

Towers Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102309
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	286335
Inspection date	27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H Elsworth
Headteacher	Mrs J M Lobley
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001
School address	Osborne Road Hornchurch RM11 1HP
Telephone number	01708 447407
Fax number	01708 443533

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- The effectiveness of core subject leaders in monitoring provision.
- The curriculum balance and provision in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The effectiveness of tracking and assessment systems in the Foundation Stage.

Evidence was gathered from samples of work, lesson observations, various sources of data, a range of written documents, discussions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, core subject leaders, Foundation Stage teacher, representatives of the governing body and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils at this two-form entry school are White British but a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds the majority of whom speak English fluently. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than in most schools. Almost all children have been to local nursery schools before admission.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Towers Infant school is a good school with some outstanding features. It has a well-deserved reputation locally. Pupils' progress by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is outstanding and they reach standards that are well above average. It has developed well since the last inspection because of its keenness to address areas for improvement, for example in broadening the curriculum, although its systems to track pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently refined. The improvements in its links with parents are very marked.

This is a school now thriving on the happy relationships between staff, pupils, parents and the governors. It recognises the benefits that result from close cooperation with parents. Pupils sense the togetherness of staff and parents and thoroughly enjoy their time at the school, shown by their above average attendance. They look forward to the effectively planned lessons as much as they do to the well organised lunch and playtime arrangements. Teachers often make lessons fun. For example, pupils explored the texture of different materials in a Year 1 science lesson blindfolded. Pupils show much keenness in their learning. Playtimes are enjoyable. Pupils and playtime staff together lead twice-weekly playground dance sessions, which create a great sense of enjoyment, and support their healthy life styles. Child protection arrangements are generally good. Pupils are well cared for and they know about living safely.

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate, but it has underestimated the pupils' achievements and standards in the core subjects, which are outstanding due to work that is well matched to pupils' needs and a well organised curriculum in these areas of work. Teaching and learning in ICT are less effective. Staff are less confident in this subject and resources are barely satisfactory. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in ICT and reach broadly average standards in the subject but they do not make as much progress in it as in many other aspects of their learning.

The dedicated staff work effectively to secure improvements and have a good perception of where improvements can still be made. Subject leaders monitor the school's work regularly through a range of strategies to identify good features and aspects that are less effective. For example, monitoring of mathematics revealed that able pupils' skills in the calculation and understanding of three-digit numbers were not secure enough. The staff worked on this aspect much earlier the following year and introduced problem-solving with three digit numbers. Mathematics results improved as a result. Subject leaders' action plans and the whole school development plan are weaker aspects of leadership. The development plans are not robust enough in outlining clearly how they will reach the objectives and how the various initiatives will be evaluated. The school improvement plan does not yet fully involve other stakeholders, such as governors, pupils and parents. Nevertheless, a very strong feature of the school is the way in which staff work very well together as a team and support each other professionally so that they grow as teachers.

The monitoring of pupils' progress has some good elements, such as when staff mark work, but staff do not track pupils' progress rigorously at specific times of the year. As a result, they do not analyse sufficiently well whether pupils are making or exceeding expected rates of progress. This is not helping to ensure that it maintains the history of very good achievements, and outstanding levels of attainment.

The school gives a more effective balance of time to different aspects of the curriculum than at the last inspection. Staff plan some links between subjects, such as in theme weeks, but

there is room to develop these further to profit pupils' learning. The curriculum encourages pupils' knowledge of safe living and a healthy life style effectively. A good range of extra-curricular activities supports the curriculum well. The school prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent because teachers follow up any isolated inappropriate behaviour sensitively, sometimes involving the whole class so that all learn from the incident and class harmony is maintained. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities for responsibilities with room for the school council to play a more active role. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Parents speak very highly of the school's approachability. They feel at ease with the staff and mention, for example their access to the headteacher in the playground at the start of the day. One parent commented 'My child enjoys going to Towers Infants and we feel very lucky that she attends such a good school with such a good reputation.' This is typical of comments made by parents. Very good communication keeps parents well informed and enables them to be fully involved in school life. Led by an enthusiastic chairperson, the governing body is active in its support for the school. Governors have the parents and pupils very much at heart. For example, the chairperson talks to pupils regularly to find out their feelings about the school. The governing body is clearly intent on getting the best for each child and is not content that the school should rest on its laurels. 'We want new ideas, new initiatives', they say.

A strong feature of this school is its openness and honesty with information. For example, parents know that they can ask written questions of the governing body. These are displayed prominently in the entrance porch. The answers are written underneath so that all parents can share in the responses. This imaginative idea, combined with regular governor newsletters, keep the parents fully informed. Meetings for new parents about reading and writing help them to be complimentary educators and so contribute to the pupils' very good progress by the end of Reception.

The harmony of all who work in the school is clearly evident. There are plenty of smiling faces at this school from the kitchen to the classrooms and a clear intent to do the best for each pupil. The school already obtains very good results and, if the rate of progress is maintained in all round school improvement, it could quickly become an outstanding school because it certainly has the capacity.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry is average. Good induction arrangements enable the children to settle quickly. Children are well prepared for school and take off quickly with their learning. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage as a result. Children reach a standard above that expected in most areas of learning by the end of the Foundation Stage. The curriculum and teaching are good overall. The organisation of the outside activities for these children is justifiably under review to ensure that the activities advance children's learning. The careful balance of teacher-directed activities and those that children choose for themselves helps develop the children's independence. Boys performed less well than the girls in 2007 because some boys had learning difficulties. The Foundation Stage staff are also rightly reviewing the way in which they track and assess children's learning in order to support the planning of activities to meet children's individual needs more accurately.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in ICT by improving resources and developing teachers' skills in the subject.
- Ensure staff track pupils' progress in core curriculum areas regularly and take appropriate action based on their findings.
- Improve school development and subject action planning so that it is a more effective tool for improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Towers Infant School, Hornchurch, RM11 1HP

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school. Thank you also for sharing your work with me and talking to me about what you do. You are very proud of your school and rightly so. You make outstanding progress in your work by the end of Year 2 and reach a very good standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Your parents are correct when they say that you attend a good school. Your school is coming close to being an outstanding one. Not only do you enjoy your lessons but you also very much enjoy playtimes. I was impressed with your enthusiastic dances in the playground, which you thoroughly enjoyed.

All the staff take good care of you. The teachers make the lessons interesting for you. You behave well and try hard with your work. Your headteacher and the teachers form a good team together. Your parents play a good part in the school's work and the governors do a good job for the school. The curriculum is improving but I feel that you need more opportunities to work with computers so that you develop better skills. In order to improve the school even more, I have asked the teachers to improve the way in which they check the progress that you are making and to improve the way in which they plan for further school improvements.

I wish you well for the year ahead and into the future when you go on to the juniors. I hope that you will continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector