Inspection of Towcester Church of England Primary School

Islington Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 6AU

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Sally Beaton. This school is part of Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ruth Walker-Green, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Holman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this school. A happy, exciting learning environment greets children from the Reception Year onwards. Everyone is welcome. Staff want every pupil to flourish academically, personally and socially – and pupils do.

Pupils enjoy their lessons very much. They say that they are 'fun' and 'interactive'. They say that teachers explain things well and help them if they are unsure. Staff make sure pupils remember key knowledge so that they are ready for what is next.

The curriculum is rich and relevant. Pupils find out about the history of shoemaking in Northamptonshire. They visit Silverstone racetrack. They quickly learn to read and enjoy lots of books, such as 'Nim's Island'. They work hard in class and leave well prepared for secondary school.

Pupils behave well. From the early years onwards, they are taught to be kind and respectful. They enjoy getting rewards such as the 'Golden Mention'.

Pupils feel safe and secure within the school community. Everyone comes together for assemblies and sings out the school's song with pride. They look after their school by watering the plants. The 'Tombles' collect litter in the community. Pupils explain that 'it's everyone's responsibility to be a role model'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Staff at the school are determined that every pupil will reach their potential. Some subject leaders are new to their role and need further guidance to fulfil all their responsibilities. However, the school has ensured a consistent approach to all aspects of provision, which begins in the early years. Here, children get off to a strong start. A wide range of well-planned activities mean children are excited to learn. They use simple maps to navigate around the outdoor area. They write sums, such as '5+4=9'. They cooperate happily together in the water area.

The school's teaching of phonics is excellent. All those who teach early reading are experts. They help any pupils who fall behind to learn the sounds and letters they do not know. As a result, children use their 'Fred Talk' to read fluently. Those in Reception Year learn to read words such as 'rich' and 'chop'. By Year 2, pupils spell more complex words correctly, for example, 'dolphin' and 'congratulation'.

Pupils returned from the pandemic with considerable gaps in their knowledge. The school has worked hard to close these. Despite this, the knowledge of many pupils in the 2023 Year 6 cohort was not secure enough by the time they left the school. Pupils' fragile abilities led to their low attainment in mathematics and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Weaker skills in reading meant that they made significantly less progress than they should have done in this subject. However, the school has wasted no time in tackling each of these aspects head-on. Thorough analysis of the subjects took place. Curriculum plans were improved. Teachers received intense,

precise training wherever it was needed. Staff addressed any weak planning or delivery and put in place action to tackle it. Monitoring of impact was strengthened.

As a result, weaknesses have been rectified. Pupils across key stage 2 are making, like their younger peers, effective progress in their reading. They compose accurate written work that is both creative and assured, across a wide range of genres. Pupils' mathematical knowledge is now at least in line with age-related expectations. They know their multiplication tables, can explain algebra and solve problems with confidence.

The school uses the 'I do, we do, you do' approach in lessons. Pupils say that this structure helps them to learn well and want to learn more. The needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully addressed. This means that they can make the progress they are capable of. These pupils are proud of their work and can see how they are knowing and remembering more over time.

The school's personal development programme is good. It develops pupils' character and gives them the knowledge to make safe, well-informed decisions. Pupils learn about the need to respect others, to behave well and to stand up for what is right. The school gives 'Yes I can' awards to those demonstrating great courage. The school's pastoral support is a strength of the school. At its heart is 'The Hive', where skilled staff help pupils with emotional needs. This is supported by a suite of other interventions of an equally high quality.

Pupils support strongly the school's behaviour code. They listen well, try their hardest, raise money for charity and are kind to others. They are polite, positive young citizens.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The leaders of some subjects are relatively new to their role. Some have not had sufficient opportunity to monitor the quality of their colleagues' pedagogy, for instance. Senior leaders should continue to give them time and support to undertake their role, so that they are highly proficient in developing and enhancing the professional quality of their colleagues' delivery of the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142650
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10324183
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Holman
CEO of the trust	Ruth Walker-Green
Headteacher	Sally Beaton
Website	www.towcesterprimary.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- This Church of England school is part of the Diocese of Peterborough. Its last section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was in March 2022.
- The school offers both a breakfast club and an after-school club to pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- In order to judge the quality of education, inspectors focused the inspection on specific subjects of the curriculum. They undertook 'deep dives' in early reading, mathematics, history, science and physical education. This involved meeting with senior and subject leaders, scrutinising curriculum planning and visiting lessons where pupils were learning these subjects. Inspectors met pupils from the lessons and looked at their work in these and in other subjects. They held meetings with teachers about the curriculum they were delivering. Inspectors heard children in different year groups reading to a familiar adult. They also looked at other subjects of the curriculum, such as writing, in less depth.
- Inspectors met with members of the local governing body, the leader for the early years and the coordinator for pupils with SEND. They spoke with representatives of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors read a wide variety of school documents. They also spoke with other members of staff, such as midday supervisors. They checked whether pupils were safe and happy at the school's breakfast club. They held a telephone conversation with a member of staff at the alternative provision used by the school.
- Inspectors took note of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, met with parents at the start of the school day and considered the results of the Ofsted staff questionnaire. They met pupils from different year groups to ask their views about the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Roary Pownall, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Aird	Ofsted Inspector
John Lawson	Ofsted Inspector

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