



Towers Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102313
LEA Havering LEA
Inspection number 276693
Inspection dates 16 May 2006 to 17 May 2006
Reporting inspector Nick Butt AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Windsor Road
School category	Community		Hornchurch
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		RM11 1PD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01708 449872
Number on roll	222	Fax number	01708 478926
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Elizabeth Dixon
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Marilyn Whiskerd

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This two-form entry school is similar in size to most schools. Its roll is falling, as there are fewer primary-aged children living locally. It serves a fairly prosperous area of Hornchurch, with most pupils coming from privately-owned housing. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion claiming free school meals is small. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. None of these are at the early stages of acquisition. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is around the national average. Pupil mobility is low. The school receives most of its pupils from the neighbouring infant school. It has Healthy Schools status and an Activemark Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This improving school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Standards are above average when pupils enter the school and remain above average when they leave. They make satisfactory progress. The good strategic leadership of the headteacher and deputy is well focused on raising standards. They are supported effectively by a revitalised governing body. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some good or better teaching, but not enough of it to ensure that all pupils make consistent progress in every year group. For example, more able pupils do not do as well in English as they do in mathematics. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good, and the progress of these pupils is better. There are particular strengths in the personal development of pupils. Their behaviour is outstanding and they are very keen about their work. The curriculum is enriched well with a range of clubs and visits, but the last half hour of each morning lacks a clear focus.

The care of pupils is good. Inspectors agree with all the school's judgements about its quality, including its overall effectiveness. In most respects its self-evaluation is accurate, but leaders do not observe lessons frequently enough to have sufficient influence on the quality of teaching. This is partly because not enough management time is available, especially for the deputy head, to monitor and to share expertise with colleagues. The school has made sound progress since its last inspection. Progress in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and raising standards in mathematics has been good. Value for money is satisfactory. Recent improvements, and the determination of senior leaders to increase the pace of change, mean that there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English for the more able pupils
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good in all classes
- Review curriculum allocations so that more effective use is made of the last half hour of each morning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school in Year 3 with standards that are above the national average. They leave in Year 6 with standards that are also above average. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, but those with learning difficulties do better. This is because they receive very good support from teaching assistants and effective systems are in place to ensure their needs are met. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. The performance of more able pupils varies, with fewer in Year 6 attaining the higher levels in English than the school expected in the 2005 national tests. In this respect the school's target was not met. In mathematics, challenging targets for all learners were exceeded. The school has introduced a system of checklists that makes pupils more

aware of how to improve their writing, and this is beginning to have a positive impact, especially in Year 6. During their four years at the school, the rate of pupils' progress varies according to the quality of teaching they receive. In some classes they do not all make the expected progress, while in others they exceed it. This is why achievement is satisfactory overall by the time they leave.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are polite and caring towards one another, and like taking responsibility. For example, the play leaders organise games and activities at lunchtimes. Pupils enjoy these and cooperate together well as a result. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies reinforce the school's values, and the prayers are particularly effective at developing pupils' spirituality. Since the last inspection, pupils have become much more aware of the multi-cultural world in which they live. They found the Language and Culture Week exciting. One pupil said, 'School dinners were good when we tried food from other countries.' Pupils really enjoy school, and are keen to learn. Attendance is good. One parent said, 'My son would come to school at the weekends if he could, he loves it so much!' Pupils are very aware of living healthy lifestyles and take plenty of exercise, both in physical education lessons and through after school clubs. The vast majority say they feel safe at school and that any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils get involved in supporting the wider community through performing in concerts and raising money for charity. They are well prepared for life at secondary school, and have good basic skills by the time they transfer.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Whilst some of the teaching is good or better, this is not consistent across the school. In the best lessons, pupils are very clear about what they need to learn. Teachers maintain a brisk pace and ask challenging questions, based on their good understanding of what pupils need to learn next. For example, Year 6 pupils were asked why the opening paragraph to a story they liked made them want to read on. Responses such as 'the short sharp sentences' and 'it hooks the reader in three lines' revealed a clear understanding of how to start a story. Pupils enjoy working in pairs and small groups. They listen well to one another, offering suggestions about how work can be improved. This does not happen with enough regularity in classes where teaching is less strong. Teachers tend to spend too much time introducing the lesson, so that there is not enough time at the end to review the learning. This inconsistency is also reflected in the marking, with clear guidance offered in some classes, but not in others. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because

of the very effective support they receive from teaching assistants. Tasks are well planned and set at an appropriate level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, with strengths in the enrichment it offers pupils. The last half hour of each morning is not timetabled, and this time is not being used efficiently. The literacy or numeracy lesson prior to this tends to merge into it and there is no separate focus. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. Year 5 pupils published attractive books of Greek and Roman myths using the computers. Art is used very well to enrich the curriculum across several subjects, especially in claywork. Pupils and parents said how much they value the good range of visits to support topic work. The residential trip to the Isle of Wight for Year 6 pupils is a particular favourite, and helps to develop their social skills. Pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of clubs. The curriculum is well adapted for pupils with learning difficulties, and teachers make sure they are fully included in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for care, guidance and support. The school's caring ethos means that pupils are valued as individuals and thrive, growing in confidence. They are expected to take responsibility, for example in organising activities at lunchtimes. This contributes well to their personal development. Child protection procedures are robust and well known. Pupils feel they are treated fairly and know that any worries they have are dealt with quickly. Risk assessments are carefully carried out to ensure safety for pupils on educational visits. The school works well with parents, and runs workshops to explain what children are learning. It keeps careful track of pupils' progress and puts in place effective support for those who are not keeping up. Pupils have individual targets in English, which are helping to improve their writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy head provide good strategic leadership and set a clear direction for the school that is focused on raising standards. Leaders have established a friendly caring ethos, with very good relationships at all levels. The impact of this is apparent in the good personal development of pupils and their very positive attitudes. The management of some of the monitoring is less effective, especially in how often lessons are observed in those classes where teaching is not so strong. This is partly because subject leaders do not have sufficient time out of their classes to see what is going on in other lessons. The expertise of the deputy head, in particular, is not used as well as it could be to improve teaching. Because of this, teaching and progress are satisfactory overall.

The governing body has seen changes in the last year and is now much more involved in shaping the work of the school. One governor said, 'We ask the questions that other people want to know the answers to.' Governors hold the school to account well and are very supportive of staff. The school's view of its performance is accurate. Effective systems are in place to show the progress pupils make. Pupils and parents are regularly invited to contribute their views and these are valued. For example, the school started to offer percussion lessons in response to requests from pupils. The school has enjoyed some success in raising standards in mathematics and has begun work to do the same in English, especially among more able pupils. Given the determination of senior leaders to increase its rate of progress, capacity to improve is good.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

Many thanks for making us feel so welcome at your school. We enjoyed spending time with you and hearing about what you like doing. We thought that your behaviour was excellent, and we were very impressed with how polite everybody was.

We believe that your school is getting better all the time. We know that Mrs. Whiskerd and all the staff work really hard to make it as special as they can for you, and that you value all the activities and trips that are laid on. The artwork and ICT are particularly good in your school. You are a very talented group of people, what with all the drama you do and the musical instruments you play. It is good that you look after one another so well. The play leader scheme is working very well and lunchtimes are now enjoyable for everybody. Most of you make steady progress in your work, and we think those pupils who get extra help do well. We know you enjoy your lessons, and we think the teachers could learn from each other by going into one another's classes more to see what is going on. That way they can share their good ideas and you will learn even more quickly. It is good that you have checklists to help you with your writing because, although we could see some improvements, this needs to improve more. Your teachers value your ideas, and we are sure they will continue to encourage you to think about how well you are doing and what would help you to do even better.

All in all we think you are getting a fair deal from your school, and we believe it will continue to improve. We did enjoy meeting you all, and wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Nick Butt,

Lead Inspector