

Tower Bridge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100813
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	301346
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Robin Hammerton HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bruce Cheltenham
Headteacher	Mrs M Windsor, Mrs M Boole
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2005
School address	Fair Street Tower Bridge Road London SE1 2AE
Telephone number	020 7407 2959
Fax number	020 7403 5650

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, working with two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This one-form-entry primary school, with full and part-time nursery provision, serves a vibrant and diverse, but socially deprived, part of central London. Over half of pupils speak another language alongside English. A slightly higher than average proportion of pupils is identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). The number of pupils on roll has fallen since the last inspection in October 2005 when the school was deemed to require special measures. The then headteacher resigned in April 2006 and since May of that year the school has been led by a headteacher and associate headteacher from the local authority's Southwark School Leaders Team (SSLT). They are referred to in this report as 'the headteachers'. The governing body has appointed a permanent headteacher from September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It is now improving quickly and providing a satisfactory education, with some good aspects and others which the school knows still require significant work. Standards are starting to rise throughout the school although they remain too low in Year 6, which the school recognises. All groups of pupils are now making good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) but their overall achievement is satisfactory because most are still making up lost ground. This is a much stronger position than that at the last inspection. Teaching and the care, guidance and support provided to pupils are significantly better than they were.

After the school entered special measures, it made slow progress for several months. It was not until the appointment of the headteachers, and changes in local authority support, that rapid improvement began. Over the past year, the school has enjoyed outstanding leadership and management from the headteachers and, increasingly, from other senior staff, many of whom were appointed in September 2006. From careful self-evaluation, the school knows its strengths and areas for development. One such area for development is the curriculum, which is barely satisfactory and insufficiently stimulating in many subjects. The exception is Nursery and Reception, where the curriculum and overall provision has been developed well and is now good, enabling the youngest children to make good progress in all areas. The school is beginning to improve its use of its fascinating locality to stimulate learning but this can go much further. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in the playground, where supervision is less effective than in class, is sometimes too noisy and boisterous.

The school is well placed to maintain the improvement momentum it has built up. The governing body has grown and improved out of all recognition in the last year and now carries out its work excellently. Through a rigorous process, it has appointed a new headteacher who is clear about what she wants and needs to do from September. She is preparing well through an excellent induction programme, which includes contributing significantly to the selection of a new deputy head. There is already a very capable senior management team which is constantly improving. The school is planning very effectively for the forthcoming period of transition.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Improve the breadth and excitement of the curriculum in Years 1 to 6, using the school's local environment to better advantage.
- * Ensure that pupils' behaviour outside lessons is as positive as that within lessons.
- * Raise further standards and achievement.
- * Maintain the current focus on sustaining improvement during the transition to a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

All pupils now make consistently good progress in core subjects, through improved teaching and very effective individual target setting. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities

(LDD), or for whom English is an additional language, make good progress because very strong support is provided by specialists and class-based staff. This is a much better picture than at the last inspection. However, the many weaknesses in the school identified then mean that pupils are still catching up on what they missed in the past, so overall achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Standards in Year 6 remain very low, though these pupils' progress this year is good and they have been suitably prepared for secondary school.

Many children enter the school with well below average attainment, especially in language development. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception. They listen well, use language imaginatively and are interested, excited learners. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to develop skills to help them learn, building a firm foundation for their future work. By Year 2, standards in English and mathematics are below average. In Years 1 to 6, standards in subjects such as history, geography and religious education are low because of the lack of breadth in what is taught, although there are some examples of good work in these subjects. Pupils achieve well in ICT. Standards broadly meet national expectations and pupils use computers with confidence.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Their developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are important for their future. In lessons, pupils work well together and their attitudes, relationships and behaviour are good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and pupils clearly enjoy their learning. As a result, attendance has improved significantly in the past year and is now in line with the national average. Most pupils arrive at school on time although a minority still does not. The rate of exclusions has fallen considerably. These improvements have been achieved by a more rigorous approach from the school and the increased involvement of parents.

Pupils like taking responsibility. The much improved school council is rightly proud of its contribution and pupils appreciate the efforts of playground buddies. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. However, their behaviour around the school can be noisy and slightly disorderly. This is also true in some less interesting assemblies, which, in turn, reduces spiritual development. Younger pupils express some anxiety about the behaviour of the oldest pupils and inspectors observed isolated instances of unruly playground behaviour. More positively, the pupils were keen supporters of a teacher who ran the 2007 London Marathon, devising 26 money raising activities which earned an amazing £1800 for her chosen children's charity. They have a clear understanding of the need to be physically active and eat healthily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with many good aspects, and rapidly improving. Lessons are clearly planned and proceed at a suitable pace with usually high expectations. Pupils are generally well motivated by the activities. Assessment information is used to provide precisely targeted support for those pupils who need it most, especially those with LDD. More generally, staff usually match work suitably to the needs of individual and groups of pupils, supporting their improved progress. There is some inconsistency in this, however. Teaching assistants help guide pupils in their learning, but sometimes their contribution is too passive. In some lessons, teachers tend to dominate and ask too few searching questions, giving pupils limited

opportunities to show their thinking and understanding. Work is usually well marked with constructive comments, but pupils are not usually expected to follow up these helpful words to improve their learning. A good standard of presentation is insisted upon and achieved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for English, mathematics, science and ICT is well planned, contributing to the recent improvement in pupils' progress. Daily basic skills sessions and activities such as 'Big Write' and 'Number Wizard' are effective and popular. However, across most other subjects, the school often provides only the bare minimum, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6, where there is the greatest proximity to national testing. This means the curriculum is just satisfactory overall, although it is good in Reception and Nursery. From Year 1 onwards, too much choice about curriculum content and how much time is allocated to different subjects is given to individual teachers, rather than having a consistent whole school approach. Although there has been improvement, the local environment remains underused as a stimulus and resource. The lack of curriculum richness impedes the further raising of standards and pupils' opportunities to be excited and enthused.

The school is aware of these issues but, having prioritised other areas, is only at an early stage of addressing them. The senior management team has decided to use a commercial curriculum scheme next year as a short-term improvement. Pupils enjoy some worthwhile enrichment activities and lessons, in different year groups, such as French and philosophy, as well as some visits out and projects in school. For example, pupils have enjoyed painting the walls in the school's stairwells to represent six continents. An exciting new project to decorate the school's external walls is underway. There is also a sound and popular range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. For all pupils, individual target setting is used very successfully, impacting positively on their progress by informing them clearly of their next learning steps and checking regularly how well they have done. Intervention strategies and support provided for pupils with LDD, and for those for whom English as an additional language, are excellent. Parents are becoming increasingly involved with the school and their children's learning by attending workshops, social occasions and helping with practical projects. A breakfast club is well attended. The school has rigorous and well understood systems to safeguard pupils and ensure their safety and well-being. Consequently, pupils feel safe in school. Any bullying allegations are dealt with well. Behaviour management in lessons is consistently good, with the quality of care and supervision observed in a swimming lesson being excellent. However, outside lessons, in corridors, stairwells and the playgrounds, supervision is not as strong and expectations of pupils' behaviour not made as clear.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

In their year in post, the headteachers have worked exceptionally effectively, drawing on their wide experience and expertise, to turn the school round from failure towards recovery and success. They provide outstanding and inventive leadership, being clear from good

self-evaluation about their priorities. Staff recruitment has been done very successfully, while some necessary difficult staffing decisions, including redundancies, were made in a positive and fair way. The headteachers arrange excellent training and support to enable new and existing staff to reach the set goals. The school now provides satisfactory value for money. Rightly, there is a planned reduction in one of the senior managers from September to suit changing circumstances.

Improvement planning is exemplary and adapted well as needs alter. Most importantly, with the governing body, staff, parents and local authority, the headteachers have ensured the school is well placed to continue its long journey of improvement independently. They are working closely with the headteacher designate, who is already contributing well, making sure she has the scope to make her mark, whilst enabling current staff to take still further responsibility and prepare for a different future. Morale, in these exciting times, is high and everyone pulls together. The large senior management team makes a very strong and increasing contribution to school improvement. The management of provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language, and for those with LDD, has improved hugely in the last year and is excellent. Because of the school's priorities, the leadership and management of the curriculum beyond English, mathematics, science and ICT has less attention. However, the acting deputy headteacher evaluates provision and pupils' attainment across the whole curriculum accurately and in detail, so school leaders know where weaknesses exist.

The governing body has made spectacular improvement from inadequacy a year ago to being outstanding now. It is full, hard working, astute and highly representative of all sections of the community, including parents. Governors make wise and considered strategic decisions, challenging and supporting the school very well and in the right balance. Much credit for this is due to the chair, who has carefully and sensitively managed this growth, with support from the LA.

All these factors together mean the school has good capacity to continue to improve smoothly as its leadership changes.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

4 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tower Bridge Primary School, London, SE1 2AE

I have visited your school five times since it went into special measures. During that time, I have come to know the school well and have always enjoyed meeting you. When I came with two other inspectors recently, it was clear to us that the school is ready to leave special measures. This is great news and you should be really pleased because you have all played an important part.

We found that the school is giving you a satisfactory education, with many good aspects. Lessons are better than they used to be and you are learning much more quickly, especially in English, mathematics and computing. We were really impressed with the way you take care over your work. Staff look after you well and make sure each one of you knows what you need to do to get even better at your work. We really liked seeing some things you have done, like the six continents stairway painting. And we hear that some of you are going to be film stars!

Mrs Windsor and Mrs Boole have done a really good job since they took over and they have been helped greatly by other staff and the governing body. Everyone is now getting ready for Ms Compton to start as the new headteacher. We met her and found that she is quite clear about what she wants to do. She has many good ideas and has already learned a great deal about the school. That's very important.

To help her and all of you make the school improve further, we have made some suggestions. The most important one is to make sure that the school gives you more exciting things to do in all the different subjects and makes more use of the fantastic area that you live in to help you to learn. There is so much more you could learn from what is all around you like the river, buildings, transport, shops, theatres, museums and much more. Secondly, we would like you all to think about how you behave in corridors, stairways, the playground and some assemblies. Most of you are good most of the time but sometimes you are too noisy and, very occasionally, some of you are silly and don't think about other people enough. That really needs to stop. Finally, the school needs to keep up its good work so far in helping you all to learn better and reach higher standards.

With good wishes for the future.

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector