

Talbot Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113700
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	338220
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayes Rana (Acting)
Headteacher	James Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 31 lessons or parts of lessons and 16 teachers. They held meetings with the affiliated headteachers, deputy and assistant headteachers, subject coordinators and other staff, pupils, members of the governing body and with the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation including development planning, pupil assessment and tracking records, documentation related to safeguarding, particularly that of vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also analysed attendance data and records of staff monitoring. They also scrutinised 52 parents' questionnaires and those from staff and pupils.

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

- whether the temporary leadership and management team is helping to improve standards, achievement and enjoyment and if so, whether improvement is sustainable
- whether standards are high enough, particularly at Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, and whether different groups of pupils, especially boys, girls and more able pupils, are progressing well enough in different subjects
- does the quality of provision, especially teaching, provide work well matched to pupils' differing needs and whether marking and assessment gives pupils good guidance.

Information about the school

Although it is officially in Poole, the school lies on the boundary with Bournemouth, drawing pupils from both authorities. The majority of pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 with a minority remaining in the current Year 7. Here there is only one class, with two in all other years. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school is currently being led by two affiliated headteachers. Many governors, including the acting Chair of the Governing Body, are new to their posts. The Healthy School award is one of a number which the school holds.

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

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school has declined significantly since its last inspection, when it was satisfactory with many good features. Some of its strengths remain. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are still positive and most are attentive and compliant in lessons, even when teaching is ineffective. Support for pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities often enables them to achieve satisfactorily, but the majority of pupils have inadequate achievement. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is good, and most are enthusiastic about sports and swimming in their school pool. Many contribute well to the local community through, for example, playing in the school band at functions. The newly strengthened governing body shows the potential to be a strong partner in helping the school improve. The newly appointed deputy head has quickly introduced some useful systems and the very recently affiliated headteachers and new governors have already begun to strengthen and focus self-evaluation through more rigorous monitoring and a sharper evaluation of provision. However, the impact of most changes is not yet secure.

Most pupils' progress is not good enough given their starting points, and although attainment is broadly average, it does not match pupils' earlier potential. Children do not get a good start to their education because outcomes and provision in the Reception year are inadequate. The school has abundant data, but this is of little use because it is often inaccurate. However, performance data do reveal that too many pupils have 'stood still' and that attainment has declined in key subjects. Teaching is inadequate overall despite some that is good. Staff are only now beginning to use assessment information to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils and to guide their next steps. However practice is patchy and this aspect of teaching is generally weak.

The management, monitoring and evaluation of teaching have been inadequate. Teachers appreciate the new approach which gives them opportunities to identify how to improve. However middle managers have not developed the capacity to lead in their areas of responsibility because they have lacked direction. Other inadequacies in leadership and management relate to the governing body's breach of its statutory duties regarding safeguarding procedures and its lack of effective challenge to the school about pupils' achievement. The two affiliated headteachers, deputy head and governors have accurately identified areas for improvement, and well-focused action plans are now

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in place. However, the absence of the headteacher and the very short time others have been in post mean that actions taken so far have not had time to show sufficient impact. The school therefore has not demonstrated the capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of all teaching and raise achievement through rigorous, systematic approaches to:
 - establish reliable, accurate assessments in all year groups
 - use information from assessment to plan lessons and adapt work to match the needs of all groups of learners
 - ensure that pupils receive useful advice and guidance about how to improve their work.
- Improve all aspects of leadership and management by implementing the current plans put in place by the affiliated headteachers, particularly as they relate to:
 - developing management capacity through the school
 - the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the performance of staff to include informative feedback.
- Improve provision, management and outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing management capacity in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring that a strong, well-resourced Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is provided
 - improving the quality of teaching and assessment
 - making sure pupils are safe at all times.
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duties relating to safeguarding.

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

Pupils do not progress as well as they could across the school. Despite this, some lessons were seen where good teaching ensured that pupils did progress well. Good examples of support by teaching assistants were also seen in several lessons. This leads to satisfactory achievement for groups of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In too many lessons, however, learning is lacklustre and, as a consequence, progress is slow. A common shortcoming which limits achievement is that work is not planned well enough to match pupils' needs.

In many of the lessons observed, more-able pupils were insufficiently challenged and drifted off task. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for independent learning. This restricts overall achievement, but affects more-able pupils in

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particular. No major differences between girls' and boys' progress were seen. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Since the last inspection, an understanding of cultural diversity has developed well. Pupils feel safe and behaviour is satisfactory overall, although several pupils have been affected by bullying, which has not always been resolved satisfactorily. Attendance is average, contributing satisfactorily to pupils' skills for future working life. They are polite and courteous and the school is a calm, mutually respectful community.

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	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is inconsistent, partly because staff have lacked good advice about how to improve. A lack of challenge in lessons is exacerbated by unsatisfactory marking which offers pupils little guidance about how to improve. Often, pupils do not understand their targets. Teachers use a limited range of questioning styles. There are very few opportunities for pupils to question each other or engage in other forms of discussion, restricting their thinking. Little use is made of information and

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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communication technology (ICT) and pupils do not readily use computers as a source of information in lessons or for other purposes. Expectations of pupils' work-rate are sometimes not high enough.

Apart from in Reception, the planned curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils cover the required subjects and in Year 7, some specialist teaching, including in modern foreign languages, provides good subject knowledge. Some aspects of pastoral care are good and pupils commend the useful work of the pastoral care worker and the school nurse, whose influence on vulnerable pupils is effective. The overall quality of care, guidance and support is unsatisfactory, however, because of weaknesses in safeguarding. Plans are already in place to resolve these. Some examples were seen of good attention to health and safety issues. For example in an art/batik lesson, pupils were made explicitly aware of potential hazards such as that of handling hot wax. Teachers, other staff and some managers have dealt well with incidents such as racist abuse, or potential child protection issues, but these have not always been followed up properly by senior managers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are inadequate. The decline since the last inspection results from a lack of drive towards improvement by leaders and the governing body. Many staff voiced strong support for the two affiliated heads, whom they feel are now leading the school very effectively. They value the improvements made in such a very short time. Many of these improvements began when the deputy headteacher assumed the acting headship last term and with the appointment of new governors. The staff report that morale has improved immensely because of 'a sense of direction, with firm goals and aspirations', creating a 'much happier place' where staff and governors can make improvements together.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily in a variety of ways, having particularly improved pupils' understanding of the cultural richness of British society. Equality of opportunity is inadequate, particularly as it restricts more-able pupils in achieving their full potential, and is a priority for the school leaders. Safeguarding procedures are inadequate. Self-evaluation in the past has been inaccurate, with insufficient identification of the school's weaknesses, so previous plans for improvement were inappropriate. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
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	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
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

Although teachers' assessments on entry to Reception place children's skills and understanding in line with those usually found nationally, inspection evidence shows them to be below that level, especially in key areas such as communication and language. Entry levels are also low in personal, social and emotional development. Children's progress is inadequate. This is because of significant weaknesses in provision, particularly in teaching. Inadequacies in the curriculum lead to an unsatisfactory balance of adult-led/child-initiated and indoor/outdoor activities, which limits children's development. Inadequate care, guidance and support procedures mean that no Early Years Foundation Stage risk assessments were available and, at the time of the inspection, several breaches of safeguarding and safety requirements were identified.

One classroom is interesting and lively, but the learning environment in the other is dull and lacking in stimulation to support key areas of learning. Children in this class get too little opportunity for child-initiated activity. Teaching is over-directed and does not meet children's needs. Provision in the outside environment has improved because it now has partial cover, but this space is not used satisfactorily. No use of outdoor space was seen on inspection, despite reasonable weather on one day. It lacks reference to the areas of learning, with no number or letter areas, and few markings on floors or walls to promote learning.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are inadequate. The new coordinator has not yet had time to monitor planning or lessons, despite the identification of concerns about provision in one of the classes, and is not yet involved in

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the planning process. All aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage have declined and are inadequate.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Of the small number of parents and carers who returned the survey, most were satisfied with the school's provision and the outcomes for their children. Several wanted inspectors to know about positive experiences like the school's provision in meeting additional needs such as physical impairment. Others commend the caring attitude of teaching and support staff this year. Inspectors found evidence to support these comments and agree with them.

Several parents and carers commented, some forcefully, about their dissatisfaction with the ways in which bullying and bad behaviour have been dealt with. This was discussed with the senior staff, who have already identified the small number of pupils who have exhibited bullying behaviour, and they plan to deal with this promptly. Other areas of concern relate to leadership and management, which several parents and carers feel have been weak, leading to the school's deterioration. Several also noted how much the school has improved very recently, under the management of the two affiliated headteachers. Inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Talbot Combined School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 of completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 436 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	52	23	44	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	42	27	52	3	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	27	30	58	6	11	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	33	32	62	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	16	31	34	65	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	33	29	56	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	40	24	46	5	10	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	12	23	23	44	7	13	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	31	30	58	3	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	23	26	50	8	15	5	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	33	23	44	7	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	21	29	56	7	13	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	39	26	50	5	10	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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.



15 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Talbot Combined School, Poole BH12 5ED

Thank you for welcoming us into your school when we came for the inspection. We were very pleased to look at your work and to talk with many of you in lessons and in meetings. I am writing to tell you the main things we found out. There are some good things about the school, including your own friendliness and attitudes to learning. We feel that you really understand how to be fit and healthy, for instance through swimming lessons in your school pool. We enjoyed hearing about your activities outside the school also; for instance, the band playing for other people in your community. We looked into the worries some of you have about bullying and found that you were right to be concerned. The new headteachers agree with you too and are taking steps to sort this out immediately.

We looked at whether the new headteachers are doing the right things to improve the school, and we found that they are and that the other adults in school are working hard to help them to do it. However, there has not been enough time yet for the changes to make a significant difference. We looked at whether your standards are as high as they should be and if you all make the progress you could across the school. We found that many of you could be doing better than you are. We also looked at whether lessons are planned to give slower and faster workers different sorts of work. We found that this needs to be better. In most classes, your work is not marked well enough and does not give you enough advice about how to progress. We have asked the school to improve all of these things.

We have also asked the headteachers to make sure that the Reception year gives the younger children a better start. Finally, we have asked the school to make sure that they follow the latest guidance on how to keep you safe.

The school is not giving you a good enough education. We are therefore placing the school into what we call 'special measures', which means that it will get help to improve. You can all help by trying your best and working as hard as you can in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms

Lead inspector

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