

Townhill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116134
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	326335
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Janet Sinclair

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Gear
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Batchelor
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2005
School address	Benhams Road Townhill Park Southampton SO18 2NX
Telephone number	02380 473611
Fax number	02380 476991

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils' needs are varied and include moderate learning and speech and language difficulties and autism. Pupils are mainly White British. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, some of whom are at an early stage of learning English. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Pupil numbers are falling due to the reorganisation of schools within the authority.

The school has the Healthy School Award and Football Association National Primary Charter Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The headteacher cares passionately about his pupils and ensures a very positive learning environment. In this school every child really does matter. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding; they have excellent attitudes to work and their behaviour is exemplary. A stimulating curriculum, coupled with excellent enrichment opportunities, ensures pupils' enjoyment and commitment. They say that lessons are fun and interesting. As a result, they fully enjoy school and all it has to offer. Parents are very supportive of the school and fully appreciate the many extra-curricular activities, residential visits and high level of care their children receive. Parents who said, 'All staff are exceptionally helpful and supportive ensuring my child is extremely happy at school and making good progress' and 'Mutual respect between staff and pupils ensures each child reaches their full potential', sum up many of the positive comments made.

Standards vary but are broadly average. Currently, Year 6 pupils are on course to reach their challenging targets. Pupils across the school achieve well given their generally lower than average starting points. This is true in all subjects except writing, where their progress is satisfactory. The school is working hard to improve writing through, for example, regular writing assessments. This is proving successful as noted in improving rates of progress across the school. Pupils' good progress is due to good teaching across all aspects of the curriculum, ensuring that they have a well-rounded education. Teachers plan and organise lessons well, making good use of a variety of resources to enhance learning. Progress is tracked carefully within year groups and staff are held accountable for the progress of their pupils. This is helping to accelerate progress across the school. Many pupils know their targets, are involved in assessing their work and respond well to teachers' helpful marking. However, this is not consistent practice across the school, so not all pupils are fully involved in improving their work in this way.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is seen in their excellent contribution to the community through, for example, their Christmas concerts and involvement in the Youth Parliament as well as the excellent work they do as responsible school councillors. They know how to stay healthy through sensible eating and plenty of exercise. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school as there is no bullying. They are confident that events such as 'Friendship Week' help with this.

The headteacher provides clear direction for the work of the school and he is well supported by a strong team who are committed to ensuring pupils' academic and pastoral needs are fully met. Self-evaluation is mainly accurate and the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plan is a detailed, helpful document, which identifies the main areas for improvement. However, it does not have clearly measurable success criteria attached to these, so it is difficult for staff and governors to accurately assess the full success of initiatives.

Good leadership and management at all levels have ensured the school has maintained, and in some aspects improved, the good provision of the last inspection, thus indicating a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing.

- Ensure the consistent use of target-setting and self-assessment to enable pupils to develop greater involvement in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment on entry varies from below average to broadly average. Writing remains the weakest area and the school is working hard to bring about improvement through a variety of strategies such as spelling programmes and phonics for lower-attaining pupils. Staff monitor pupils' progress carefully and target those in need of additional support to ensure their progress is accelerated. Pupils with learning difficulties, including those with moderate learning needs and speech and language difficulties, are well supported through, for example, reading and phonic groups and guided writing. Those with English as an additional language are also well supported and benefit from small group support targeted at their specific needs. Pupils' achievement is also good in many aspects of the wider curriculum. For example, many learn a musical instrument and achieve well in music overall due to good provision, including a choir and orchestra. They also achieve very well in physical education due to good teaching and involvement in sporting competitions, where they gain high levels of success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school very much and this is shown in their excellent attitudes and exemplary behaviour. Pupils are very happy to come to school and most attend regularly. The school works hard to improve attendance and this is having a positive impact. A very small number of parents, however, do not see the importance of regular attendance. Consequently attendance is satisfactory overall. Pupils say they feel safe from bullying and know they can get help from any member of staff should they have any worries. School councillors are proud of the contribution they make to the school, particularly in their roles as playground buddies. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They relate extremely well to each other and work happily as members of a group. In assemblies they learn to explore moral issues and enjoy the opportunities for prayer and reflection. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are clear about the importance of eating fruit and vegetables, having healthy lunches and taking exercise. They make a very positive contribution to the school community through, for example, their annual concert, the school choir, their huge number of sporting successes and their fund-raising activities. Parents say that the 'Christmas concerts are spectacular with every child taking part'. Pupils' good progress in developing basic skills together with their excellent personal qualities means that they are well prepared for secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their lessons because teachers plan a good range of activities, including opportunities for group and paired work, that stimulate their interest and engage them in their learning. Teachers use a variety of methods and resources, including interactive technology and drama, which enhance learning. A good example of the use of drama was seen when Year 5 pupils re-enacted the story of Robin Hood, which clearly showed their effective presentation

skills and confidence in performance. An excellent example of the effective support for lower achievers was seen in a Year 4 writing lesson where, through a carefully planned sequence of activities, pupils were fully engaged in making posters to promote recycling. Relationships are excellent. Teachers clearly enjoy being with their pupils and encourage and help them, which gives pupils confidence in their own abilities. Pupils say that, 'Teachers are great fun'. Effective questioning and a good match of work to pupils' needs in literacy, numeracy and science are ensuring they make good progress in these lessons. Occasionally, however, questioning does not fully extend pupils' ideas and the pace is slow, which hinders progress. Marking is mainly good and helps pupils to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides well for the development of pupils' skills in reading and numeracy, and is working hard to improve pupils' rates of progress in writing. Many small group activities such as guided writing and phonics are used to develop pupils' skills as writers. Good computer facilities across the school enable teachers to use information and communication technology flexibly to support learning in other subjects. There is good attention to safety and health through, for example, the Healthy School Award and personal social and health education. These contribute well to pupils' personal development. In music and in physical education specialist teaching provides good support for the development of pupils' skills and French is taught well across the school. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties through the learning support tutors who work with small groups and individuals on, for example, dyslexia and reading fluency. Curriculum enrichment is excellent, with an annual residential visit for environmental studies, Book Week and visits and visitors for pupils' work in history. An outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities is on offer and rates of participation are high. There is an excellent programme of sporting activities involving many pupils, for example, cricket, gymnastics, karate, athletics and dance clubs. The school is also justifiably proud of its Football Association National Primary Charter Award as it is the only school in the country to have won it twice.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The teachers and learning support tutors know the pupils very well, and use their excellent relationships with them to provide very good pastoral support. The school makes good provision for any vulnerable pupils, for example, 'Meet and Greet' for autistic pupils. The arrangements to safeguard pupils and provide child protection are robust. Effective risk assessments are undertaken before excursions take place. Good arrangements are made to ensure smooth transition for pupils from the adjoining infant school, and for transfer to the feeder secondary school. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously. They assess pupils' learning carefully within lessons, and often give them praise. However, although the school is developing its target-setting arrangements, and there are examples of good practice, it is not yet consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management have ensured that the school runs very smoothly, pupils' fully enjoy the many and varied opportunities on offer and they make good progress in their learning. Regular and detailed monitoring of teaching and learning has ensured good practice across the school. Subject and year group leaders are enthusiastic and committed to school improvement. They are having a positive impact on the work of the school through a termly evaluation of pupils' success across all aspects of their work. Governors are enthusiastic supporters of the school. Through their committees and regular involvement in the work of the school, they act well as critical friends. Community cohesion is promoted well through the school's close involvement in local events, their sporting achievements, links with the church and police. Links with the wider community are developing through associations with schools in China and universities in America as well as teacher exchanges from Australia.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

05 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Townhill Junior School, Southampton, SO18 2NX

I am writing to tell you how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so very friendly and helping us with the inspection. We really enjoyed talking to the school council. We were impressed with the extent of your sporting achievements, your excellent school pantomimes, which your parents thoroughly enjoy, as well as your obvious enjoyment of all school activities.

Your school is a good school. It also has some outstanding features.

Here is a list of some of the good aspects.

- You have a good headteacher, senior leaders, year group leaders, teachers and school staff who are dedicated to ensuring your school is a happy, safe place where you can work hard and do your best.
- You make good progress in reading, mathematics and science because your teachers make lessons interesting and fun and monitor your progress very carefully.
- You thoroughly enjoy school, especially the teaching, sports clubs, visits, and special events such as Book Week.
- You are very well cared for and in turn are caring, kind and supportive of each other.

Most schools have something they could do better, so this is what I have asked your school to do to help you learn even more.

- Help you to do better in writing by checking how well you are doing and clearly identifying the next steps in your learning.
- All teachers need to make sure that you know your targets and know what you have to do to improve your work.

With very best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Janet Sinclair

Lead Inspector