

Townley Primary School

Crown Drove, Christchurch, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 9NA

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- This is an improving school. The headteacher is effective. She has accurately identified areas for improvement, and has introduced initiatives which are showing signs of success. However, there has not been enough time to see the full impact of this work.
- Governors have not routinely monitored the impact of leaders' work. As a result, improvements in standards at the end of key stage 2 have not been rapid enough.
- Leaders and governors have not communicated effectively enough with some parents who have concerns about the behaviour management of a small minority of pupils.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles and are still learning how to lead initiatives to improve standards. Consequently, the rate of improvement is too slow.
- The attendance of some pupils is too low.
- When learning tasks are not challenging, pupils lose concentration and they do not use their time well.
- The aspirations of some pupils are not high enough. Consequently, they do not make the progress they should.
- Teachers do not plan activities to enable pupils to develop skills in a wide range of subjects. Nor do all teachers plan activities which challenge pupils sufficiently. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

The school has the following strengths

- Since taking up post, the headteacher has rightly introduced a number of effective changes to improve safeguarding.
- Progress in mathematics is beginning to improve as a result of investment in teacher training and subject resources.
- Pupils conduct themselves in an orderly manner around the school.
- The care and attention given to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are effective, and challenging behaviour is well-managed.
- Provision in the early years is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment and, as a result, raise standards by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to plan activities that ensure all pupils make good progress from their different starting points
 - teachers plan cohesive sequences of work across a wide range of subjects, which enable pupils to develop sustained skills and understanding.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring that:
 - learning tasks consistently challenge pupils
 - pupils have consistently high aspirations for themselves, so that they can make the rapid progress they should
 - the attendance of pupils who are often absent improves.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - embedding the role of new middle leaders, so that the headteacher is well supported in raising standards
 - ensuring that governors routinely hold all leaders to account for the urgent improvement of standards
 - ensuring that leaders and governors communicate more effectively with parents who have concerns about the behaviour management of children in school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because recently introduced initiatives are not yet sufficiently embedded to demonstrate an impact on standards. Nevertheless, the headteacher knows the school well, and improvement plans demonstrate a clear vision for the way forward. As yet, staff do not have a clear, shared understanding of what pupils can and must achieve if they are to fulfil their potential. While there are pockets of strong practice, it is not consistent.
- Middle leaders are new to their roles with regard to improving standards. They are keen to take part in key improvement activities, such as monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, and are supported well by the headteacher. They have successfully helped to improve, for example, aspects of teachers' subject knowledge in writing and mathematics. However, their roles are not yet developed well enough to support the headteacher in bringing about rapid improvement.
- Leaders and governors are committed to investing in training for teachers, so that they improve their subject knowledge. The headteacher recognises that much needs to be done to improve teaching and assessment, and has rightly accessed expert support from local authority advisers. The impact of training is especially evident in mathematics, where pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress.
- Teachers are very appreciative of the opportunities for training and support that they receive from the headteacher, whatever the stage in their career. Teachers new to the profession value the strong mentoring support they receive, and welcome the chance to learn from the best practice of others, such as in the teaching of phonics. Those who have been teaching for longer enjoy the opportunity to take on more responsibility and to improve their subject knowledge. All staff are very supportive of the direction set by the headteacher, and are committed to develop their teaching.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. Well-trained staff manage challenging behaviour well, and enable pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders encourage teachers to plan interesting activities which will motivate pupils, such as the recent science day visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6 to a local school. An assembly for pupils in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection showed that pupils have taken part in a range of activities. These included making models of hot air balloons in design technology and learning about Scott of the Antarctic. However, while pupils across the school enjoy such activities, leaders do not yet check that teachers are planning opportunities to acquire sustained subject-specific skills and understanding. As a result, progress across these subjects is not good as it should be.
- The use of the pupil premium has too variable an impact. Leaders and governors use it well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access the same opportunities as other pupils in the school. However, there is still some way to go to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others nationally by the time they leave the school in Year 6.
- Leaders and governors use sports premium funding effectively to provide a range of

lunchtime clubs. These clubs are proving successful in increasing the number of pupils who take part in physical activity, and in improving their fitness.

- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They ensure that school staff strongly encourage core values, such as respect for others and acceptance of difference between people. In an assembly, pupils were riveted by the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet, and were keen to take part in reflecting on what this means for them in their own lives.
- Leaders and governors strive to ensure that the school is an inclusive community where pupils with additional needs can make good progress. The care and attention given to pupils with challenging behaviour are effective. As a result, there has been a recent reduction in isolated incidents of poor behaviour.
- Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and sent in texts are happy with the school. In particular, they described how organisation is 'tighter and better', and appreciate actions to, for example, improve site security. Many were very complimentary about communication between the school and home, and about the approachability of staff. A minority of parents, however, have concerns about the behaviour of a small number of pupils, and do not believe that their concerns are taken seriously.

Governance of the school

- Most governors are new to their roles since the previous inspection. There is a good range of skills within the governing body team, and governors take their responsibilities seriously. They have a good understanding of the needs of the local community.
- Governors are keen to be as effective as possible. They regularly seek out training to ensure that they are up to date in aspects such as safeguarding.
- Governors have begun to tighten systems to ensure that they are effectively monitoring leaders' actions to improve performance. For example, they now have a sharper focus on school improvement priorities during their visits. However, they have not yet developed a precise enough understanding of what leaders are doing to improve educational standards, and what the impact is. As a result, they are not able to hold leaders to account with sufficient urgency.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Since taking up post, the headteacher has rightly introduced a number of improvements to safeguarding practices. She has successfully established a culture where all staff understand very well how to safeguard pupils against day-to-day risk. As a result, staff fulfil their responsibilities to a high standard.
- The headteacher and the governors ensure that the correct checks are made to prevent unsuitable people working with children in the school. Staff and most parents agree that pupils are safe. A minority of parents disagree.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much across the school, and sometimes within the same lesson. Consequently, the progress pupils make over time is too slow.
- Teachers rightly aim to plan tasks which will interest and motivate pupils. However, they sometimes do not check that these tasks match pupils' learning needs. As a result, some activities, although enjoyable, do not lead to strong progress.
- Teachers do not routinely use assessment well enough to devise learning tasks for pupils of different abilities. For example, if work is too hard, support assistants too often help pupils to complete the task without ensuring that they have properly understood the concepts required. This leads to gaps in learning that slow down progress later on. Where work is too easy, the most able pupils are not given opportunities to work at a high enough standard.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is variable across the school. This is because teachers often focus too narrowly on knowledge rather than the sustained development of subject-specific skills and understanding. As a result, not enough pupils are reaching the required standard in these subjects.
- Teachers' planning does not routinely ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged, especially in writing. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what these pupils can achieve; too often they miss opportunities to help them extend and improve their work. As a result, the most able pupils do not make the rapid progress they need to. Very few pupils are working at the higher standards, especially towards the end of key stage 2.
- Teachers do not consistently follow the school's marking policy. The impact of feedback provided by teachers to pupils about their work is, therefore, variable. Where it is most effective, pupils are given the time and opportunity to make appropriate changes, such as finding their own spelling errors and practising their corrections. However, not all teachers give specific enough guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work.
- Work in pupils' books shows evidence of a concerted initiative to improve presentation and handwriting. Pupils are able to write in a joined-up, legible handwriting style and understand the school's agreed conventions for presentation. Not all teachers, however, insist that expectations are met, and so recent improvements are not always sustained.
- Good practice was seen in some lessons during the inspection, especially in mathematics. For example, progress was strong when pupils were encouraged to use drawings and visual equipment to help them find fractions of numbers. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities did especially well when using cubes and counters to help them divide by half.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The understanding of pupils about how to be successful learners is too variable across the school. At times, pupils show confidence in themselves and are keen to explain what they are learning. Too often, however, they are unaware of their potential to succeed and do not demonstrate high enough aspirations for themselves.
- Most pupils trust school staff to look after them. They say that the best thing about the school is the support they receive from adults, who are always there for them. As one pupil said: 'They are always there to help. They will give you a few minutes of their time, and they encourage us a lot.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of how they should keep themselves safe, such as when using the internet. They are aware of the need for safety systems such as regular fire drills. Most pupils say that staff deal with any bullying well. However, a significant minority of parents disagree.
- Pupils enjoy staying healthy. During the inspection, pupils in key stage 1 were enthusiastically working for their Golden Mile award by building up their running stamina in the playground. Most are on track to run a mile in the required time by Easter. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in physical exercise at lunchtime with specialist sports teachers, and look forward to going outside.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The attitudes of pupils towards their learning is variable. While their conduct is good, they sometimes do not expect to work productively enough, resulting in limited progress. This is especially the case when activities in lessons are not challenging them or are too hard.
- Most parents believe that school staff manage behaviour well, and that the school is appropriately inclusive. However, a minority of parents are concerned about the behaviour management of a small number of individuals, and want it to improve. Leaders have already introduced a new approach. The inspector judged, following a thorough investigation of behaviour records, discussions with pupils and observations of conduct throughout the school, that the new approach has already demonstrated some success. This is especially the case for pupils with particular behavioural needs, where there has been a marked reduction in the number of incidents in the last few months.
- Attendance is not as high as it should be, and too many pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance. The headteacher is rightly taking firm action to ensure that every pupil comes to school regularly and punctually. Most pupils are well motivated by schemes such as regular raffles for pupils with 100% attendance, for which they can win a voucher to spend. There are early signs that attendance is beginning to improve.
- Pupils' conduct outside lessons is good. School staff expect them to move around quietly and respectfully. The inspector noted that pupils walked through the school in

their class year groups in an orderly manner at breaktimes and when going in and out of assembly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For the last three years, published progress information for pupils at the end of key stage 2 in English and mathematics has been below, and sometimes well below, average.
- Outcomes in mathematics were particularly low in 2017, with only 11% of pupils reaching the expected standard, and none achieving the higher standard. Progress in 2016 and 2017 was in the bottom 10%. In reading in 2017, just 44% of pupils reached the expected standard compared with 72% nationally and, again, no pupils reached the higher standard. The effect of small group sizes on published assessment information, and the fact that large numbers of pupils joined the school in later year groups, some of them quite recently, will have had an impact on performance data. However, not enough individual pupils have made sufficient progress from their starting points in the last three years in reading and mathematics. In writing, outcomes improved in 2017, with progress close to average.
- In key stage 1, the picture has been more positive, and outcomes have been consistently close to the national average for the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils have met the required standard in the national Year 1 phonics screening check in recent years, and readily apply their skills when reading unfamiliar words.
- The work of pupils in current year groups across key stages 1 and 2 shows that not enough pupils are making the rapid progress they need to catch up with other pupils nationally, and too many are still working below expected standards in English and mathematics. Consequently, too many pupils, especially older pupils, are not yet well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, the school's work to improve outcomes in mathematics, and more recently in writing in key stage 1, is showing early signs of success.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils currently in the school are too variable, especially for older year groups. Pupils are making better progress in mathematics than in English because the work in mathematics is more challenging and gives pupils more opportunity to extend higher-level reasoning. Pupils are given opportunities to think for themselves through, for example, applying their knowledge to problems requiring a deep understanding of fractions. However, in writing, older pupils in particular are given limited opportunities to write at a greater depth because teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- Most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are beginning to make good progress from their starting points. Teachers are well trained in planning suitable work for these pupils and ensuring that they succeed in lessons. In addition, pupils with challenging behaviour are becoming better prepared for the next stage of their education because strategies for managing their behaviour are beginning to work.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is still too variable because their work is not always well enough matched to their learning needs. Some make good progress in

their personal development and well-being.

- There is limited evidence of learning across other subjects. For example, older pupils have received too few opportunities over time to develop the scientific skills expected for their age. While pupils in some classes have enjoyed topics on, for example, crime and punishment in Anglo-Saxon times, other classes have not benefited from enough opportunities to extend thinking and excite curiosity in subjects such as history and geography. As a result, pupils are not able to reach expected standards in these subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have recently, and successfully, incorporated nursery-age children into the early years setting. The needs of children aged from two years to five years are met well.
- Children start in the early years with a range of skills and aptitudes, with around half starting at a stage of development below that typical for their age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception, including those who are disadvantaged, is typically close to the national average. All children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the transition into Year 1.
- Leaders have an ambitious vision for what they want to achieve in the setting and are clear-sighted about its current strengths and areas for improvement. All are prepared to go 'the extra mile' in ensuring that the setting is a safe and appealing place to be.
- Leaders and staff have high expectations of what each child can achieve. They precisely assess children's needs and then plan exciting activities which will help them to make good progress. For example, over the course of the inspection, the youngest children were fascinated to explore what was on offer, such as pouring and mixing in the mud kitchen.
- Adults enable children to develop confidence and independence through having regular opportunities to make choices in their learning. During the inspection, the older children were keen to develop their reasoning through activities such as ramp-building to make car tracks, developing a good understanding of gradient and the effect of friction on speed.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Children enjoy playing at splitting up words and joining the sounds together again. Staff have good subject knowledge, which enables them to question children effectively, to check their learning continuously and to move them onto the next step.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are promoted well across the early years. Staff help children to apply the skills they are learning to carefully planned activities which capture children's interests. During the inspection, Reception children were beside themselves with excitement at writing they had produced, inspired by a scenario in the outdoor area, of a witch's abandoned clothing and a policeman's helmet. The teacher encouraged children to speak aloud in sentences through the use of hand-held sound recorders, and children were keen to hypothesise explanations such as 'a policeman might have come to get the witch and left his police hat'. As a result, writing was of a

high quality. Children's work over time shows that such practice is typical.

- The behaviour of children is good. Staff make sure children are well-cared-for and are kept safe.
- Leaders are highly committed to working closely with parents, and value their contributions. The learning journals maintained for each child include many comments by parents, which inform children's next steps. 'Story cafes' held each term enable children to share their work with their parents, such as the most recent event to celebrate Chinese New Year. Classroom displays showcase parental comments, which are celebrated along with exciting photographs of the event. As a result, children are highly involved in their learning and enjoy coming to school.

School details

Unique reference number	110630
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10046708

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Fred Yeulett
Headteacher	Maria Higgins
Telephone number	01354 638 229
Website	www.townley.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	head@townley.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average primary school. All classes are for mixed age groups.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced provision for two- and three-year-olds.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and who are receiving support is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is well below the national average.
- There are too few pupils in the Year 6 cohort to make valid comparisons with the

government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in lessons, and parts of lessons, in all classes, jointly with the headteacher. The inspector scrutinised a variety of pupils' work in every class, jointly with the headteacher, talked to pupils about their learning during lessons and listened to younger pupils read.
- The inspector also observed behaviour in the playground over the two days of the inspection.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders, school office staff, a trainee teacher and pupils. She met with governors, and had a discussion with a local authority representative.
- The inspector took account of the 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. She considered the free-text messages provided by 32 parents, plus any letters from parents and discussions with parents in the playground. She also considered the results of the staff survey undertaken at the time of the inspection.
- A wide range of documentation was evaluated by the inspector. This included the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, and the school's current performance information. The inspector scrutinised the checks that the school does to ensure the suitability of adults who work with children, and leaders' records of behaviour, child protection and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Judith Sumner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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