

Tower Road Academy

Ashlawn Drive, Boston, PE21 9PX

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching helps all pupils, including those who need extra help and the most able, to make good progress.
- Pupils' work in their books shows that standards are improving. Pupils currently at the school are doing well, particularly well in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of what they teach and they give pupils interesting things to do.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their positive attitudes and their readiness to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour help them to do well.
- Pupils say they feel safe in all areas of the school, feel well cared for and are happy to attend regularly.
- Pupils enjoy lots of opportunities to participate in sport, dance, drama and music. This contributes particularly well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Systems to check the quality of teaching are robust. Leaders link staff training to the needs of the school well. Consequently, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are improving.
- Senior leaders have skilfully developed the expertise of other staff to lead key areas of the school's work.
- Governors work well with the leadership team. They are fully involved in actions to improve the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not practise new writing skills by writing longer pieces of work.
- Occasionally, more-able pupils are not set work that is at the right level of difficulty to help them make the best possible progress.
- Not all teachers place enough emphasis on developing pupils' handwriting and helping them take pride in the presentation of their work. As a result, it is sometimes untidy and difficult to read.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 27 teachers, and two assemblies. Three lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Additionally, inspectors accompanied senior leaders on 'learning walks' which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at reading, including phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and learning in different subjects.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, other staff and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break times and at lunchtime.
- The team reviewed the school's safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and records of their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and of the responses to the school's most recent consultations with parents. They also spoke to parents at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school. In addition, inspectors looked at the 29 replies to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Wood

Additional Inspector

Andrew Fox

Additional Inspector

Christine Murrell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tower Road Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 June 2011. When its predecessor school, Tower Road Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- It is much larger than most primary schools.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. About one in every five pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- A well-below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care, those with a parent in the armed services and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The 'Early Birds' before-school club, managed by the governing body, operates on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially in writing, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - give pupils in Years 1 and 2 practice in using new literacy skills to write longer pieces of work, when they have reached a level to benefit from it
 - set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils that are most able
 - raise their expectations of pupils' handwriting and encourage them to take a greater pride in the presentation of their written work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. Above-average proportions reach a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. They make good progress. Adults organise a range of tasks that help them to practise new skills; for example, in the Reception classes, children chatted together, shared their ideas and helped each other to sound out and write simple words and phrases successfully.
- Pupils do well in reading. In 2013, the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in phonics was above average. This is because young children are taught phonics every day. More complex reading skills are taught explicitly throughout Key Stage 2. One such example was seen in Year 6, where pupils learned to scan text to draw out the key ideas. The teacher deepened pupils' understanding by asking them to find evidence in the text to explain their views.
- Most pupils, including those who need extra help, and those who speak English as an additional language, are making good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well because adults plan tasks for them that can be achieved one step at a time. They use helpful resources that explain new ideas. Adults provide clear explanations, using pictures and symbols to help those who arrive at the school unable to speak English learn new words and phrases.
- The school uses the extra funding it receives in the form of the pupil premium to support eligible pupils; it provides one-to-one tuition and small group work to fill specific gaps in their understanding. It enables pupils to take a full part in educational trips, sporting events and to access music lessons. Most are now making progress at a good rate, similar to their peers. Of the Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2013, eligible pupils were, on average, about a year behind their classmates in mathematics and around half a term ahead in reading and writing.
- Pupils, including those who are the most able, make good progress in physical education. Their skills are developed well by good use of specialist sports coaches, supported by the new sports funding. Furthermore, pupils practise mathematics alongside sport. For instance, they learn to recall multiplication facts while running around the athletics track.
- Pupils enjoy attending the Early Birds before-school club. As one pupil put it, 'We love coming to the Early Birds because it means we can spend more time at school'. They play games and solve puzzles, share resources sensibly and tidy up readily. The club prepares pupils well for the school day ahead.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 have been broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past two years. The Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2012 had made very rapid progress. Results declined in 2013 because too few of the Year 6 pupils who left the school made the progress expected of them. They made better progress in reading and mathematics than they did in writing. However, recent assessment information, confirmed by the work they are doing in lessons and by that in their books, shows that standards are rising to above average levels and pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Key Stage 2. More are on track to make and exceed expected progress, but achievement in reading and mathematics is better than in writing.
- In most lessons, more-able pupils are set work that is at just the right level of difficulty to

encourage them to think hard about what they are doing. In a few lessons, the work is too easy and this slows their progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The Early Years Foundation Stage unit is well organised and well equipped. Children make good progress because staff set up inviting and appealing activities, in and out of doors, that foster their curiosity. Consequently, they are encouraged to explore and try something new. Adults talk to children as they learn through play, constantly reinforcing their speaking and listening skills.
- Throughout the school, there are good relationships between adults and pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to make sure pupils are given the support they need. All adults ask pupils questions to check how well they have understood and to help them to move on to the next step.
- Teachers plan stimulating learning experiences that engage pupils and keep them interested. Year 4 pupils, for example, rose enthusiastically to the teachers' challenge to find the largest combined area of two different-sized rectangles. As a direct consequence, pupils quickly increased their understanding of the idea of 'area'.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of what they teach. They use the appropriate technical language for the subject they are teaching. As a result, pupils use it confidently and this helps them make good progress. In Year 2, pupils speak knowledgeably about including 'adjectives', 'adverbs' and 'conjunctions' in their writing. In a Year 3 music lesson, the teachers' use of 'dynamics', 'tempo' and 'texture', enabled them to apply these to their instruments producing a range of fast and slow, loud and soft sounds.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work across the school praises them for their hard work and gives them advice about what they have done well. On the whole, it lets them know what they need to do to improve.
- The large majority of pupils who spoke to inspectors say they are given regular homework, which gives them the chance to learn more. They particularly enjoy the 'extended learning projects' they do with their families, such as the 'Titanic' models, the results of which are proudly displayed in the school.
- In Years 3 to 6, pupils are taught writing skills and then given time to put those skills into practise by writing longer pieces of work. As a consequence, they make good progress in writing. A Year 3 pupil, for example, who wrote, 'Once upon a time there lived ...', at the start of the year to open a story, is now writing, 'You will never guess what happened to me today? The breath taking moment had arrived'. Pupils in Key Stage 1 who are at a level to benefit from it do not routinely practise and extend their skills in this way.
- In a few lessons, pupils who are capable of doing much harder work do not make the best possible progress because the work they are given is too easy.
- Across the school, the quality of pupils' work is variable. Some do not take enough pride in how their work is presented. Not all teachers have high enough expectations that insist pupils' handwriting is neat and easy to read. As a consequence, some find writing difficult and this limits the progress they make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They look neat and tidy in their uniforms and are keen and eager to learn. The vast majority listen attentively to adults and apply themselves fully to their work. They respond positively to advice and persevere to do what they have been asked.
- Well-established routines enable pupils to get on with their work quickly. Older pupils in the Year 6 study centre are prepared well for their move to secondary school because they are expected to select what they need for each lesson.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff about behaviour are complimentary. Pupils demonstrate good manners in and around the school. They spontaneously say, 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me' politely to adults and to each other. A rota ensures cloakrooms are tidy and well-organised places.
- Year 6 pupils learn to take on additional responsibilities such as becoming playground 'buddies', helping younger pupils to play games at break and lunchtimes. They become 'Junior Road Safety Officers', working with Lincolnshire's county officers. Pupils organise competitions, conduct surveys and run sponsored events to buy 'reflectors' which help pupils to be visible and stay safe. Pupils say such activities teach them important skills they will need in their future lives.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. They are adamant that incidents of bullying, such as name-calling and minor disagreements are rare. Pupils are entirely confident in seeking help from adults and say that these issues are quickly resolved. They have a well-developed understanding of keeping safe when using the internet and computer technology.
- Pupils arrive for lessons on time. Their attendance, below average for two years, is now average because of rigorously applied policies and procedures.
- Occasionally, when pupils find their work easy, a few become restless or go off-task and this limits the progress they could or should make.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have created a climate in which they empower those with leadership responsibilities at all levels to lead key aspects of the school's work. They have established an atmosphere in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn and behave well. Staff morale is high. Typical of the comments shared with inspectors is, 'I feel very proud to be part of the Tower Road team'.
- Systems for improving teaching are rigorous. Teachers in the early stages of their career are supported well by more experienced colleagues. They are set targets for improvement and when these are met, progress along pay scales. Leaders at all levels regularly observe learning, look at the work pupils are doing in books and link the information they gather to staff training. Leaders check that the professional development staff undertake is raising pupils' achievement.
- Following the dip in results in 2013, leaders took effective action to improve assessment procedures and ensure better progress. Leaders have adopted a new approach to tracking how well pupils are doing.

- Good attention is paid to ensuring all have an equal chance to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is robustly tackled. Those in danger of falling behind where they should be for their age are now identified early. In lessons and in small group work, adults ensure they are helped to catch up.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. It ensures children get off to a good start. Work to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is regarded positively by parents who say that the school goes 'out of its way' to help pupils who are experiencing particular difficulties. Outside agencies are used effectively to ensure those in need of specialist help are supported well throughout the school.
- An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, the school's own survey and those who spoke to inspectors were happy with the school. Almost all would recommend it to others.
- A key strength of the school is what it offers to pupils in terms of sport, dance, drama and music. Its facilities to promote sport and the performing arts are extensive. The sports funding has been used to provide specialist staff to enhance its provision. Pupils are regularly taught the importance of healthy eating, regular exercise and sleep to keep healthy. A comprehensive range of trophies, shields and awards adorn the corridor in 'Winner's Way'. This reflects the wide-ranging opportunities for an increasing number of pupils to be more active and take part in competitive sport. Consequently, the school supports pupils' physical education, healthy lifestyles and sense of well-being extremely well.
- The curriculum is varied, lively and engaging. Visits and visitors inspire pupils and widen their horizons, exemplified by the work on display. Pupils' artwork and music has been stimulated by an African Art workshop. A visit to a lifeboat station led to pupils' learning and writing about the life of Grace Darling. Links with the local church, schools in Poland and the Czech Republic help pupils to reflect on and learn about other cultures. Such opportunities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors regularly come into school to see for themselves what happens there. As a result, they are well placed to make decisions in the pupils' best interests. Governors are aware of their standards and progress compared with other schools nationally in published data. They are fully behind the school's drive to improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. Governors manage the performance of the headteacher and keep abreast of the school's systems to improve teaching. They manage the school's finances well, including the use of the pupil premium and sports funding. Governors check the funding is used to ensure these pupils make good progress. Governors ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	136793
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	431552

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	619
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Horniblow
Headteacher	Dominic G Loyd
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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