

Tower Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123019
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340258
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr L Walsh
Headteacher	Mrs E Cawley
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, observed all seven class teachers and spent the majority of the time observing learning. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work, and other assessment information. Inspectors scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 72 parents or carers, 72 pupils and 15 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of measures to improve writing and challenge higher attaining pupils
- the extent to which teaching is effective enough to accelerate learning, especially in writing
- the extent to which leaders and governors are bringing about rapid and sustained improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school. Most pupils on roll are of White British heritage, with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, mainly with moderate learning difficulties. The school has the Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards. A new extension has recently opened to house Year 6. The school has its Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and a Reception 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Tower Hill Community Primary is a satisfactory school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and achieve satisfactorily. Their attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6, although it is below average in English. This is because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use their literacy skills across a range of different subjects. A start has been made in developing a more creative and relevant curriculum to allow them to do this, but this is not finished yet. Improvements in tracking mean that teachers know which pupils need additional support and there is a wide variety of initiatives to help them. The school is not able to describe in depth what impact these are having because leaders do not make the best use of the data and monitoring information they possess.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff form a strong team and have a good understanding of how young children learn. Pupils' behaviour is good across the school, as they show consideration for one another and have positive attitudes to learning. They say they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of potential risks. The majority of pupils take part in sports clubs and adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils get involved in community events such as 'Witney in Bloom' and the carnival and lead an active school council. The school provides pupils with satisfactory care, guidance and support, ensuring that new pupils settle quickly. A parent commented, 'The teachers are all extremely approachable and genuinely seem to care about every child.'

Teaching is satisfactory. There are good elements that include detailed planning, effective management of behaviour, thorough marking and skilful deployment of teaching assistants to assist learning. Opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge pupils through searching questioning and to involve them actively in lessons. At times the pace of lessons flags because too much time is spent introducing topics. Pupils have targets for improvement, but these remain the same for too long and are not linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment. While the curriculum is satisfactory overall, enrichment is good, with a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils have the opportunity to go on three different residential journeys while attending the school, which helps to develop their social and team-building skills and gives them self-confidence.

The impact of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has the full support of staff in being committed to raising pupils' attainment, and there have been improvements at Year 2 and in mathematics. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve, but this does not always translate into effective strategic planning that highlights key priorities. There is too much data, which is difficult to access and does not give a clear overview of the school's performance. Consequently, there is a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. Governors support the work of the school, but are not sufficiently well informed to be in a position to

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hold it fully to account because they do not monitor often enough or record their findings systematically.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing across the school by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills through other subjects
 - building on work to target individual pupils for support so that nobody falls behind.
- Increase the proportion of consistently good teaching by:
 - asking more open-ended questions to challenge pupils to develop their thinking further
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in lessons
 - setting short-term targets for pupils linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making better use of data and monitoring information to set key targets for improvement
 - enabling governors to hold the school to account more effectively through training and becoming better informed.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy taking a full part in lessons through drama and role play, and in discussing their ideas together. For example, Year 1 pupils were absorbed in sorting different objects in different ways, and were happy to explain to the class at the end of the lesson what they had found out. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 had an interesting discussion about using emotions in writing and how characters feel, before setting their thoughts down on paper.

All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. This includes the relatively large number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This is because at times, their individual education plans do not specifically define these needs so that support is not precisely enough targeted to provide good progress. The rate of progress for pupils across the school varies, with those doing better where expectations are highest. A focus on improving problem-solving in mathematics has led to steadily rising standards. The school is working hard to reverse a downward trend in writing standards by making writing more enjoyable for pupils and giving them a clear motive to write. The appearance of a mysterious crate overnight occasioned much speculation, especially as it was gurgling and oozing goo!

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. A pupil commented, 'Everybody's friendly, everybody gets along.' Pupils learn about other cultures through the curriculum, but have few opportunities to meet children who come from different backgrounds and traditions from their own. Pupils' good adoption of healthy lifestyles is evidenced by the award of Healthy Schools and the Active Mark. They participate in short

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bursts of early morning exercise to get them going in the mornings. A family cookery club is very popular, as children and their parents try out new recipes. The school council helps to organise anti-bullying week, and has been choosing new play equipment. Pupils get involved in planned community events, but are not particularly active in influencing decisions about their local area through making their views known to local representatives. They are prepared satisfactorily for secondary school, leaving with broadly average basic skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Plans clearly set out what pupils will learn, and usually take account of their differing abilities including those who are higher-attaining. Classrooms are orderly and productive places, with useful information on the walls to assist pupils in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Good use is made of the outside areas, as when Year 2 pupils were pouring and measuring water independently in a study of capacity. Teachers are skilled at managing behaviour, and supported effectively in this by teaching assistants. The pace of lessons is often brisk, but sometimes lessons are directed too much by the teacher and pupils' concentration wavers. Marking is good and shows pupils how they can improve from day to day. Targets do not indicate to pupils what they need to do to reach the next National Curriculum sub-level, or inform them about their current performance. They are not changed often enough and so sometimes become stale and less relevant. Pupils are

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enthusiastic about themed weeks and enrichment activities, which contribute positively to their personal development. The school benefits from excellent grounds, including an extensive woodland dell, which are used well for environmental work. Visits have included the Chedworth Roman Villa and the theatre at Oxford. The curriculum is being redesigned to take account of current needs and interests, as there are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects.

The school promotes attendance satisfactorily, although the class competition is not currently running. It provides a caring and nurturing environment for pupils, in which they can thrive. The provision for special educational needs is satisfactory, but constrained by the limited time available to the coordinator to fulfil her role.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are ambitious for the school and have seen improvements in areas where they have focused their energies, such as raising standards in mathematics. However, measures to improve writing have had limited impact so far because many of the initiatives are too recent. They conduct regular monitoring and gather a sound picture of how the school is performing, but there are too many priorities in the school improvement plan, and it is not clear which are the key ones to be tackled most urgently. Subject leaders ensure policies and procedures are being implemented, but do not possess a clear overview of attainment and achievement based on a thorough analysis of assessments. The school is gently drowning in data, but recognises this and has plans to move over to a more efficient electronic system in order to analyse the progress of groups much more easily. Governors take a general interest in the school, but their monitoring is not rigorous or systematic enough to enable them to become a really effective 'critical friend'. All safeguarding procedures are in place. There are minor administrative details to be corrected, but the welfare of the pupils remains at the heart of the school's work. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. It is inclusive and all pupils are equally valued as individuals. However, progress in mathematics is better than in English and there are some variations in the quality of provision between classes. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. There are strong links with the local community and the school reaches out to parents well. Links with a school on an island off the coast of Kenya are at an early stage. Pupils have a basic understanding of life in a multicultural society, but currently lack direct experience of children from a wide range of backgrounds.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities generally below those usually found. Because of good provision, they make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning. They also make effective strides in developing the personal qualities they need to prepare them for Year 1. Relationships with adults and with one another are good. Children in the Nursery enjoyed becoming builders with hard hats and fluorescent jackets. The outside areas are used well and there is a good mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff respond promptly to pupils' interests, for example setting up an 'interest table' for a child who showed an interest in minibeasts. Good assessment procedures ensure all adults know the children well and build up a clear picture of their progression. Last year's data was unreliable, but this year there is a real focus on making sure the assessments are accurate. There is good leadership and management resulting in a close-knit team that works together effectively to ensure that children have a diverse range of high quality experiences.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Parents are generally positive about the work of the school. They say their children enjoy school and are kept safe. Some parents would like to know more about how their children are doing and how they can help them at home. Inspectors found that the school communicates with parents well, and provides workshops and other activities to inform them about how they can support their children. A few parents felt behaviour could be managed better, but inspectors found that staff manage pupils' behaviour well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tower Hill Community 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 inspection team received 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 169 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	44	35	49	5	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	42	41	57	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	43	28	39	11	15	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	43	30	42	9	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	29	40	37	51	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	29	42	58	7	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	33	43	60	5	7	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)	10	14	48	67	4	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	32	40	56	4	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	21	41	57	11	15	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	22	42	58	9	13	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	23	32	42	58	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	40	33	46	6	8	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



4 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tower Hill Community Primary School, Witney, OX28 6NB

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. Your school gives you a satisfactory education. Here are some of the things it does well.

- Behaviour is good, and you support one another well.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy; the majority of you take part in sports clubs.
- You say you feel safe at school and that it is a friendly place.
- There are plenty of clubs and visits for you to enjoy.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.

We think your writing could improve and have asked your teachers to find lots of different things for you to write about. We would also like them to do more to help those of you who find writing difficult to catch up. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you take a full part in lessons and to ask you questions that really make you think. We believe it would help you to know what you have to do to get up to the next level in your work, so have asked staff to give you targets that make this clear. We are sure they would be pleased to hear from you how well you think you are doing.

School leaders gather lots of information about your progress, but we believe they could make it work for them better and have asked them to look at ways of using it more smartly. Governors take an interest in the school, but we think they could come in more often to check up on how things are going and make a note of their findings to share with the governing body.

Thank you once again for your help. We enjoyed meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

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