

Tower Bridge Primary School

Fair Street, London SE1 2AE

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has brought together a strong team of leaders all of whom share her high aspirations for the school and the pupils.
- Leaders at all levels plan their actions on a clear understanding of what needs to be done next to improve teaching and raise outcomes further.
- The quality of teaching has improved greatly since the last inspection. Much now is of a high quality and leads to pupils making consistently good progress across the school.
- The governing body uses its considerable expertise and knowledge to question leaders very closely and hold them to account for improving the quality of teaching.
- The improvement of the school is due in part to support from the local authority and the expertise within the federation. This has brought rigour to all of the school's work so that it now has the capacity to build on its recent successes.
- The pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They show great consideration and respect towards adults and each other.
- The effectiveness of the early years has improved significantly since the last inspection. Activities are much more interesting for children because of the investment in new resources.
- Pupils say how safe they feel and how much they enjoy school. They know they are at the school to learn and are very keen to do well.
- Leaders have made a strong partnership with home a priority. Parents say how welcomed and informed they feel, putting much of this down to new leadership.
- The school's strong ethos, coupled with a newly designed creative and engaging curriculum, promotes very well the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- School leaders do their utmost to identify whether pupils have particular talents, special needs or face other challenges and ensure the right support or challenge is available so they can succeed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Opportunities are not always available for children in the early years to explore their own ideas themselves and so deepen their understanding of the skills they have been learning.
- Teachers do not assess reading sharply enough to be able to plan what pupils should be doing next so they can learn as well as in writing and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Deepen the understanding of children in the early years by ensuring that more opportunities are provided for them to explore their own ideas and investigate resources.
- Improve the assessment of reading so that teachers plan for pupils to make more rapid progress in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations and an ambitious vision for the school. They have built a cohesive community based on the vision that 'we learn and succeed together'. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and tackle areas for development with urgency, so pupils make at least good progress.
- Senior leaders have very high expectations of staff and set teachers challenging targets that focus sharply on raising the achievement of pupils in their classes. They ensure high-quality training is on hand so all staff can develop their skills whether this is as teachers or aspiring leaders. This has met with such success that the school is now outward-looking and starting to use its expertise in support of other schools.
- The local authority has been a major factor in the school's improvement since the last inspection. By supporting the establishment of the federation it has helped to bring in strong leadership and expertise to improve teaching. This has also been significant in developing staff in leadership roles and giving the school the capacity for further improvement.
- Leadership is meticulous in ensuring that provision fully meets the needs of all pupils whether they have special educational needs or are identified as gifted and talented. Furthermore, by changing the way in which pupil premium funding is used for the better, staff can now focus their attention and support to boost their attainment sharply on the specific needs of those eligible for support.
- The curriculum has been adapted well so that topics follow the needs and interests of pupils and forge close links between subjects. This has led to pupils becoming more engaged in their learning and having more opportunities to write at length. The local area and community is used as a resource so learning is relevant to the pupils. Partnerships with local theatres and regular visits to places of interest linked to the topic being studied make learning more interesting for all.
- Sports funding is used well to train staff to extend their teaching skills and to develop leadership capacity. Opportunities for competitive sport have increased and new equipment has been purchased. Four pupils elected by their peers as sports leaders are playing an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles.
- The parental partnership is very strong. Parents greatly value 'stay and learn' sessions and workshops such as in internet safety in helping them to understand what their children are learning and how they can support them at home.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The new federation governing body has established very effective working practices swiftly. Governors are knowledgeable and have high ambitions for the school.
 - Governors have a very secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are rigorous in questioning school leaders about the performance of pupils and check the progress of improvement plans carefully. They use their frequent focused visits to scrutinise the performance of the school and to check safeguarding procedures and processes are robustly followed.
 - Governors make sure that the school's resources, including additional funding, are used for pupils' benefit. They are very vigilant, checking carefully that funding is being used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in their learning.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a very sharp focus on keeping pupils safe and secure based on robust systems and procedures. All staff are very vigilant in spotting concerns. They have been trained well by looking at different scenarios where a child's welfare might be in danger such as from radicalisation or exploitation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers make their high expectations very clear to the pupils. This is not just for how they should behave but also that they should share ideas and support each other's learning. This means classes are calm and very purposeful.
- At its most effective, teaching is stimulating and challenging because of the interesting methods used. Questioning is incisive, probing and makes pupils think deeply about what they are doing. Key vocabulary relevant to different subjects is constantly emphasised and defined so that it is understood and used correctly. Displays contribute considerably to learning by showing pupils what they are trying to achieve in each subject.

- Teachers accurately identify what pupils understand and can do in writing and in mathematics. Teaching is then adapted so that pupils move quickly to the next steps in their learning or are given additional support.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment in reading is less secure. Pupils are not always sure how well they are doing or how they can improve. Comprehension activities do not always make pupils think enough about the texts they are reading or challenge them sufficiently.
- Pupils greatly value the feedback their teachers provide about their learning. Marking follows school policy very closely. Pupils respond to their teacher's suggestions about how to improve their work. This helps them to correct their work and see how to incorporate accurate grammar and spelling into their writing.
- Pupils are continually provided with opportunities to deepen their understanding of number. They solve problems and investigate ideas. Pupils know they will be expected to justify their answers by explaining their reasoning using vocabulary correctly.
- Learning in science is built firmly on pupils planning and undertaking investigations. They are expected to make reasoned predictions which they test by taking and recording measurements before drawing conclusions. Pupils learn the subtlety of technical vocabulary and how to use it correctly.
- Extra adults in each class make a significant difference to learning. Teaching assistants question carefully those they work with to draw out ideas and make them think. This encourages pupils to try to find answers themselves and not become over-dependent on adult support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very confident and self-assured. They are very positive about their school, take great pride in their achievements and are very keen to celebrate when others do well. They can talk with insight about how they can improve in most subjects.
- Pupils are strongly of the view that bullying is very rare. Parents and staff agree. Pupils describe how they will tell perpetrators not to do it or quickly get an adult to stop any situations escalating. This is one of the reasons they cite for feeling so safe in school. They can also explain how safety training has helped them to spot potential risks and how they can be dealt with, such as on the roads or when using the internet.
- Pupils are tolerant, show great respect for others and have a strong sense of justice and fairness. They are encouraged to become leaders by applying for roles such as science leaders, digital leaders or sports leaders. The school council also plays an active part in school life and its members have led pupils in exploring what British values mean to them and their families.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school is calm and very orderly because pupils conduct themselves very considerately at all times including in the dining hall and when at play. They show great respect for adults and are unfailingly polite. Responses to questionnaires from parents and staff as well as the school's records show that this is now the norm for the school.
- Pupils learn without any distractions. They fully understand the system of rewards and sanctions used by the school to promote their best behaviour. Pupils say that adults are always fair and will give them a chance to start again if they fail to live up to expectations. They also report how they feel happy now that behaviour has improved so much under the new leadership team.
- Pupils are very attentive in class and respond quickly to their teachers. They constructively support each other's learning by readily sharing ideas in discussion and thoughtfully giving suggestions about how they could improve their work.
- Attendance has steadily risen since the last inspection and is above average. Pupils rarely miss a day at school. The school has worked successfully to make sure parents see the importance of regular attendance.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The pupils' progress is improving rapidly and has been since the establishment of the federation. This is leading to rising attainment so that more pupils than at the last inspection are working at standards expected for their age.

- Attainment varies slightly because of the legacy of past weaker progress in some year groups. Gaps have been closing since joining the federation and increasing numbers of pupils are suitably prepared for secondary school.
- Pupils make good progress in writing because they have plenty of opportunity to plan over time before producing the finished article. They learn to write creatively and extensively in different styles including in their topics and in science.
- The pupils' good and improving progress in mathematics is based on them becoming more secure in their basic skills of number and the confidence with which they apply these when solving problems of investigations.
- Basic reading skills are taught well. A structured approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds made by letters) has been introduced since the school has joined the federation. Pupils make good progress and use their understanding well to deal with unfamiliar words. Pupils understand the importance of reading if they are to learn well in all subjects but do not always show a great love of books or an enjoyment of reading.
- School assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making good progress. This is enabling them to narrow what had been relatively wide attainment gaps with other pupils nationally. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are generally stronger than for others in each class.
- Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least good progress. This is because the school is precise in the support it provides in meeting their needs.
- Newcomers to the school, often with little or no English, are supported well and make good progress. However, they are not always at the school for long enough to reach expected attainment for their age. Any variations in outcomes for pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds do not follow any significant patterns.

The early years provision

is good

- It is through effective leadership that significant improvements to teaching have taken place in the early years since the last inspection. Children now make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Their attainment by the end of Reception has risen rapidly to above average. Children are now prepared well for Key Stage 1.
- If children have weak language skills or are new to English, they are helped to catch up with others quickly. Their immersion in an environment rich in speaking, language and new vocabulary helps them to become confident to participate and express their ideas.
- Teaching is now good. The swift and accurate identification of each child's needs enables staff to plan carefully the next steps in their learning. As a result of the major overhaul of resources since the last inspection, activities are more stimulating for the children.
- The direct teaching of new skills by adults is effective, but children are not always encouraged to explore and investigate ideas themselves. This means they do not always develop a deep understanding of the skills they are learning, such as in number.
- The strong emphasis placed on the children's personal development means they understand how to play and learn together safely. They behave well, are keen to learn and happily share tasks and resources. Their great enjoyment of learning shows how confident and safe they feel.
- Teamwork between adults is strong. The welfare of the children is given due attention. Parents are involved at every opportunity in support of their children's learning and greatly value being able to stay and play with their children at the start of the day.

School details

Unique reference number	10001969
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	100813

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	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Lohead
Executive headteacher	Kate Wooder
Telephone number	020 7407 2959
Website	www.thebridgesfederation.org
Email address	office@towerbridge.southwark.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2013

Information about this school

- This school is below average in size, compared with other primary schools.
- Most pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. This figure is high.
- The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. This figure is high.
- The majority of pupils are supported by funding through the pupil premium. This figure is high. The pupil premium is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- Children in the early years provision attend the Nursery full time for three days each week and the Reception class full time. The school reopened the Nursery in September 2015.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave part-way through their primary education is higher than in most primary schools.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club. It also hosts a privately run after-school service, which is inspected separately.
- The school joined The Bridges Federation in September 2015 having previously been loosely federated and receiving support from Snowfields Primary School since February 2014. The federation is led by an executive headteacher and a single governing body. The school has also experienced many staff changes over the last two years, including at leadership level.
- The school failed to meet all of the government's current floor standards in 2014 and 2015, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 16 lessons. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors to nine of these. They looked at work in pupils' books from the current academic year.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors. A meeting was also held with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and written contributions from three parents. Inspectors also took account of surveys undertaken by the school in November 2015 which received 167 responses from parents and 153 from pupils. They also met informally with parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara Breed	Ofsted Inspector

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