developing independent learning and ensuring that teachers’ marking has maximum impact on progress.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils’ personal development are good. Pupils’ enjoyment of school is highly evident and attendance rates are above average. There are good systems to support the effective management of behaviour which ensures pupils are able to learn uninterrupted. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported.
- The senior leaders manage teachers’ performance satisfactorily. Weak teaching has been identified and challenged appropriately. There are positive strengths in the creative curriculum, particularly in the way ICT promotes learning and achievement in a variety of subjects.
- Schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical thinking skills through open-ended problem solving
  - developing teachers’ questioning skills to probe and extend learning

- providing opportunities for numeracy skills to be practised in other subjects.
- Move satisfactory teaching to good, and good to outstanding, by April 2013 through:
  - ensuring an appropriate balance of time in lessons for teachers to talk and for pupils to work independently
  - ensuring pupils have time to reflect on the written comments made by teachers in their exercise books and act upon them.
- Ensure that all staff use tracking and assessment data more effectively to drive further improvement by pinpointing underachievement and acting robustly on the findings to secure more rapid progress.”

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

All parents and carers who returned questionnaires stated that their children were making good progress. Overall, inspection findings show that progress is satisfactory. Most pupils start in Year 3 with significantly above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. By the time they leave the school overall attainment is significantly above average. This represents satisfactory achievement considering pupils’ starting points. Current tracking data and work in pupils’ books show an improving picture in Years 5 and 6 and a higher proportion of pupils than in recent years are on target to reach the higher levels of attainment in both English and mathematics. Higher expectations, new progress targets and a more rigorous focus on learning are supporting improved rates of progress across the school. Pupils are keen readers and reach significantly above average standards by the end of Year 6 in reading. They are eager to talk about books they have read and show empathy towards characters.

In 2011, boys’ attainment in mathematics was not as high as that of girls; this is the opposite of the national picture. The school has taken satisfactory steps this year to ensure this issue is being addressed through focused support in classes by teaching assistants. For example, in a good mathematics lesson, the probing questioning of a group of boys ensured they understood what they had been taught and consequently they moved on in their learning. Actions such as these are ensuring that the gap between girls and boys is closing. Boys are set to achieve improved results this year. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. This is because the school has provided small-group and one-to-one support which has enhanced their progress. Their needs are identified early and effective help is provided to boost their confidence and help them to surmount their difficulties. More-able pupils make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress and are challenged to work at high levels in literacy. Pupils achieve well in lessons when they are motivated by the activities presented to them. For example, in a good Year 4 lesson, groups of pupils participated as ‘defence’ and ‘prosecution’. They enthusiastically prepared their arguments and then debated them. This is not always the case in mathematics. Pupils are not presented with open-ended problems often enough which provoke them to think hard about a variety of outcomes.

## Quality of teaching

The vast majority of parents and carers believe their children to be well taught. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with strengths evident in the teaching of literacy and ICT. High expectations in writing lessons ensure that pupils are challenged. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils used evocative and descriptive phrases to replace mundane vocabulary while writing about the stimulating theme of 'flashbacks'. Teachers' good questioning skills promote higher levels of achievement in writing. However, in mathematics this is less effective and teachers' questions do not always probe and extend learning as well as they could. Written feedback provided by teachers has improved since the last inspection, but pupils do not always have time allocated to reflect on comments made and put them into practice. Sometimes teachers talk for too long at the beginning of lessons, which leaves insufficient time for pupils' independent learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, but sometimes in mathematics the methods used are too complicated and have a negative impact on learning. Across the school, there has been good progress in implementing several assessment strategies, including peer-assessment by pupils. In a good English lesson pupils were invited to comment on the effectiveness of an introductory paragraph written by their peers. Their comments were perceptive and constructive and demonstrated their understanding of the usage of complex sentences and powerful verbs.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and, as a result, pupils gain in confidence and their contributions are valued by teachers. Time is provided for pupils to reflect on their own thoughts, ideas and concerns. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. In an effective topic lesson pupils discussed whether 'Oompa Loompas' should be considered to be living beings with the same rights as humans. This led into an effective examination of the rights we should all expect to have. The planned curriculum has a mostly satisfactory, and sometimes good, impact on teaching. For example, in ICT, good opportunities are provided for pupils to work in teams while using a large interactive table while computers provide cross-curricular opportunities to develop topic-related comics.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents and carers say that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school, although a few also say that sometimes their children's lessons are disrupted by bad behaviour. Inspection findings show that behaviour is typically good. Behaviour in classrooms, around the school and in the playground is positive. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and listen and cooperate well in lessons. The school is an inclusive community and its efforts over time with pupils who have behavioural difficulties have been very effective. A pupil with particular anger management problems spoke about how the school had helped to 'lengthen his fuse' and how this had helped him to make better progress. The school's high expectations of good behaviour are clearly understood and, as a result, the management of behaviour is systematic. Pupils clearly know the rewards and sanctions and are eager to please.

The vast majority of parents and carers believe that the school keeps their children safe and most are happy about the school's response to bullying. Pupils also say that

incidents of bullying are rare, but when they do occur they are dealt with effectively. Pupils are clear about the different types of bullying and spoke confidently about how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. They understand what to watch out for so that they can help others who may be victims of bullying. Pupils are confident that they can approach adults in the school for help if necessary.

## **Leadership and management**

Senior leaders have a clear school vision based on raising attainment. Self-evaluation ensures leaders know the strengths and areas for development in the school. Areas for improvement are identified well in the school improvement plan and actions taken are evaluated for their impact. Actions taken to bring about improvements in pupils' writing have had satisfactory impact, but in mathematics this has been less successful. The school is now focusing on driving forward improvement in mathematics.

The areas for improvement set at the time of the last inspection have been tackled satisfactorily. The leadership of English and mathematics has improved and subject leaders clearly know and understand their roles and responsibilities. They are aware of key issues related to their subject and have formulated action plans to address them. These are regularly reviewed and evaluated for their impact on raising achievement. Pupils know and understand their English and mathematics targets and are able to explain how to reach the next level of attainment because the quality of teachers' feedback is improving, although pupils do not always have enough time to respond to comments. Gaps in attainment among different groups of pupils are narrowing; equal opportunities are promoted well. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have equal access to the curriculum and value their membership of a variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

The evolving tracking system identifies underachievement well and is used as a tool to drive improvement by senior leaders. As a result, teachers are being held increasingly accountable for the progress that pupils make. However, the data from the tracking system are not used well enough by all individual teachers to accelerate the progress of all learners. Almost all staff believe that their training needs are met; professional development for teachers links clearly with the school's priorities for improvement.

Policies are regularly reviewed and links with parents and carers are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The school meets safeguarding requirements. The governing body makes a positive contribution to school improvement. Parental workshops in mathematics and surgeries for parents and carers with children who have specific needs have helped them to support their children more effectively.

The curriculum is good and promotes improved levels of achievement especially in literacy and ICT. Creative arts are well developed through a number of successful partnerships and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a variety of planned activities. For example, themed events, such as 'A Taste of India', ensure pupils are aware of some features of different cultures.

## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



7 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Towers Junior School, Hornchurch RM11 1PD**

Thank you very much for giving us your views about the school when we came to visit you recently. We enjoyed looking in your books, reading your questionnaires and watching you in your lessons. This helped us to get to know your school. It provides you with a satisfactory education and these are some of the things we liked best.

- You enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn.
- You have a clear understanding of what bullying is, and you say you are confident to speak to an adult.
- The headteacher and governing body do a satisfactory job in helping the school to improve.
- Your achievement in English has improved and you achieve particularly well in ICT.
- You attend school regularly.

We have asked the school to do the following things to make it even better:

- ensure you all achieve better results in mathematics
- make sure teachers ask you questions in mathematics that make you think hard
- provide opportunities for you to practise the skills you learn in mathematics in other subjects
- improve teaching from satisfactory to good and from good to outstanding
- provide enough time in lessons for you to work independently
- ensure you have time to read your teachers' comments in their marking and for you to take good notice of them
- make sure teachers use information about your work to improve your progress.

You all can play your part in helping your school become even better by always working hard and by trying things out for yourselves.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat  
Lead inspector

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