

Towers Junior School

Windsor Road, Hornchurch, RM11 1PD

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- While the school is improving, too few pupils are making more-than-expected progress in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement because not enough is consistently good. At times the most-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- Weaker readers do not read enough to adults in school and there are not enough challenging texts for the most-able pupils.
- In mathematics pupils often spend too long practising skills they have already mastered before moving to harder work.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough advice in their marked books about how to improve in mathematics.
- While subject leaders in English and mathematics in particular use data well, other subject leaders do not use data as effectively to influence pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders are a newly formed team and new members are early in developing their skills in analysing data to know how well they are doing in driving improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Writing has improved because pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve their work.
- The school makes innovative use of information and communication technology.
- Leaders, managers and governors have eliminated all inadequate teaching and an increasing proportion is good.
- Pupils behave well, have positive attitudes to learning and feel safe in school.
- The school is inclusive and its core skills and focus on creativity mean the curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and, with the headteacher, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 88 responses and one written reponse to the online questionnaire Parent View and spoke with several parents outside the school.
- The inspectors considered the 24 staff questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector
Sara Benn

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals among others) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school's staff and pupils support other schools in developing virtual learning platforms.
- There have been many changes of teaching staff this year, with four new teachers, including a new deputy headteacher, and new leaders for mathematics and English, joining the school in September 2013.
- There are plans for the school to share a governing body with the nearby infant school in 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to consistently good by making sure that:
 - learning is introduced at the right level for all pupils, so that it challenges the most able in particular
 - teachers have a complete overview of how individuals are progressing in each lesson.
- Raise achievement in reading and mathematics so that a greater proportion of pupils make more-than-expected progress by:
 - giving weaker readers more practice in reading at school
 - increasing the range and challenge of reading material for the most-able pupils
 - moving pupils on to more challenging learning in mathematics as soon as they have mastered a skill
 - giving pupils more advice in their books about how to improve in mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing other subject leaders to make more use of data, as happens in English and mathematics, so that they make a greater contribution to increasing pupils' progress
 - developing the skills of the new leadership team members in analysing data to show and increase the impact of their actions on driving improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- While an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress, not enough pupils make more-than-expected progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils join the school with standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and when they leave in Year 6 standards are also above average. This means that most pupils make expected progress rather than consistently good progress. In 2013 the Year 6 cohort was changed by pupils leaving and joining the school from the one that completed Year 5, and this meant results were not as strong as data indicated prior to the changes.
- The school has been successful in tackling underachievement and there is an upward trend in progress over time. In 2013, while many pupils made better progress in most subjects, there was some variation so that achievement was not consistently good across the school.
- In reading, pupils develop a love of books and use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to sound out unfamiliar words. Many read regularly at home, and develop skills and knowledge through daily reading sessions.
- Some weaker readers do not have the opportunity to read frequently to an adult in school to strengthen their skills, something the school has identified. The range and level of challenge of books for most-able readers require improvement as some of them are too easy.
- In mathematics, expected progress rates have significantly improved since the time of the previous inspection. This is because pupils have many opportunities for solving real-life problems and have access to plenty of practical resources. Teachers' subject knowledge is now accurate, but sometimes they do not challenge pupils to move forward in their learning quickly enough once they have mastered a skill.
- Pupils write for a wide range of purposes across a variety of subjects. They benefit from detailed feedback about what makes their writing effective and how to improve it.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving because programmes of support are well targeted to meet individual needs. The school can point to individual case studies where pupils have improved so much that they no longer require additional support.
- The pupil premium is used well to support individual pupils but only a very small number of pupils are known to be eligible. Additional funding is also spent on small-group support. In 2012 very few pupils were eligible and in 2013 the support clearly shows a positive impact on pupils' progress compared with other pupils in English and mathematics, which means that their attainment is similar to their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not strong enough to secure good progress for all pupils. There is now no inadequate teaching and more is good, but there remain some inconsistencies.
- While teachers plan for pupils of different abilities, they do not routinely adjust their teaching within lessons in the light of pupils' responses. This means that some pupils spend too long practising skills they already know.
- When introducing lessons, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge pupils because the work is not pitched at the right level for different groups, and does not extend the most able pupils in particular.
- Strengths of the better teaching include the following.
 - Teachers use probing questioning to check what pupils understand and to move them on in their learning.
 - The pace of learning proceeds at a brisk pace with nobody left behind.

- There is good use of technology to interest and engage pupils.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the groups they support.
- Work in books shows that marking is regular and thorough for extended writing, but there is not enough analytical marking in mathematics, to show pupils the next steps in their learning. Pupils are given time to consider and respond to the comments in their books, which helps to consolidate their learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Teachers often involve pupils in learning actively, for example through drama or role play. In Year 5, pupils acted out a market scene highlighting their reactions to a stranger who had come among them. This gave them insight into how people can form unfair first impressions based on people's appearance and about how prejudice can evolve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are friendly to visitors and respectful of one another. Relationships in class and around the school are very strong.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They show maturity and take on leadership roles willingly. As members of the school council pupils take on responsibility well. 'Digital leaders' try out new equipment and with others support their peers, play leaders and road safety officers. Pupils throw themselves wholeheartedly into their roles.
- Pupils know the school's values, summed up in the five 'r's of resilience, responsibility, readiness, reflectiveness and resourcefulness. They aspire to live up to these and can give examples where they have met them, for example when a pupil said, 'I used to talk when I was working, but now I don't any more.' Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Parents say that behaviour is good and pupils agree. Bullying is not considered a problem and pupils are confident that staff deal with any incidents well. Pupils know about different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They say they feel safe in school and are supported by their road safety officers. Digital leaders play a role in telling them about e-safety. They also contribute to risk assessments to keep the school safe.
- Attendance is rising after a slip last year through an epidemic of illness and is returning to above average.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because pupils sometimes lose focus when work is too easy for them and they do not always respond immediately to instructions.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics do not have a detailed enough knowledge of how pupils are doing because they do not use data effectively to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement.
- There have been significant changes to the leadership team this year and leaders and managers are adjusting to their new roles. They have identified the need to use data to show them the impact of the actions they are taking to drive improvement so that they can be sure how successful these are.
- The headteacher is passionate about teaching and learning and has a clear ambition for school improvement. Systems to check the quality of teaching have been tightened so that the management of teachers' performance is very rigorous and includes coaching and using expertise from other schools. This has led to the elimination of any inadequate teaching and to more good teaching.
- Regular meetings to assess the progress pupils are making hold staff to account. A programme of checks by the headteacher, other leaders and governors means that the school builds up a full picture of how well it is doing and sets appropriate priorities for improvement.
- New leaders bring with them high expectations and a sense of ambition, which means that morale is high and staff are working well as a team to make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. The mentoring system involves all members of staff in helping pupils

to assess how well they and their peers are moving towards reaching individual curriculum targets known as 'targeteers'.

- The topics that pupils follow are chosen so as to appeal to them and to develop their skills in a range of subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed a topic called 'sea to your plate' which involved a study of cockles and a visit to Leigh-on-Sea. They produced high quality work that included artwork, poetry and persuasive letters. Such approaches make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum is well enriched through numerous clubs, themed weeks and partnerships with sporting and artistic organisations such as Chelsea Football Club and the Royal Opera. The school is rightly proud of its virtual learning platform, which pupils access for homework and chatrooms, and which adults use extensively. The school's plans for spending its primary sport school funding are designed to broaden pupils' experiences, increase their fitness and develop teachers' subject knowledge.
- Parents say the school does well by their children. They find staff approachable and support their children's education at home through hearing them read and helping with open-ended homework projects.
- Through regular reviews of the school's work and targeted support, the local authority plays a valuable role in securing improvement. The school's partnerships with other schools, especially a local outstanding primary, mean that staff have access to high quality support and advice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors play a full role in checking the work of the school and have a clear understanding of how data inform them about the school's performance and the quality of teaching. They are involved in managing the performance of the headteacher and understand how other members of staff are developing. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. Governors are now asking more searching questions of the headteacher and other leaders and managers about how well the school is doing and taking a longer-term view of its future through discussions with the infant school about the possibility of forming a single governing body for both schools.

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

Unique reference number	102313
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	425543

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Adams
Headteacher	Marilyn Whiskerd
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 March 2012
Telephone number	01708 449872
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