

# Tow Law Millennium Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114055
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	338286
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gordon Potter

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	93
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	None Appointed
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lisa Jackson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Wear Street Attlee Estate Tow Law DL13 4LF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 730283
<b>Fax number</b>	0
<b>Email address</b>	towlaw@durhamlearning.net

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons or part lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and spoke informally to parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies and documentation, pupils' work, assessment data, monitoring records, strategic planning and minutes of governors' meetings. They also scrutinised 47 questionnaires returned by parents as well as questionnaires from staff and pupils.

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

- the success of the school in raising pupils' achievement in English and mathematics and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how well leadership and management are bringing about sustained improvement
- the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement, especially in Key Stage 2
- how well information about pupils' progress is used to ensure the work that pupils do matches their abilities.

## Information about the school

Tow Law Millennium Primary School is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above average. Almost all pupils are from White British heritage backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is above the national average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards. Children enter the Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the autumn term. Childcare is provided by an outreach centre on the school site that is managed by a private provider and the school works closely with this provision.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Tow Law Millennium Primary School is a satisfactory school with many good features, especially the care it offers its pupils and in the way in which it helps them to develop confidence and self-esteem. A key strength of the school is the keenness and determination with which pupils tackle their work. The school has a good reputation locally because the headteacher and staff have created a welcoming and calm learning environment and developed strong links with parents and carers, other local schools and outside agencies to support pupils. The school is justly proud of its inclusive nature and its place at the heart of the community.

Achievement is satisfactory overall, although attainment is below average at the end of Year 6. This is because pupils make better progress in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. There are clear signs that this is starting to change. Attainment has risen significantly in Key Stage 1 where teaching is stronger, and there is a rising trend in Key Stage 2. The school has detailed information about pupils' progress and uses this so that pupils know at what level they are working and what they need to do to improve. Teachers are less successful in using this information to plan work that is sufficiently challenging and this contributes to pupils' slower progress in Key Stage 2. The school has implemented appropriate strategies to improve writing although these have not yet fully impacted on standards across the curriculum. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. Senior leaders have tackled some of the most important weaknesses and although much remains to be done, improvements have been made.

The headteacher is an effective leader who has created a strong staff team where there is a shared commitment to pupils' wider personal development and to raising standards. Staff appreciate how she involves them in the decision making process. The school knows itself well and accurate self-evaluation has led to appropriate areas for improvement. Senior and middle leaders are willing and enthusiastic as they become increasingly involved in the self-evaluation process. However, they do not all have the experience and skill to drive the improvement process with sufficient confidence, especially in evaluating the success of initiatives and understanding how to use data to monitor performance. Despite this, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory because there is clear evidence that initiatives are making a difference to improving outcomes for the pupils. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

A very large majority of parents and carers supports the work of the school. Parents of younger pupils say that their children have flourished because they love attending school and do well. They are stretched in the subjects in which they excel and encouraged in the subjects they find less appealing. They thoroughly enjoy the extra activities. However, some parents of older pupils say that pupils have fallen behind and

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that more-able pupils do not make the progress they should. Pupils are very positive about their school and most appreciate how the school helps them to stay safe, learn and know how to improve their work. A significant minority of pupils says that they do not enjoy school and this is evident in those lessons where they are not actively involved in their learning.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise attainment in Key Stage 2 by:
  - developing teaching strategies that will improve pupils' learning and progress
  - ensuring that teachers make better use of assessment information when planning work for individuals or groups of pupils
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to participate in practical and investigative work and for pupils to learn independently or with others
  - developing the curriculum so that pupils have more opportunities to develop their skills especially in writing, in a range of subjects.
- Develop the expertise of senior and middle leaders by ensuring that :
  - they receive further support and development in analysis of performance information
  - they are more closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives in order to drive improvement.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning is satisfactory. Attainment has risen for pupils in Key Stage 1 in recent years, so that from starting points which have been below average they reach average standards at the end of Year 2. This is because teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is low. The school's results in the national tests for 11 year-olds are typically well below average. This is because teaching in Key Stage 2, while it is satisfactory and has many good features, is not strong enough to ensure that pupils make better than satisfactory progress from their starting points. There is large proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in each of the small cohorts and they make satisfactory progress.

Pupils show great keenness to do well in their work. Their personal development is good. They are very aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in the high levels of involvement in sporting activities and the high uptake of healthy school meals. Pupils get on very well with each other and with the adults in the school, and they say they feel very safe. They are confident that they

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know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. In lessons, pupils behave well, have good attitudes and relationships, and work conscientiously. When they are learning through lively activities, such as creating a musical journey or measuring their heartbeats after vigorous exercise, their enjoyment is high. However, when lessons are less engaging their enjoyment is reduced.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, taking on a range of roles, such as looking after younger children in the dining hall, and they put forward their ideas through the school council. There are good links with older residents in the local area and pupils raise money for a range of local and international charities. Pupils have a love of the rural area where they live and thrive in their garden and in the wildlife sanctuary they are developing with a local farmer. Pupils' understanding is good of communities in other parts of the world, such as Gambia and Greece. They have confidence in using information and communication technology and have developed enterprise skills through developing the school garden, the school newspaper and the school fruit shop. They have more limited skills in working collaboratively. Their basic skills in English and mathematics equip them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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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## How effective is the provision?

While teaching is satisfactory overall it has many good features, especially in Key Stage 1, and there are signs of improvement in Key Stage 2. In good lessons, teachers use secure subject knowledge to plan a range of interesting activities which are well matched to pupils' individual interests and abilities. Teachers use discussion, games and interactive whiteboard technology to engage pupils and to stimulate their thinking. They make it clear what pupils are to learn in the lesson and use questions well to find out what pupils already know and to check that they have moved on in their learning. In all lessons, teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In less effective, though satisfactory lessons, pupils are not so engaged and this reduces their enjoyment. Teachers talk too for too long, the pace is slow and opportunities are missed for pupils to learn independently or together. Pupils also lose interest when they all do the same work because teachers do not use information about pupils' progress to match work to their individual needs. Assessment of academic progress is rigorous and helps pupils develop a good understanding of their own strengths and areas to develop. The setting of clear targets for improvement is beginning to raise achievement.

The curriculum offers pupils a range of interesting activities. They enjoy welcoming artists and writers to school and their own visits to other places such as the Segedunum Roman fort. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to refine their writing skills in different subjects. They participate enthusiastically in a range of extra-curricular activities in sport and the arts. There is a strong focus on learning about life in other countries. Pupils benefit from the extremely high quality of care and guidance by all staff. Developing all pupils' self-esteem, their enthusiasm for learning and sense of responsibility is central to the school's work and is reflected well in the day-to-day life of the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for looked-after children, is well managed and there are effective programmes for intervention and support so that pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress. A major element in the good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is the work carried out by the parent support advisor to support family learning. Good links with the on-site day care provider and the local secondary school ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a clear vision for the development of the school. Staff are committed to driving continuous school improvement. Senior and middle leaders have effectively brought about improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in standards in Key Stage 1. However, some do not, as yet, have the confidence, skills and experience to play a full part in the improvement process, especially in evaluating the success of initiatives and understanding how to use data to monitor performance. The multi-agency approaches used to support individual pupils when required show the school's effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities for all pupils. It is equally good in ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. The school is well served by the high quality support it receives from the local authority and its external adviser. Governors have been instrumental in supporting the school, challenging it to raise standards and developing strong links with outside agencies. Resources have been well used especially in the development of the area for outdoor learning and play for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements well and effectively secure pupils' safety. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is strong and there are good links with the local community and a good awareness of life in other countries. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to build an understanding of Britain as a diverse, multicultural society. The school has good relationships with parents and carers, who are provided with frequent information about their children and have opportunities to learn in school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with a range of skills, knowledge and understanding that is well below that expected for children of this age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and aspects of personal development. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress and, by the end of their year in Reception, the majority of the children are working at the expected level for their age in most areas of their learning. The exception is in the area of communication, language and literacy which remains below that expected for children as they move into Year 1. Good links with parents and carers, and with the on-site private day care provider, ensure that children settle well into this warm welcoming environment. These close links are also helping to raise the children's skills before they start school.

There is a wide range of stimulating resources to promote children's learning and creative play. Children are keen to learn; they play happily together and their behaviour is good. Children are encouraged to learn by exploration. They delight as they play in the 'Vet's Surgery' looking after sick animals and making them better. The well resourced outdoor area makes a significant contribution to children's learning. They are very proud of their garden and talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about the insects to be found there.

The team leader ensures that all adults work productively together. She has a good understanding of the needs of children of this age and rigorously monitors the provision, giving her a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the development of individual children and how to meet their needs.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Forty seven parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and an analysis of their responses shows that support for the school is very strong. All respondents believe that the school keeps children safe and encourages them to be healthy. Parents and carers are also strongly supportive of the leadership and management of the school, the quality of teaching and the way the school meets children's needs. However, a very small minority indicated that they felt that their children were not making enough

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progress and that they had concerns about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2. Inspectors agree that this is an area for improvement.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tow Law Millennium Primary 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 inspector received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 93 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	56	36	39	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	69	28	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	61	26	28	8	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	58	28	30	8	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	50	54	34	37	8	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	52	38	41	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	56	40	43	0	0	0	0
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)	48	52	44	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	52	40	43	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	59	34	37	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	49	32	36	4	4	6	7
The school is led and managed effectively	52	57	30	33	4	4	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	60	32	34	6	6	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



On behalf of the team, thank you so much for making us welcome when we inspected your school. Tow Law Millennium Primary School is a satisfactory school and some things are good. The staff care for you very well. Teachers are very dedicated to helping you learn well, although sometimes they miss opportunities to allow you to learn through more lively activities or by working with your friends.

The team was impressed by the pride you take in your work. You behave well, work very hard in your lessons, and you look after one another admirably. You are polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and sports activities. Your parents and carers like the school very much, especially the way in which your teachers care for you.

The way your school is led and managed is satisfactory. Leaders and staff know what needs to be done to make the school better and their work is making the school gradually become more effective for you. I have asked your teachers to do the following things to make your school even better.

- Help you to achieve better results in your tests at the end of Year 6.
- Make sure that your curriculum is more exciting and gives you more opportunities to learn together and to develop your writing skills.
- Make sure that more lessons in Key Stage 2 are good, with teachers matching tasks and activities to your needs in all classes.

You can help by continuing to do your very best, as I am sure you will, and by continuing to attend regularly. Thank you for all your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

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