

# Townhill Junior School

Benhams Road, Townhill Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 2NX

## Inspection dates

4–5 June 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and assessment is not consistently good across the school.
- Despite recent improvements, teaching does not develop pupils' writing and mathematics skills consistently well across the school.
- Pupils' progress information is not used sufficiently well to inform the next steps of their learning. As a result, some pupils can struggle to keep up and the most able are not sufficiently challenged.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make enough progress in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Governors' record-keeping does not offer sufficiently robust challenge to leaders at all levels.
- Some subject leaders are still developing the skills required to enable them to have an influence on teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Teachers' expectations in science and the foundation subjects are variable. Consequently, pupils do not develop deep enough knowledge or the necessary skills in these subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, although improving, are inconsistent. When teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils, some pupils lose concentration and disrupt learning.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below that of their peers.

### The school has the following strengths

- This year, the new headteacher has made some significant improvements and motivated her staff. Her leadership has given a clearer vision and has brought about improvements to teaching, assessment and behaviour.
- Staff feel well supported by senior leaders and value the training they have received this year. They want the best for the pupils they teach.
- Leaders and teaching assistants ensure that provision for pupils with SEND is effective. As a result, this group of pupils makes strong progress.
- Townhill offers a particularly nurturing community atmosphere which ensures that pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Strong relationships underpin the many opportunities to develop pupils' emotional resilience and well-being.
- The school offers a particularly rich provision for physical education (PE) and sports which is valued by pupils, parents and carers.

## Full report

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

- Raise standards of leadership and management by:
  - continuing to improve subject leaders' quality of planning and embed recent training to support them in monitoring and recognising their accountability for improvements in their subject areas across the school
  - ensuring that record-keeping accurately collates the challenges made by governors to hold leaders at all levels to account for continued improvements
  - ensuring further improvements to attendance, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- Continue to improve teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good across the school by:
  - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment information to pitch work at the right level, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able, so that no time is wasted
  - improving adults' assessment and questioning skills in line with the strongest examples in the school
  - ensuring that pupils' behaviour and concentration in lessons is consistently in line with the best examples in the school
  - improving teachers' subject knowledge and expectations across the wider curriculum.
- Boost pupils' outcomes by:
  - ensuring that the needs of disadvantaged pupils are better met and gaps between them and their peers are diminished
  - continuing to improve the quality of writing and mathematics across the school
  - raising the level of challenge so that more pupils achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 than in the past
  - ensuring that the curriculum sequentially develops pupils' depth of knowledge, vocabulary and breadth of skills in science and the wider curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since her arrival in September 2018, the headteacher has brought much needed clarity and vision and, together with her senior leaders, has reinvigorated staff. Working with the local authority and consultants from other schools, she has swiftly identified the school's shortcomings and is systematically reviewing and improving the school's systems and curriculum.
- The headteacher and her senior team are uncompromising in their recognition of the hard work still needed to address the legacy of pupils' underachievement. They balance this expertly with support and training for staff and consideration of their welfare. Staff value the support and training they have received, and morale is much improved.
- Historically, leaders did not ensure that assessment systems were sufficiently accurate. The new headteacher wasted no time in addressing this and the accuracy of assessment information is improving. However, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to set work for pupils at the right level. Some teachers' expectations are not high enough and inconsistencies in teaching remain. Progress and attainment are too variable across the school, especially in writing and for the most able pupils.
- Current training is supporting subject leaders to improve their skills and share their expertise. For example, the teaching of English and mathematics has improved this year because subject leaders have introduced agreed approaches that all staff are following. However, there are still variabilities in the quality of teaching and outcomes in English and mathematics across the school.
- The leadership of the wider curriculum is variable, with particular strengths in PE and music provision. Subject leads are a dedicated and enthusiastic team. They have willingly accepted guidance from external consultants and senior leaders to improve their planning and sequencing of the curriculum in their subject areas. However, this work is ongoing, so it is too soon to see an impact upon outcomes. Currently, pupils do not achieve consistently well across all year groups and in different areas of the curriculum. Leaders are aware that better planning is required to sequence the key knowledge, vocabulary and skills pupils need across the wider curriculum.
- Subject leaders have not been given sufficient opportunities to challenge and support staff to address the variability in practice across the school. Consequently, outcomes in some areas, such as science, technology and the humanities, are not yet good.
- The local authority and headteacher have been proactive in implementing training for leaders and a range of appropriate support for teachers. There are pockets of strong teaching and learning, most notably in Years 5 and 6. However, it is too soon for new leaders' improved systems to have rooted consistently good teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- Senior leaders have worked hard to ensure that some aspects of the pupil premium funding are used effectively. For example, funding is used for the nurture provision and improved family contact, which have become significant strengths of the school. This has had a very positive impact on improving pupils' self-esteem, communication skills

and some behaviour. However, although provision has improved, weaknesses in teaching mean that disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

- Strong leadership ensures that the additional funding for pupils with SEND is used well. Pupils' needs are identified more effectively, and these pupils now benefit from intensive, specialist support from teachers and other staff.
- The school offers a welcoming and friendly place for parents and visitors and communication with parents and carers is strong. All the parents that inspectors met during the inspection, and most of the small number that replied to the Parent View survey, reported that they were happy with the levels of communication from staff and felt that their child was well supported by the school and happy. As one parent said: 'It's a homely place and staff go out of their way to meet pupils' needs.'

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors share the headteacher's vision and ambition for all pupils at Townhill Junior School. The governing body is a dedicated team and members have undertaken a variety of training this year, including some to support their interpretation of performance information. Using this, together with their visits to the school and the accurate information they receive directly from senior leaders, they are well informed about the quality of education.
- Conversations with governors show that they have a wealth of information and understanding about improvements made this year and the remaining weaknesses. However, records of their work do not reflect sufficiently in-depth questioning and probing into information provided to secure an accurate evaluation. Refinements are needed to hold leaders to account and maintain the pace of school improvement required.
- Governors have given high priority to ensuring improvements to all policies and systems this year. They regularly check the systems and procedures that school leaders have for keeping pupils safe and ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and on time.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work well with parents and other stakeholders to ensure an effective culture of safeguarding.
- All the school's employment checks are in place, in line with statutory requirements.
- All staff and governors receive regular high-quality and appropriately up-to-date training and are well informed about safeguarding matters. This means they can carry out the school's procedures well, ensuring a culture of vigilance.
- There are effective systems in place to secure the well-being and safety of pupils. Leaders work diligently, engaging specialist expertise where necessary to offer timely support for vulnerable pupils. Detailed records are kept of the regular communications with outside agencies.
- Staff, parents and pupils agree that the school offers a safe, secure and inclusive environment.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- As a result of leaders' training and consultant support this year, staff have made improvements. However, the quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent, within and between year groups. Sometimes teachers do not offer enough challenge, and pupils of different abilities complete the same work. This means that some, especially the most able, complete tasks which are too easy, while others can struggle to complete the tasks set.
- Although there are examples of strong practice in Years 5 and 6, teachers' questioning skills and use of assessment are not effective enough to inform appropriately challenging work in writing and mathematics. Some teachers are not careful enough in checking what pupils can do, and do not plan work that is sufficiently well matched to pupils' learning needs or which builds on their prior learning. Consequently, in lessons, some pupils find the work either too easy or too hard, and some lose concentration, chatter or fidget. This prevents pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able, from making strong progress over time.
- While there is coverage of the national curriculum, there are noticeable variations in the quality of teaching in different subjects. In some subjects, such as science and the humanities, teachers do not consistently sequence lessons in ways that help pupils to build on their prior knowledge. As a result, pupils make variable progress across different subject areas.
- Teaching assistants have been well trained and are able to offer useful and effective support to pupils. Where activities are well planned by teachers, additional adults in lessons and support for pupils with activities outside the classroom have a positive impact on the progress that vulnerable pupils and those with SEND make.
- Reading skills are promoted throughout the school and pupils told inspectors they enjoy reading. Staff select appropriate and interesting texts which engage and interest pupils. Pupils are confident to select strategies such as the use of phonics and skimming to help them make sense of texts. However, reading skills are not always sufficiently well developed to enable the most able pupils to be inquisitive about definitions and their own use of more challenging vocabulary.
- Teachers' efforts to raise standards in writing are starting to have an impact. Inspectors' reviews of work in pupils' books showed evidence of increasing challenge in the tasks set by many teachers, and more opportunities for pupils to write independently. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' written work are still inconsistent. In some classes, pupils do not apply their grammar, spelling and punctuation knowledge effectively. Consequently, pupils do not make the strong progress they need in order to meet age-related expectations and, for the most able, the higher standards.
- Learning in mathematics has improved this year as a result of strong leadership and training for staff, and this was seen in books and the classrooms. For example, inspectors saw examples of high teacher expectation and strong levels of challenge for a group of the most able pupils in Year 5. However, across the school, there is still some variability and not all teachers provide sufficient stretch and challenge. Pupils' books show that, although pupils are making progress in mathematics, pupils' problem-

solving and reasoning skills are not being developed effectively across the school in line with the best practice.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and they are. The work of the school's nurture unit, and facilities such as the rainbow room, are particularly effective at supporting pupils who feel vulnerable or insecure and boosting their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy eating and lifestyles. In addition, pupils can confidently recall how to keep themselves safe, including when accessing the internet.
- The primary PE and sport premium is used very effectively to improve pupils' engagement and participation in sporting activities. The school has a specialist teacher to deliver lessons, as well as offer guidance for staff. Through the curriculum and a range of clubs and events, Townhill provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to engage in sports, including swimming, gymnastics and various team games. The school is rightly proud of its sporting success in local festivals, tournaments and competitions. As a result, pupils develop a sense of teamwork and learn how to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Pupils show tolerance and respect for one another and for adults in the school. They are aware of the need for rules and consequences. The curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures, and to reflect on British values. Pupils in Year 6 told inspectors that they felt confident and prepared for their forthcoming transition to secondary school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Despite some improvements, this is due to the poor attendance of some groups and low-level disruption across the school.
- Leaders have recently updated their policies and practices to improve pupils' behaviour. Systems and procedures are now much more consistent. This has resulted in a reduction of behavioural incidents in school. However, some pupils' behaviour is still too variable in class.
- When teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils, some pupils become distracted, chatter or disrupt classes by talking over the teacher or not participating in activities. Where this occurs, such behaviour interrupts and slows the pace of learning.
- Parents and pupils reported that cases of bullying are rare. However, some younger pupils reported worries about swearing and misbehaviour of others. Around the school, leaders deal with unwanted behaviour issues swiftly and effectively. Recently, the school has introduced the role of pupils acting as 'restorative practice ambassadors' (RPAs). These RPAs are trained by leaders and proud to support and help their peers

to demonstrate better behaviours.

- Pupils' overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Leaders have evaluated systems to manage attendance and have made some improvements. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND remains stubbornly below that of their peers.
- There have been no permanent exclusions for the past three years. However, fixed-term exclusion rates have been above the national averages for similar schools. Leaders have put effective measures in place to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- In 2018, by the end of key stage, 2 pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics were below national averages. Teaching does not consistently challenge pupils to stretch themselves in English and mathematics. As a result, although the proportions of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 were in line with the national averages, too few pupils attained the higher standard in each area.
- Improved planning has started to raise teachers' expectations and improve standards in mathematics and English. Visits to lessons, pupils' work and the school's own assessment information provided evidence that the best teaching is helping pupils to make progress. In some classes, pupils are making up lost ground, but this is not consistently so across the school. Leaders are rightly prioritising continued improvements in writing.
- Although many make strong progress socially and in self-confidence, disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently strong progress academically. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attain at the expected standard is below that of other pupils, nationally and within the school.
- In some subjects, pupils make strong progress. For example, Year 3 pupils quickly developed increased confidence applying new techniques in PE, enabling many to improve their running skills and their subject-specific vocabulary. However, subjects such as science, geography and history are taught too inconsistently. As a result, pupils make very variable progress in these subjects.
- Leaders ensure appropriate identification and support for pupils with SEND, and a range of interventions and support is offered to help improve their outcomes. Despite the variability of teaching, strong leadership ensures that effective interventions by skilled teaching assistants enable pupils with SEND to make strong progress from their starting points.

## School details

Unique reference number	116134
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10088126

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matt Bishop
Headteacher	Sian Carr
Telephone number	02380 473611
Website	<a href="http://www.townhilljuniorschool.co.uk">www.townhilljuniorschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@townhilljuniorschool.co.uk">info@townhilljuniorschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–8 February 2017

## Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and has provision for children from age 7 to 11.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2018.
- The school has received a high level of support from the local authority and from external consultants from Beachwood Teaching School and other local schools to boost teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups to gather evidence to contribute to the evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their work across a range of subjects. They spoke to pupils on the playground and during lessons. One inspector met with a group of pupils to gather their views.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of five parents who replied to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. In addition, conversations were held with several parents at the beginning of both days of the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors reviewed the record of leaders' vetting and checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils and spoke to staff and governors about safeguarding procedures in the school.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to policies, self-evaluation, improvement planning, safeguarding, and pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jon Hills	Ofsted Inspector
Debra Anderson	Ofsted Inspector

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