

Towers Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102309
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	355171
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Netto

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Gentili
Headteacher	Janet Lobley
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons or part lessons, and observed seven teachers. They met with staff, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school plans, records of pupils' progress, policies, minutes and self-evaluation documents. They received and analysed 38 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- The attainment of current pupils, including the more able and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The effectiveness of middle and senior leaders in ensuring good progress for all pupils.
- The strategies used by the school to improve attendance.

Information about the school

Towers Infants is a smaller-than-average two-form entry school. Most pupils are from White British heritages, but a small and increasing number come from minority ethnic heritages. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to most schools. The school has received a number of awards, including national Healthy Schools status. It runs a breakfast club.

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

Towers Infants is a good school. It has outstanding features. Attainment is high, and represents good progress. Pupils feel extremely safe, have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy living, and their behaviour is exemplary. Parents and carers are happy with the care and education provided; as one parent said, 'The children are happy and this reflects in their work.'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start, and some make exceptional progress to attain standards well beyond national expectations. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1, and by the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is high. Attainment has remained high at the end of Year 2 for several years. Steps taken since the last inspection have raised the achievement of more-able pupils, who are now much more consistently attaining the higher Level 3, including boys.

Teaching is good overall and, at times, outstanding. In a small minority of satisfactory lessons, some pupils make slower progress. This is usually because pace is slower and challenge not so finely tuned to pupils' abilities. Pupils work hard and are keen to contribute in lessons. This ensures that they are fully engaged and enjoy their learning. They show consideration for each other, and work well in pairs and small groups.

Effective leadership and management by the headteacher and her team have ensured that the school has built on its strengths, and that key areas of weakness are being tackled. Attendance is average. Steps have been taken to work with parents and carers to improve this and they have resulted in a reduction in the numbers of pupils whose attendance is a particular cause for concern. The school acknowledges that the next step is to work with parents and carers of all pupils to raise awareness of the impact of periods of absence. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, and leads to effective action to bring about improvements. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and contributes to the strategic direction of the school. This ensures that the school has a good capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better lessons by:
 - ensuring pace remains high throughout lessons
 - ensuring pupils of all abilities are fully challenged.
- Further improve attendance by working collaboratively with parents and carers, so that whole-school attendance reaches the target of 95 % by July 2012.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is at a good pace and offers good challenge, and a stimulating and well-resourced learning environment helps to inspire and motivate the pupils. In a small number of lessons observed, too much time was spent on the carpet with the teacher talking, so pupils spent less time learning actively. On some occasions, the planned activities did not fully challenge different abilities. In these lessons, progress slowed. However, the majority of lessons were characterised by skilful teacher questioning based on carefully planned, interesting topics and contexts. Regular feedback and opportunities for pupils to review their own learning ensured that pupils of all abilities were making good progress. Information and communication technology is well embedded within the learning, and pupils are developing skills and confidence in this area. Speaking and listening skills are developed particularly well.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, provides a range of creative opportunities through a good choice of visits and visitors, and contributes very well to the pupils' personal development. The curriculum is enhanced through good partnership working with a range of other institutions, and there is a high take-up of a wide variety of extra-curricular

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activities. There are some opportunities for cross-curricular learning where pupils use and apply literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in other contexts.

The welcoming environment is much appreciated by pupils, parents and carers. As one parent said, 'Our children feel very safe and secure and the staff know the children, ensuring that their individual needs are met.' The school provides good support to pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Strategies to improve attendance have shown a significant impact on reducing the numbers of pupils with regular and persistent absence. However, there has been less impact on pupils' attendance more generally and there is a comparatively high proportion of absence taken for holidays. Pupils benefit from breakfast club, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in partnership with external agencies. Transition arrangements with the junior school are effective, and there are good partnerships with pre-school settings.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, ably led by the headteacher and supported by an effective governing body, ensure that the school's vision and ambition are shared with parents and carers, and the wider community. Middle leaders play an increasing role in monitoring performance and contribute effectively to school improvement. The school's systems for monitoring and tracking the progress of pupils are well developed, and support the setting of challenging targets. This careful use of data has helped the school to improve attendance of individuals. Governance is good, and rapidly improving. The governing body is committed to supporting the school. Its members make a strong contribution to promoting a caring ethos with high academic expectations, and to the pupils' personal development and well-being.

The vast majority of parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Communication with parents is good, but the school rightly plans to improve it further, including development of the website. Safeguarding policies and procedures are good, and the school adopts good practice in a range of areas, including training in child protection and safer recruitment. The school makes a good contribution towards community cohesion, and the school is a harmonious community which effectively promotes shared values. The promotion of equal opportunities is good, and there is no evidence of discrimination. All groups of pupils achieve well.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

From a wide range of starting points, including a significant group of children who had high attainment on entry, most children make good progress towards meeting the early learning goals. Carefully planned programmes help to support learning and developmental needs, as well as challenging provision which meets the needs of more-able children. Observation and assessment practices are effective, and adults receive high levels of professional development to ensure good learning for all children. There is a usually a good balance between teacher-directed activities and those chosen by the children, though occasionally pace drops when input from adults lasts too long. Good use is made of the outside area.

Children respond well to adults and are welcoming and articulate. They express their ideas and explain their thinking and ask questions. This was particularly evident during an outdoor session when the children observed the release of butterflies which they had seen develop during the lifecycle of caterpillars. Skilful questioning by the teacher enabled the children to experience exceptional curiosity and wonder, and to ask probing questions about change and continuity. Positive relationships and the safe, secure procedures in place support the children's well-being.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

A comparatively low proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. However, inspectors drew on the school's own survey results as well as the inspection questionnaire. Most of those who returned them were very positive about the school, and this was reflected in the findings of the report, and in the school's surveys. Parents and carers feel strongly that the school provides a safe and welcoming environment for their children. A small number of parents and carers raised concerns about communication and about how the school meets the needs of their children. During this inspection, inspectors found communication with parents and carers to be good, and evidence on achievement demonstrated that the needs of all pupils are met.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Towers Infant 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 inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 179 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	76	9	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	37	21	55	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	53	14	37	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	50	16	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	42	19	50	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	47	17	45	1	3	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)	18	47	18	47	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	47	16	42	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	34	20	53	2	5	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	32	24	63	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	66	12	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	61	14	37	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Towers Infant School, Hornchurch RM11 1HP

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently, and for giving us your views and showing us your work. We very much enjoyed the visit, and were particularly impressed by the care and respect which you showed to each other. We would like to tell you about what we found. Yours is a good school, and it has many features which are outstanding. These were some of the strengths of the school.

- Most of you make good progress because the teaching is good.
- You get on very well with each other and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You feel very safe in school because teachers and other adults look after you and help you to understand how to keep safe.
- You have an excellent understanding about how to keep fit and healthy.
- You enjoy learning and getting involved in class, and being school councillors.
- You make valuable contributions to the school and to the wider community.

The headteacher and her staff are working hard to make your school even better and we have asked them to continue to improve teaching. We have asked them to keep up the improving attendance, as this makes a difference to your achievement. You can help with this.

We would like to thank you as well for giving us copies of your wonderful recipe book, and I am looking forward to trying some of these out. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto Lead inspector

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