

Townsend Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100814
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	335192
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Robin Hammerton HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection 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 of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Walsh
Headteacher	Mrs M Windsor
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2008
School address	Townsend Street London SE17 1HJ
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This unannounced inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and two assemblies and observed around the school. They held meetings with staff, governors, pupils, parents and the local authority. They looked at key documents, including school plans and policies, pupils' work, assessments of pupils, school self-evaluation and minutes of meetings.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the current rates of progress being made by pupils, their learning and progress over time during their current key stages, and their resulting attainment
- the effectiveness of the school's senior and middle leaders
- the key strengths and weaknesses of teaching and pupils' learning
- the effectiveness and relevance of the whole-school curriculum.

Information about the school

Townsend Primary School serves a richly diverse inner-city area. Pupils represent many different heritages. More pupils than average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little higher than is typical.

At its last full inspection, the school was judged to require special measures. Soon after that inspection, the headteacher went on leave. An acting headteacher provided by the local authority has been in post for most of the time since then. She is leaving at the end of this term as part of a planned course of action. After a thorough process, following the substantive headteacher's resignation, the deputy headteacher has been appointed as permanent headteacher from January 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school has improved greatly in the last year and its provision is consistently satisfactory and sometimes better. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment in Years 4, 5 and 6 remains low. Therefore, in accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement, because it is still performing significantly less well in all the circumstances than it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' attainment in Years 4, 5 and 6 in English and mathematics and, most particularly, writing.

The main story of the school since it went into special measures is one of rapid improvement. Led effectively by the acting headteacher, with the strong backing of the deputy headteacher and revitalised staff and governors, Townsend Primary School is now a self-improving school, reinventing itself as a great place to learn and work. School self-evaluation is very accurate and makes staff accountable in a positive, supportive way. Improvement planning is ambitious and the teamwork it inspires is making the difference. Teaching and learning are considerably better than they were and are meeting the needs of pupils suitably. Key improvements to the curriculum have done much to improve pupils' motivation and progress, with the school knowing there is more yet to do. The atmosphere in the school, amongst adults and children is positive and purposeful. Parents have noticed this with pleasure. One summed it up, saying, 'the difference between now and a year ago is like the difference between oil and water'.

The school knows it has much more to do to achieve its ambition of being 'great', but it is on the way. The biggest immediate problem it faces is that, because of the historic problems that led to the school requiring special measures, many older pupils are a long way behind in key aspects of their learning. Standards are too low in Years 4, 5 and 6 in English and mathematics, with very low attainment in writing. The pupils in these year groups are now receiving some of the best and most improved teaching in the school, but there is a large deficit to make up. This was perfectly exemplified in a Year 5 writing lesson observed. The teaching and support in this lesson were very well focused and the classroom learning environment was bright and stimulating. All pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, engaged well and worked hard at their well-constructed tasks. However, the quality of the writing most were producing was at a level typical of much younger pupils. Many were not joining up their letters or forming them consistently, sentence construction and grammar were often weak and the vocabulary pupils used in their writing was limited ' though this improved during the

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lesson. In order to redress this long-term underachievement, the quality and focus of the teaching has to be better still, day-by-day. The school has good information about the progress and attainment of each pupil. However, this is not used well enough in lessons to target work at the precise level required to ensure that each child is able to make the steps needed in their learning quickly enough to overcome the underachievement. In some lessons throughout the school, the pace of learning is not as fast as it could be. Pupils can be insufficiently active, listening to the teacher for extended periods.

The Nursery and Reception classes are in a state of transition, with some staff change and redecoration. The quality of provision for these younger pupils, which was good at the last inspection, has declined. It is the one part of the school not to have improved. Although provision and learning are satisfactory, activities which children choose for themselves under guidance are not always purposeful enough. Some of the discussions that adults have with the children are too focused on routine matters, and thus do not encourage higher level learning. The outdoor learning areas are rather tired and unsuitable for promoting high quality learning, linked with that in the classrooms. They are not used as much as they should be in wet weather.

The governing body is well organised in its work. It arranged a rigorous and successful search for the new headteacher and, with the local authority, has made proper transition and induction arrangements for her. This means the school is well placed to continue its improvement. There is a good plan in place for the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. The senior leadership of the school is well organised and effective. Core subjects, including English and mathematics, are well led. The work of middle leaders in other areas and subjects is developing but needs further improvement to make a bigger difference.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of all pupils, especially those currently in Years 4, 5 and 6, so that they attain at least average standards, under Ofsted criteria, by the summer of 2011 at the latest, through:
 - extending the recent improvements to the curriculum
 - improving further the quality of teaching and learning, making sure that in all lessons, the pace of learning is sufficiently rapid, information on how well each pupil is doing is used to match work closely to their needs, raising expectations further and by ensuring pupils are active learners, not having to sit and listen to teachers for too long.
- Continue to improve the leadership of the school by:
 - sustaining the school's rate of improvement through the forthcoming change of headteacher
 - developing the roles and impact of middle leaders, including subject leaders.
- Improve the provision in the Nursery and Reception classes by:

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- ensuring that assessments made on pupils feed clearly into the planning of their learning
- improving the quality of the adults' interactions with children, so that these promote higher-order thinking and learning
- improving the outdoor learning environments, so that there is good free-flow between classroom and outdoors, and the outdoor areas are well equipped and used in inclement weather.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

The attainment of pupils who left school at the end of Year 6 in 2009 was low in English, mathematics and science. These pupils were well taught in Year 6, and had a positive year, but were not able to make up for the previous significant underachievement. Because of poor literacy and numeracy skills, they were not prepared well enough for the next stage of education. A similar pattern continues in the current Years 4, 5 and 6 classes. Pupils in these year groups are now making much better progress than they did before. They enjoy their lessons and their needs are being increasingly well met through much better teaching. However, because of low progress in some earlier years, they are underachieving. In writing, the worst area, a large majority of pupils are not meeting age-related expectations. No particular groups of pupils are performing notably better or worse than the others, although pupils who speak English as an additional language are making clearly improved progress this year.

For pupils in the current Year 3 and below, however, there is a brighter picture. In 2009, at Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in mathematics and reading was slightly above the national average and very close to average in writing. These pupils made sound and often good progress from their starting points. A similar rate of learning continues for these year groups this school year.

Pupils of all ages are often self-disciplined. Most come to school and arrive in lessons on time. Attendance levels are average. Pupils behave well, both in and out of class, working and playing very supportively and harmoniously. In the playground, for example, they encourage others to join in their active games, so no one feels left out. They understand well how to keep themselves healthy, knowing the importance of exercise and what constitutes a balanced diet. They feel safe in school and trust that adults will always be on hand to sort out any problems.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. This fuels their own positive attitudes and sense of well-being. The work of the peer mediators, for example, is valued by pupils and parents alike. Pupils helped write the school rules and have contributed ideas for curriculum improvements. The school council is eager in making suggestions, for example in trying to set up a school bank and corresponding with a local high street bank to make this happen. Younger pupils are happy to be 'VIPs', acting as helpers for their class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are curious about different faiths and cultures and willing to listen to the views and beliefs of others. One pupil commented that, 'we learn respect

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for one another's religions'. Assemblies are much enjoyed with good levels of pupil participation, including some enjoyable singing, a recent innovation which draws the community together. A confidently staged assembly, led by a Year 2 class, was much enjoyed by everyone, especially the rightly proud parents!

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum has been worked on closely and improved. In consultation with pupils, a new curriculum map has been agreed which ensures pupils now enjoy a suitably broad experience, with a range of skills being progressively developed. Rightly, having seen particular improvement in mathematics work, the school is focusing now on improving the writing curriculum. Other subjects, such as physical education and music, have also been developed well. Pupils enjoy exploring and playing instruments and learning how to recognise and use loud and soft, and high and low in enjoyable music making. Subjects are related better to each other, so that pupils can see links. The staff, however, know that more can be done to make the curriculum still more innovative and challenging. To help this, learning outside the classroom, such as recent visits to the

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Dulwich Picture Gallery, is taking a higher profile and is rightly integral to the whole curriculum. The school has a sound range of extra-curricular activities with a satisfactory attendance rate. There is an annual residential visit, which the school intends to develop, especially as many pupils do not go on it.

There has been considerable improvement in teaching since the last inspection, particularly at the top end of the school. There is now more consistency between classes. Whole-class learning objectives and success criteria are well used across the school. These focus activity so that pupils make more rapid gains in their understanding and develop their confidence as learners. Pupils say that, 'Teachers check things in case we don't understand and go over things'. Supportive marking of their work helps this too. The school's now very accurate assessment data has raised expectations amongst staff and pupils. However, more needs to be done to enable teachers to use this information to plan work which meets more closely the needs and targets of the different pupils and further increase their progress.

Teachers use resources appropriately to support learning, with pupils saying that lessons have become much more interesting and fun because, 'there are different ways of learning'. There are inconsistencies, nevertheless. In some lessons and classes, the pace and organisation of lessons are not always quite good enough to enable pupils to maximise their learning. Even with the effective use of talk partners and individual whiteboards, which are common strategies for engaging pupils, teachers sometimes keep pupils listening on the carpet for too long. This reduces pupils' opportunities to be active learners and think more for themselves.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Good pastoral care helps pupils to feel safe and secure in school and promotes their personal development well. There has been significant improvement in the systems for identifying and supporting pupils' individual needs, so that the current progress and development of those who may be vulnerable is improving. Appropriate use is made of support services and more efforts are made to involve parents in deciding the next steps for their children. Interventions to support the learning of individuals and groups are carefully targeted and are supporting better progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has done a really good job in her year in office. She has led the

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transformation of the school from a point of low morale and many problems to a position of confidence, rapid improvement and enjoyment. Through mentoring, encouragement and setting high standards, she has unlocked the considerable potential amongst the staff team. They have been galvanised into a strong unit, determined to work together to make the school great. There is no complacency; the school is well placed to continue its journey of improvement.

The deputy headteacher contributes much to this improvement, as well as learning herself. She is ready and well prepared for her future role as headteacher, though knows that it will not be easy. The roles and responsibilities of other senior leaders have developed very well and all can point to significant improvements that they have led, or worked alongside other staff to achieve. Systems for school improvement planning, and performance management of staff, all work very well to raise expectations and make positive change happen promptly. This is helped considerably by the fact that the school knows itself well. Its strengths and weaknesses are clearly and accurately identified and much is known about the progress and well-being of every pupil. This information is well collated, so that the performance of different groups of pupils is understood. While seeing clear improvement, staff are under no illusions about the long-term underachievement amongst older pupils.

Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are beginning to exert influence. They are beginning to champion their subjects and to be accountable for standards. The school understands how important their role is to the future. Staff feel their training needs are well met and really like the determined team spirit in the school and the focused professional dialogue. The school is developing the engagement of parents but recognises there is work to do to make this more systematic in some areas and to use parents' expertise more fully. A parents' council is being established.

Governors know the school well and have benefited too from the support and guidance of the acting headteacher in improving their work. The governing body is well led by its chair and committee chairs. It is efficiently organised, proactive and highly committed. Governors are supportive of the school and staff but do not shy away from actively addressing weaknesses and expecting improvement.

Pupils are safeguarded well. All proper checks are carefully carried out and there is a high commitment to keeping the premises secure and safe, but without restricting access to those who need it. The atmosphere in school is positive and welcoming, with a sound sense of community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</p>	<p>2</p>

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

In 2009, many children leaving the Reception class attained well across the different elements of learning. Children currently in the Nursery and Reception classes are progressing soundly too. They are generally happy and content. They are developing some independent skills and make some choices about what equipment to use. However, such choices are restricted somewhat by limitations in the physical environment. The outdoor area for Reception, though readily accessible, is small and poorly resourced, without much shade or cover. The Nursery outdoor area is better and larger but is not as stimulating or well resourced as it could be.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum covers all areas of learning suitably. Planning systems are consistent across both classes and lead to some interesting activities. In the Reception class, for example, pupils were enthused by looking at a crab and an octopus. At other times, however, tasks are less well structured, planned and resourced, especially when not directly led by adults, so pupils are not as well engaged. In lesson observations, some children disturbed each other and adults unnecessarily because routines and expectations were not fully established. Staff have good relationships with the children, care for them well and look after their safety. Sometimes, however, their discussions with pupils are rather routine and opportunities are missed to challenge or extend the pupils' thinking. Adults observe and assess pupils' activity and learning reasonably regularly, so they know how well they are progressing. However, these assessments are not always used well enough in planning the specific next steps of learning for individuals and groups.

The Early Years Foundation Stage has not improved as other parts of the school have during special measures. It was identified as a strength in the last inspection but that strong position has not been fully sustained. However, the newly appointed phase leader is aware of many of the areas requiring further improvement or regeneration. She has begun to communicate the need for change and make some improvements. The governing body sensibly plans to appoint a governor with a specific early years remit.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Ofsted parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for unannounced monitoring inspections, such as this. However, inspectors took full account of the views of parents and carers as expressed in a very recent survey undertaken by the school. Inspectors also met with representative parents during the inspection.

Almost all parents who returned the school's questionnaire are happy with their children's experience in the school and recognise clearly its improvement. They made comments to the effect that the school is better and the management is great, while pointing out that they might have answered differently a year ago. Parents who spoke to inspectors said that they feel much more welcome in the school now and find it easier to approach staff. They feel much better informed about what is happening in the school generally and to their children specifically. Any problems, they said, are now dealt with straightaway.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Townsend Primary School, London, SE17 1HJ

I have visited your school three times since it went into special measures a little over a year ago. I have really enjoyed this as have other inspectors who came with me. One reason we all like the school so much is all of your friendly smiles when you say, 'Welcome to Townsend School!'

I am writing with good news. Your school does not need special measures any more. This is because it has improved so much and so quickly! You and your parents know this and told us about it, and we agree. Not only that, but many of you contribute a great deal. You behave well and work and play together really nicely. We enjoyed watching you in the playground, seeing how you look out for each other and organise games. In lessons, you help each other to learn. Many of you have contributed your ideas to help the school improve. Well done! The staff have worked very hard to make the school better. Mrs Windsor has been an outstanding leader. You will miss her but you all know your new headteacher, who is ready to take over.

The school still has one key problem. Many of the older pupils amongst you need to learn more about English and mathematics and, particularly, to improve your writing. You are working very hard and being taught well now but have ground to make up. It is really important to try to catch this up for when you go to secondary school. Therefore, we have given the school a notice to improve this. Inspectors will come back to the school in the future to see how everyone is getting on.

To help the school with this, we have suggested that, although teachers are teaching well, they could give you less time listening on the carpet and more time actively learning and thinking; and they could make sure all the work they set is just right for each of you. The school needs to make sure it does not slow down making progress when the headteacher changes. All schools have to plan for this when they have a new headteacher. Also, we are asking the school to make some better provision for the youngest children in Nursery and Reception.

It has been good to get to know you and your school. Best wishes for the future!

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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