

Townhill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116134
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	379206
Inspection dates	14-15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Dickinson HMI

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Gear
Headteacher	Mr M Sambrook
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 12 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Three of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, year leaders, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's raising attainment plan, records of monitoring by the local authority and senior leaders, and the school's records of pupils' progress. Inspectors scrutinised questionnaires from 73 parents and carers, together with questionnaires completed by a sample of pupils and by staff.

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

- How well pupils are making progress in English and mathematics, particularly the more able pupils and those identified as needing extra support with their learning.
- How successfully teachers use assessments to help all pupils learn effectively and to set challenging targets.
- The effectiveness of leadership at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to identify what needs to be developed to improve the school's effectiveness.

Information about the school

Townhill Junior School is above average in size for a primary school. It shares a site with an infant school and Sure Start Children's Centre, both of which are subject to a separate inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are White British. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The headteacher was appointed in June 2011. Prior to this the school was led by an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher for approximately 18 months. During this period, the governing body was unable to recruit a permanent headteacher.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils enter Year 3 with well above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. From then on, pupils do not learn or make progress in a consistent and secure way and too many start falling behind. Achievement is too inconsistent between Years 3 and 6 and is inadequate overall. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average by the end of Year 6 but given pupils' capabilities when they join the school it should be much higher than this, putting pupils in a much stronger position to start their secondary education.

The shortcomings in pupils' achievement result from inadequate teaching and an inadequate curriculum. Teachers and leaders do not use assessment effectively to guide and promote the learning of groups of pupils of different abilities. Senior leaders report that assessments in reading, writing and mathematics have been unreliable over time. As a result, they cannot be relied upon as a solid baseline on which to judge future progress and set ambitious targets.

The local authority has provided extensive support for the school over the last year and implemented an improvement plan to raise attainment and improve teaching and leadership. This has had limited impact to date, with the vast majority of targets set by the local authority being missed.

The appointment of the new headteacher has brought about an increased sense of urgency and drive focused on improving the school's effectiveness. The headteacher has been quick to identify the key aspects that need rapid improvement. He has started to raise aspirations among staff and the governing body, several of whom say that they are 'energised' and 'motivated' by the headteacher's vision and clear leadership. New approaches designed to bring about more consistency have been introduced. However, these are at a very early stage of introduction and teachers are still finding their way with the new ideas. It is, therefore, far too early to see clear signs of improved learning and achievement.

Leaders have been more effective in providing a caring environment for pupils to support their personal development. As a consequence, pupils enjoy coming to

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school and are positive about school life. They feel that their school is a safe environment and that they are well supported. Behaviour is good. Many pupils show a strong commitment to keeping active and enjoy the sporting opportunities the school offers. Pupils who find themselves in particularly vulnerable circumstances are especially well cared for and staff work closely with families and other agencies to help pupils keep safe.

Over recent years, leaders have improved attendance and made some refinements in how pupils' progress is tracked. Partnerships with the adjacent infant school are developing well. However, the school's leaders have not tackled underachievement with sufficient vigour. Leaders have not responded effectively to the concerns raised by a succession of local authority reviews, which clearly highlighted the variability in pupils' learning and progress. The school's records of self-evaluation are over generous. Leaders at all levels, including the governing body, are still developing knowledge of their leadership roles. Currently, leaders are too reliant on the headteacher. As a result, leadership overall lacks the capacity to improve the school quickly without external monitoring and support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure rapid improvement in pupils' learning and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - improving teachers' understanding and accuracy of assessments to provide an accurate baseline for judging future learning and progress
 - setting challenging targets for individual pupils to promote good learning and progress
 - monitoring each pupil's progress in reading, writing and mathematics on a half-termly basis
 - implementing appropriate and effective intervention to support pupils identified as underachieving, or at risk of underachieving.

- Improve rapidly the quality of teaching in English and mathematics so that the large majority is good or better, by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - broadening the range of teaching strategies used by teachers to engage and motivate pupils
 - focusing more sharply on what specific groups need to learn in lessons, based on secure knowledge of pupils' attainment and their distinct targets
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about their learning in each lesson, what is expected of them and involved in assessing their own progress against their targets
 - increasing the effectiveness of learning support assistants so that they have a greater impact on pupils' learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, including the governing body, and build

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leaders' capacity to drive and sustain improvement, by:

- strengthening the effectiveness and impact of monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders
- setting challenging targets for pupils in English and mathematics and ensuring that leaders and teachers can demonstrate how they are contributing to achieving these targets
- ensuring that members of the governing body are clear about their roles and responsibilities in contributing to the school's strategic leadership and carry these out effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Almost all pupils transfer from the infant school, where standards are consistently well above average. Observations during the inspection confirm above average standards at the start of Year 3. The proportion of pupils making the expected progress in English and mathematics between the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was below average in 2010. The provisional results for 2011 indicate a considerable decline.

In lessons, pupils spend too much time sitting and listening to the teacher. In general, only the pupils who put their hands up are asked questions and this leaves a large proportion of the class uninvolved. On the occasions when they work individually or with a partner on interesting and motivating tasks, pupils concentrate well and work hard. They have limited knowledge of their own learning, how well they doing and what they need to focus on to get better. The new systems for sharing the learning intentions of lessons are very new to the pupils and not yet supporting their learning. Opportunities for pupils to initiate ideas, make their own decisions and discuss and review their progress are too limited. Though there is a school council and pupils do discuss areas of interest, they similarly have only limited opportunities to make suggestions and express views about their school and how it could be improved.

The inconsistencies in pupils' achievement do not lie solely with one particular ability group. It is more a matter of too many pupils in each year group not making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for instance, make inadequate progress in the same way as other pupils. Like other groups, they are not encouraged to work independently and are too reliant on the learning support assistants.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	3

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Pupils' attainment ¹ The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and learning support assistants promote positive relationships with pupils and this contributes to pupils' enjoyment of school. Until relatively recently, teachers have not benefited from a range of professional development opportunities to broaden their teaching approaches and motivate pupils. Assessments have been over reliant on end of term tests. Teachers are not familiar with the developments in using assessments that have been introduced nationally over recent years. In many cases they do not use a variety of assessment strategies to tailor and adapt their teaching, sometimes within the lesson, to promote good learning for all groups. Too much teaching is directed at the class in general so does not fully meet the needs of all groups and this restricts learning to satisfactory at best and, on occasion, makes it inadequate. Target setting is not having sufficient impact on pupils' progress in lessons.

The curriculum provides a range of opportunities for pupils' wider personal development, including visits and residential trips. However, the weaknesses in assessment mean the curriculum is not adapted sufficiently to cater for the different groups and this makes it inadequate overall.

Care, guidance and support are effective in ensuring pupils' well-being, but are having limited impact on pupils' progress. Staff are alert to keeping pupils safe and know the school's systems and procedures well. Pupils receive effective guidance about matters such as how to stay healthy, and the steps taken to encourage attendance have led to an improvement in attendance rates. Records for pupils who are in particularly vulnerable situations show good partnership working with other agencies and families, which ensures these pupils feel safe.

¹ 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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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

In recent years leaders have not tackled the inadequacies in pupils' achievement. There has been a lack of ambition and drive to recognise and analyse the extent of the underachievement and take effective action. Pupils' progress individually and collectively has not been monitored and analysed with sufficient regularity or rigour. Inaccurate assessments have hindered this process. As a result, the school's work in ensuring equality of opportunity is inadequate. Leaders have been successful in establishing a positive partnership with the infant school, but this growing collaboration and that with the local authority consultants has yet to show a clear impact on improving teaching and achievement. A start was made on improving the way pupils' progress was tracked and checked. However, insufficient steps have been taken to improve teachers' use of assessment and to adapt provision to help underachieving pupils to catch up quickly with their learning. Plans for improvement have not brought about sufficient change and the school's leaders have been heavily reliant on the support of headteachers from other schools, arranged by the local authority. The expertise and experience in evaluating the school's performance and identifying its strengths and weaknesses are underdeveloped across leadership at all levels, including the governing body. In addition, governors' roles and responsibilities are not sufficiently clearly defined. Hence, governance is inadequate.

The governing body and leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements for safeguarding pupils. Procedures are known by staff and are satisfactory. The school understands its context and has taken appropriate actions to promote community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who completed the questionnaire are largely very happy with the school's work. A few raised some concerns about how any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are handled. This was explored by the inspection team and no issues were identified. Several parents and carers commented on how approachable they found the staff at the school and praised the school's work in helping new pupils to settle in well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Townhill Junior 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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 301 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	64	25	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	63	24	33	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	30	41	39	53	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	47	34	47	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	42	58	28	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	30	41	38	52	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	49	33	45	1	1	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)	37	51	30	41	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	33	45	36	49	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	45	26	36	8	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	37	39	53	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	33	45	33	45	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	46	63	23	32	1	1	1	1

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).

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.



16 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Townhill Junior School, Southampton SO18 2NX

I write to you on behalf of the inspectors. Thank you for giving us a warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to many of you in lessons and around the school. Special thanks to those of you who met an inspector to share your views, and to all who filled in one of our questionnaires. Thank you for helping us with our work.

We found that many of you could be doing a lot better in your reading, writing and mathematics. These are really important subjects. You are not making enough progress as you move through the school from Year 3 to Year 6. So we judged that your school is not providing you with an acceptable quality of education. Some important weaknesses need improving rapidly. For this reason we have said the school requires 'special measures' which means it will receive support to help make the improvements.

We were pleased to see you are well behaved and you feel safe in school. The leaders and teachers make sure that your school is a caring place in which to learn. Those of you who filled in questionnaires told us that you enjoy school. Your parents and carers are happy with the school as well.

Your new headteacher has found out a lot about the school in a short time and has started to make some changes. He has not been there for long enough to improve the school. We have asked your school's leaders and teachers to improve how lessons are taught, to make them more varied and interesting and to make your learning much better. We have also asked them to improve the way they check your progress and so give you work that is right for you, not too easy and not too hard. Finally, we have asked your school's leaders to keep a very careful eye on how well you are learning so that they can change things quickly, if they need to, and help you make better progress.

We hope that you will do all you can to make the most of your time at school and work hard. Inspectors will return from time to time to see how well the school is improving.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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