



# Tower House School

Independent School

Inspection report

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**Better  
education  
and care**

DfES Registration Number      880/6004  
Unique Reference Number      113612  
Inspection number              298227  
Inspection dates                6-7 March 2007  
Reporting inspector              Bradley Simmons HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Age group 2-16	Published 29 March 2007	Reference no. 298227
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

The Tower House School was established in 1982 in a former convent school building. It is a non-selective, co-educational day school for pupils between two and sixteen years of age. The school operates as three semi distinct schools, nursery, junior and senior, each with its own headteacher, but with the same proprietor.

The school aims to instil a sense of community, responsibility, concern for others and good manners. It aims to make education enjoyable and stimulating, and to provide a safe and secure environment in which pupils feel cared for.

## Evaluation of the school

Tower House provides a good quality education for its pupils. Teaching is good with some significant strengths in English and mathematics. Three conscientious and dedicated headteachers ensure that pupils make good progress and attain high standards by the time they leave the school. Pupils enjoy being at Tower House, but want to be better prepared for life in the wider world and have a greater influence on the life of the school. Emotional support for pupils is generally good, but care for pupils is inadequate overall because the school does not meet a number of regulations. Some areas of the site are unsafe and other aspects of health and safety practice are unsatisfactory.

## Quality of education

Throughout the school the curriculum is good. Planning and provision in the nursery school cover all six areas of learning required for the Foundation Stage. Both the junior and senior schools follow the National Curriculum. In all three schools the curriculum meets pupils' needs and there is a good balance between academic, creative and practical activities.

In the senior school the curriculum is better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4 because there is a limited choice of subjects for pupils at the end of Year 9.

There is no design and technology available, only one modern foreign language and no vocational options. A wide range of educational visits, including residential trips, enriches learning for all pupils up to the end of Key Stage 3. However, opportunities for older pupils to take part in such activities are lacking; work experience is not available for Key Stage 4 pupils. Nevertheless pupils follow an appropriate curriculum to allow them to transfer successfully to the next stage of education.

At Key Stage 4, personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught in a single lesson each week, but the curriculum lacks structure. Citizenship is also integrated into other subjects and assemblies. Religious education in the senior school is taught within humanities.

After school provision is extensive and much enjoyed by most pupils. They value the effort that teachers make to meet their needs and respond to their requests, enjoying clubs such as skiing, origami and football.

Most parents think the teaching at Tower House is good, and they are correct to do so. Moreover, there are significant strengths in the teaching of English and mathematics, which account for the good progress achieved and the high standards attained in these subjects. Young children in the nursery school are encouraged to speak using increasingly complex sentences, to listen carefully and to respond appropriately. Pupils in the nursery school and younger junior school classes are heard to read regularly, but are not receiving focused, daily phonics teaching. The school has plans to address this issue.

Throughout the school, teachers target questions at individual pupils to keep them alert, challenge their thinking and extend their learning. Pupils respond well, taking an active part in class discussion. Some opportunities are missed, however, to encourage pupils to challenge each other's thinking. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and humour well to keep pupils interested in the task in hand. Technical vocabulary is effectively clarified, and pupils are often given short, timed tasks to maximise the amount of work they produce. In French, however, teaching fails to build adequately on what has been taught before. As a result, pupils make insufficient progress in both the junior and senior schools, particularly in their use of the spoken language.

Assessment has some real strengths. In one junior class, for example, the teacher uses a 'traffic light' system to indicate to individual pupils the progress they are making towards their targets. Pupils in Key Stages 2 and 4 generally have a very clear awareness of the next steps they need to take in their learning, but Key Stage 3 pupils are less certain. The school's assessment systems do not, at present, pinpoint clearly enough the gaps in each pupils' knowledge and understanding so that these may be rapidly addressed by a new class or subject teacher.

Pupils make good progress across the schools. When they join the junior school at Tower House, their abilities are well above those normally expected for their age. This is as a result of the good teaching they receive in the nursery school, combined with good support from home. They make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 and reach very high standards by the end of Year 6. At this point, a good proportion of pupils transfer to selective state grammar schools. Their places are taken up in Year 7 by pupils with generally lower prior attainment. Nevertheless, good progress continues for all and consequently pupils attain standards in excess of the national average by the time they leave the senior school.

A number of parents and pupils feel that resources at the school are inadequate. Some resources are certainly old, but most are serviceable. The school is aware that information and communication technology hardware is barely adequate and has plans to replace this.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. The very good rate of attendance demonstrates pupils' enjoyment of school. Behaviour is good. Pupils describe the school as 'like a big family' and 'more like a little community than a school'. Spiritual and moral issues are considered regularly in assemblies.

The good relationships between teachers and pupils and the good behaviour of pupils create a very co-operative atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Pupils are confident that misbehaviour and bullying will be dealt with effectively and promptly. Prefects have a positive role to play in cultivating this 'family feel'; they are well organised and have some autonomy about the way in which they support staff in taking care of younger pupils. Other pupils value them and are confident that they will do their best to represent them. There is no school council and so pupils do not feel that they make much contribution towards the way the school is run. Recently, they have organised their own fundraising event and are anxious to contribute to the wider community.

Citizenship lessons in Year 11 provide a module in money management and budgeting. Older pupils are becoming aware of the challenges and diversity they will face as they move into the world beyond school and their concern that they are not being adequately prepared for this transition is justified.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupils say they feel safe in school and risk assessments for trips off site are thorough. However, as a result of non-compliance with some regulations,

overall the welfare, health and safety of pupils are inadequate. Some areas of the site are poorly maintained and managed, and are potentially unsafe for those pupils who may stray out of bounds. The school is aware of the latest guidance for safeguarding pupils but not all staff in the junior and senior schools have yet received up-to-date training. The school has booked training to remedy this. A fire risk assessment is in place but there are still some recommendations that the school must act upon. There are omissions in the school's admission register.

There is good provision for physical education both in and out of lessons which enables pupils to lead an active lifestyle. Pupils in the junior school and at Key Stage 3 are taught about the importance of healthy eating and regular physical activity, but Key Stage 4 pupils do not feel that they have enough opportunity to learn about health and diet. The personal and emotional elements of sex and relationships education are lacking in the senior school, but the school is taking steps to remedy this.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school makes the requisite checks on newly appointed staff with the Criminal Records Bureau. However, there are gaps in the other checks required by the regulations. For some staff the school was not able to produce evidence that qualifications had been checked, that professional or character references had been requested, or that previous employment history had been checked prior to the appointment of staff.

### School's premises and accommodation

The school is accommodated in a large Victorian house which has been extended over the years. Decoration is generally satisfactory, although some areas of the school appear dated. Pupils benefit from a reasonable number of specialist rooms. There is a good quality of display, particularly in the nursery and junior schools. There is no hot water available to some of the pupils' washrooms. Some parts of the site are dangerous. Inspectors noted fetid water in a gully by a fire escape. Barbed wire was seen in a corner of the site, which, although out of bounds to pupils, is nevertheless accessible. There is, at present, no medical room with close access to a toilet where pupils may rest if they are unwell. Parents had further concerns which were investigated and have been reported directly to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A satisfactory range of information is provided for parents and prospective parents and more is available on request. Parents receive an annual written report detailing their child's progress in each subject of the National Curriculum. The best reports contain information on the steps pupils need to take to improve their work.

## Procedures for handling complaints

Several parents expressed uncertainty regarding the school's procedure for handling complaints. The complaints procedure is available from the school office and meets all regulations.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- organise training for staff in compliance with DfES guidance: '*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)*' (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- have due regard to the DfES guidance *Health and safety: responsibilities and powers* (DfES 0803/2001)' (paragraph 3(4))
- ensure that there is a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment and by any report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3(5))
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006* (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, carry out appropriate checks to confirm their previous employment history, character references, and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references (paragraph 4(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide hot water not exceeding 43 degrees centigrade to all washbasins (paragraph 5(a))
- ensure that the drainage system is adequate for hygienic purposes and for the disposal of waste water and surface water (paragraph 5(b))
- ensure that no area of the school compromises health and safety (paragraph 5(j))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the *Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999* (paragraph 5(l)).



## School details

Name of school	Tower House School		
DfES number	880/6004		
Unique reference number	113612		
Type of school	Wide age range		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1 September 1982		
Age range of pupils	2-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 111	Girls: 68	Total: 179
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 5	Total: 9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,188-£6,396		
Address of school	Fisher Street Paignton Devon TQ4 5EW		
Telephone number	01803 557077		
Fax number	01803 546038		
Email address	twrhouse@aol.com		
Headteacher	Mr William Miller		
Proprietor	Mr Stephen Fuzzard		
Reporting inspector	Bradley Simmons HMI		
Dates of inspection	6-7 March 2007		