

# Towcester Church of England Primary School

Islington Road, Towcester, NN12 6AU

**Inspection dates** 7–8 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6, too few reach the higher levels in their work. Consequently, pupils of high ability could be doing better.
- The progress that pupils make is variable as a result of teaching which is not consistently good.
- Some teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils and this results in too few pupils exceeding the progress expected.
- Teachers' introductions and explanations in lessons are sometimes too long in Years 1 to 5 and this limits progress.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, do not have a systematic strategy for the improvement of teaching and this is why teaching and achievement requires improvement.
- Recent improvements in developing the content of the subjects taught have not yet had time to fully contribute to improved achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a strong presence in the school. He is very well respected and has the complete confidence of the parents, pupils and staff.
- The effective ways in which the subjects that pupils study are enriched and enhanced enable pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Standards in reading are improving because pupils read frequently to adults.
- Some of the teaching is good and work is closely matched to the needs of pupils. Where this is the case, pupils make good, and at times outstanding, progress.
- Teachers manage behaviour well. Consequently, behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.
- All staff place a high priority on ensuring that pupils are very well cared for. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy at school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons as part of themed learning walks.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 as well as a group engaged in enterprise activities. Other meetings were held with six members of the governing body, school staff, and middle and senior leaders. A telephone discussion was held between the lead inspector and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed 22 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with many parents, informally, at the start of the school day.
- They observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the monitoring of the quality of teaching, performance management documentation, minutes of the governing body’s meetings, records relating to attendance, behaviour, safety and bullying, documents relating to safeguarding, the school improvement plan and data on pupils’ progress.
- Inspectors analysed samples of pupils’ work jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils reading.

## Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maxine Clewlow

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This primary school is smaller than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The majority of pupils are White British; around 10% are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils identified as speaking English as an additional language is below average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A pre-school shares the school site. This is not managed by the school's governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The current headteacher took up his post after the previous inspection which was in January 2010.

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

- Strengthen the quality of teaching so that it is good in all year groups and subjects, and enables all pupils to make good progress by:
  - making sure that all teachers have high expectations and insist that pupils always produce work of a high standard
  - ensuring that activities challenge all groups of pupils, particularly higher-ability pupils
  - providing more time for pupils to do their own work by ensuring that teachers' explanations and introductions are not too long
  - ensuring that all lessons are well paced and respond to the individual needs of pupils.
- Improve leadership and management procedures to improve and strengthen the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teachers are supported through a strategic approach to sharing good practice
  - making sure that strategies to strengthen teaching are underpinned by a robust performance management process and the 'Teachers' Standards'
  - embedding high expectations of all teachers and pupils so that significant proportions of pupils will exceed the expected progress
  - providing appropriate support for governors so that they are more able to monitor effectively the impact that strategies to improve teaching have on pupils' progress
  - ensuring that governors monitor pupils' progress more regularly so that they are able to influence actions more effectively to address any underachievement in a timely manner.

## Inspection judgements

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- At the end of Year 6 when pupils leave the school, they usually achieve average standards in English and mathematics which is an overall improvement on previous years. However, too few higher-ability pupils achieve the high levels that they are capable of.
- The proportion of pupils making the expected progress by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics is improving considerably. However, the proportion of pupils doing better than expected is low.
- Pupils enter the Reception classes with a wide range of skills and abilities which are below those typically seen for their age. Pupils make the expected rate of progress and many make more rapid progress as a result of often good teaching. Consequently, an increasing number of pupils are reaching the standards expected at the start of Year 1.
- The amount of progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is variable across the school. Some pupils make outstanding progress in some classes while others make inadequate progress for a while in certain subjects. This variable, inconsistent progress is limiting overall achievement.
- Inconsistent progress is evident for almost all groups of pupils, including those speaking English as an additional language, those from ethnic minority groups and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, overall most groups of pupils achieve average standards. Year 6 pupils in receipt of the pupil premium achieved well in English and mathematics in 2012.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to read to adults and they use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make in order to work out how to read difficult words.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and they generally feel that they are making progress.
- Achievement in writing, particularly for boys, is improving as a result of the headteacher's introduction of more formal and frequent testing as well as more opportunities to develop writing. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this on achievement.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough of it is good or better. However, over time the quality of teaching has been improving steadily and this is seen in the recent improvements in pupils' achievement as well as some high rates of progress made by some pupils in some subjects.
- Where teaching is good, it typically enables the vast majority of pupils to demonstrate good progress through activities which are challenging and pitched at the right level for individuals. Such teaching is engaging and captures the imagination and creativity of the pupils well. For example, in a good English lesson in Year 6, the teacher structured the learning so that pupils were enthusiastically engaged in a drama activity which enabled them to enhance their understanding of poetry.

- Where teaching is less good, it often does not appropriately challenge all pupils, particularly the most-able pupils. Expectations are too low resulting in these pupils not making the progress of which they are capable because the work is too easy. On other occasions, weaker teaching results in pupils spending too long listening to introductions and explanations and so losing valuable learning time.
- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is often thorough. Pupils value this as one pupil made clear to an inspector, 'I always know how I can get better.'
- As a result of the pupil premium, the school has been able to increase its number of support staff to enhance learning for these pupils. The impact of this on achievement in 2012 was good with proportionally more pupils achieving expected levels than their counterparts nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive additional support through small group work and the support of teaching assistants in class. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the achievement of these pupils and they work closely with class teachers in order to coordinate effectively the support they give.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around school at play time is good. Pupils and parents told inspectors that, in their view, behaviour has improved considerably since the headteacher took up post. Both pupils and parents value the new behaviour code, 'Going For Green', which the headteacher introduced. The rewards and sanctions used in this are a significant motivating factor for pupils who clearly want to behave well to earn the rewards.
- All staff manage behaviour well and consistently. As a result of this and the desire of most pupils to behave well, there have been no exclusions recently and pupils' attendance is above average.
- Pupils are well mannered, polite and friendly. Many pupils were very helpful to inspectors. From formal and informal discussions with pupils, it is evident that they are proud of their school. Pupils are courteous and respectful to each other and adults. Parents who responded to the on-line inspection questionnaire also agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and they also have a good understanding of safety issues. They report that bullying is extremely rare but, when it does occur, they feel totally confident that teachers deal with matters swiftly.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they are keen to do well in their lessons.
- A group of pupils in Key Stage 2 met with an inspector to discuss their enterprise work with their 'Chicken Club'. As well as enabling these pupils to develop important work-place and mathematical skills, these pupils showed a high level of responsibility and maturity.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because pupils are not fully aware of the various forms of bullying. Pupils are not fully equipped, therefore, with the skills and competencies to manage any such situation, should it arise.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The school is improving as a result of the arrival of the headteacher who, very well supported by

his deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, has created a positive climate and ethos in the school. There is a shared sense of ambition and drive from all members of the school community to improve achievement. However, insufficient attention has been given strategically to improving teaching which is why it is so variable and why achievement requires improvement.

- The headteacher inspires staff, parents and pupils, and all have total confidence in his ability to lead the school forward. Inspectors agree that this confidence is well founded. He makes sure he has a strong presence on the playground every day and parents know he can be approached at any time. Engagement with parents and the community in general is flourishing and is a real strength.
- The school development plan addresses the most important issues but it lacks rigour in terms of identifying how the achievement of all groups of pupils will be monitored and evaluated.
- The management of staff performance is adequate. However, targets for staff are not always sufficiently specific enough to be able to judge whether they have been met or not.
- The subjects that pupils study have been developed and enhanced. A wide range of educational trips, international links with schools in Germany and Uganda and visiting artists such as the African drummer all help to enhance learning. All these activities enable pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding to a good level and this is a strength. However, these developments have not yet had sufficient time to have a full impact on achievement, particularly for more-able pupils.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have an adequate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are aware that pupils in receipt of the pupil premium achieved well in 2012 and they are also knowledgeable about how the funding is spent. Governors engage in routine monitoring through their links to class teachers. They also hold the headteacher to account and challenge him accordingly, though this is not the case with respect to the inconsistencies in achievement and teaching which exist across year groups and subjects. Some governors have an appropriate understanding of data about pupils' progress but they do not link this to the quality of teaching. Governors do not monitor data about pupils' progress frequently enough for them to have a more effective influence on actions to address any underachievement in a timely manner.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135506
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402711

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Godwin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Camp
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01327 350332
<b>Fax number</b>	01327 358079
<b>Email address</b>	head@towcep.northants-ecl.gov.uk



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