

Towcester Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 135506 |
| Local Authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 341658 |
| Inspection dates | 19–20 January 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Marion Wallace |

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

| | |
|--|---|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 224 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rona Cambray |
| Headteacher | Mrs Marion O'Grady |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Islington Road Towcester Northamptonshire |
| Telephone number | 01327 350332 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The vast majority of time was spent looking at learning: 10 teachers were seen; 20 lessons were observed; meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of the subject departments, minutes of governors' meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition the school's 'raising attainment' plan, a scrutiny of pupils' work and 78 parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- the impact of senior leaders in bringing about improvements, especially in mathematics and science
- the achievement of all boys and of more able pupils in mathematics and science
- the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at Key Stage 2, especially those without the most acute needs
- how well teachers use assessment to challenge different groups, especially the more and least able.

Information about the school

The school is large for its type. Most pupils come from the town and the local area. A very large majority of pupils are White British. A few pupils speak English as an additional language, and very few are at the early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is that of those with a statement of need. A very small minority of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

The school was opened in September 2008 from the amalgamation of Towcester Infant School and St Lawrence Church of England Junior School. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in one Reception class. The headteacher has been in post for 16 months. The school has achieved the Healthy School award and Activemark. It provides a breakfast club and accommodation for the Tiny Tows pre-school and after school club on site run by the Day Nursery in Towcester. This provision is not managed by the governing body. There are mixed age classes in Years 1 to 6.

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

Towcester Church of England Primary is a satisfactory and improving school. It has many good features. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have worked very hard to establish the new school. They are particularly successful in advancing aspects of pupils' personal development and care. They are rightly aware that improving attainment remains a priority, particularly in mathematics and science. While achievement is satisfactory overall, the inconsistent impact of teaching across different groups of pupils and subjects hinders progress. Teaching is currently improving from the monitoring of senior leaders and the proportion of good or outstanding lessons is increasing.

The school has key strengths.

The ethos is friendly, warm and welcoming, relationships are very good and pupils make good gains in their personal development.

The provision in the Reception class is consistently good.

Girls' achievement is good in English.

Pupils and parents appreciate the good range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support are strong, so pupils behave well and are sensible and enthusiastic learners. Safeguarding procedures are good.

Links with parents are good. Most parents appreciate the parent workshops and active involvement in the school life. A parent commented: 'Maths teaching sessions for parents are excellent and communication between school and home is very good.'

The headteacher and senior team lead the school well and have a clear vision for its future improvement.

There are key weaknesses

Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to match tasks closely to the learning needs of pupils.

Achievement in mathematics and science, especially for more able pupils in Key Stage 2, is below that in English.

The roles of middle and senior managers have yet to be fully developed, particularly the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives and the rigorous identification of sources of weakness.

The systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school are improving its performance, but the effectiveness of the many initiatives undertaken are not fully evaluated. The effective work which has already been done and is continuing to redress the dip in achievement and attainment during the school's first year, its successful

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establishment, and the confidence it has already inspired in parents and the local community demonstrate its satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 by:
 - consistent teaching of key skills, particularly in science topics.
 - giving pupils experience of problem-solving in which to apply their numerical and scientific skills.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - more effective use of information on pupils' prior attainment by teachers to plan lessons to challenge all groups, especially in the mixed-age classes
 - share examples of best practice across all staff
 - base the teaching of science on a more consistent use of teachers' day-to-day records of what pupils have learnt.
- Increase the impact of school monitoring and evaluation so that middle leaders evaluate initiatives more rigorously and act to remedy weaknesses.
- 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**

Strong relationships contribute to a positive climate in which pupils enjoy learning. Achievement is satisfactory overall, including that of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The quality of learning varies too much in quality. The best was observed in Year 6 literacy and numeracy lessons, where high expectations, brisk pace and rigorous use of challenging questions assisted pupils' progress. In mixed age classes, tasks were not always closely matched to the needs of all, especially those of the more and least able. The school's tracking information and inspection evidence currently indicate significant improvement in attainment and progress for most groups, including boys. Many pupils are currently progressing well enough to reach challenging targets. Analysis of pupils' work shows neat presentation, helpful marking and effective use of pupils' self-evaluation of their work, but good practice is inconsistent. Key skills, particularly in science, are not consistently practised, limiting pupils' achievement and future economic well-being.

Pupils start Year 1 with below average attainment and make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. More able pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics and science as in other subjects. Currently, there is better challenge for them in mathematics, but the weaker teaching of science restricts progress in this subject. In Key Stage 2, overall progress remains

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satisfactory, so that pupils reach broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Underachievement of boys in Key Stage 2 is being eradicated. Pupils feel safe and discuss problems freely with adults, however, a few mentioned instances of bullying. All learners know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, enjoy their fruit breaks, and most attend the good range of activity clubs. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and locality, for example, litter picking and gardening in the local area. Their involvement is well regarded in the local area but their interaction with the wider community is not yet substantial. All pupils work cooperatively with others. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development shows in their responsible actions towards others and in their knowledge of differing lifestyles and beliefs - such as those in India. Their awareness of cultural differences in the United Kingdom is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| 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 |
| 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 | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is much good and better practice but its impact on learning is inconsistent. The use of assessment information is not consistent or

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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rigorous enough in the mixed age classes. Consequently the match of work to pupils' abilities is not always precise enough to ensure consistently good progress. Teachers use questions well to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and pupils appreciate well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas with others during 'talking partner' sessions. Pupils use coloured cones well to show understanding of their learning. The contribution of teaching assistants is too varied.

The curriculum generally matches pupils' needs but is not always well enough adapted to meet those of every individual, particularly in mathematics, science and in mixed age classes. Its strengths lie in the personal and social education programme, which assists pupils' good personal development. Pastoral care is strong and parents agree this is a strength. Support for pupils who need additional help is well planned but is not always closely matched to their needs. The school works well with support agencies. Induction and transition arrangements are good. All pupils receive very clear guidance on their behaviour and this is reflected in their good conduct. Nurturing groups have been recently formed to help pupils develop confidence. Good procedures are in place for checking attendance.

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 | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and governors demonstrate drive and ambition to take the school forward. The headteacher has a clear vision and is determined to secure improvement. She has an accurate view of teaching and uses this information to sharpen provision and target the most important areas for improvement. The headteacher is well supported and challenged by an enthusiastic governing body who, with senior leaders, monitor and evaluate the work of the school adequately in most areas. The senior management team are new to their roles and tracking of achievement, although thorough, does not fully identify the reasons for weaknesses in particular subjects.

The school's satisfactory promotion of equality reflects differences in achievement across ability groups. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate developmental areas to raise the effectiveness of the school from satisfactory to good. Partnership with the local authority has effectively helped the school to strengthen the leadership team and improve the quality of teaching and learning. There has not been sufficient time for this new school to establish an extensive range of partners. Safeguarding procedures are good. Promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is aware of the range

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of the local community it serves, but a sense of the wider national community is less well developed. Leaders and managers have yet to evaluate more fully the impact of initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes and its duty to promote community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter Reception with skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. Many have weak communication, language and literacy skills. Children make good progress in all areas of learning, and their attainment is below the expected level when they enter Year 1. Expectations are very clear. Consequently, children behave well and learn to play cooperatively with others. Children's personal, social and emotional development and their communication and language skills develop well. In the role-play area a small group worked very well together organising domestic tasks for the day. There are missed opportunities to use role-play to reinforce key learning. Adults encourage children to respond individually to questions and talk to each other, helping them to make good progress in speaking and communication. Good phonics teaching results in children's enjoyment and confidence in writing words and symbols about road safety and road signs. The outdoor learning environment is used well to extend learning. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning. Care and welfare are good and contribute to children's positive achievement. Good links with parents ensure children settle well into school life. Leadership and management are good.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| 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

A very large majority of parents are satisfied with the school. They regard it as happy, welcoming and friendly. They say children enjoy attending, make good progress and regard the school as caring and supportive. They appreciate extra-curricular activities, relationships with staff, the good start children receive in Reception, and the school ethos. Most criticism concerned behaviour. A few felt the school did not deal with unacceptable behaviour effectively. A very small minority felt the school not take account of their views. Inspectors found discipline was good and teachers made expectations of behaviour very clear but a few parents and pupils felt the school did not always deal with unacceptable behaviour effectively. Other issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the school so that action can be taken to satisfy all parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Towcester Church of England 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 inspection team received 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 224 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 30 | 39 | 41 | 53 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 41 | 53 | 32 | 42 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 23 | 30 | 44 | 57 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 28 | 36 | 41 | 53 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 30 | 39 | 39 | 51 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 22 | 29 | 45 | 60 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 29 | 38 | 44 | 57 | 2 | 3 | 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) | 27 | 35 | 44 | 57 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 25 | 32 | 44 | 56 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 23 | 30 | 37 | 48 | 9 | 12 | 3 | 4 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 21 | 28 | 39 | 51 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 29 | 38 | 34 | 44 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 34 | 43 | 33 | 43 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 |

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.



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- findings from the inspection of their school.

21 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Towcester Church of England Primary School, Northamptonshire, NN12 6AU

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We were impressed by how polite and well behaved you all were and how you all worked sensibly together. We will remember how well council committee members organised and led the whole-school assembly. Many of you and your parents told us how much you enjoy school and all the activities. We found your school a satisfactory and improving one. It has many good features.

These are the things we found that your school does well.

You get off to a good start in the Reception.

You make satisfactory progress through the school and you reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6.

You enjoy learning, behave well and are sensible and know how to keep safe.

You enjoy and benefit from the many activities, clubs, visits and visitors.

Your school cares for you well and teaches you about how to be healthy, and to respect and care for others.

Your school council committee is well organised and is working well with the whole school.

All staff and governors work well together to ensure your school continues to improve.

Your headteacher has high expectations of you and she gives a strong lead to everyone.

There are three things that we identify for staff and governors to improve:

- to make sure that you all reach higher standards in maths and science
- to ensure that all teachers use assessment information to plan work that is closely matched to your ability so that you are all appropriately challenged, especially in your mixed age class lessons
- to make sure that all staff with special responsibilities check on the changes introduced, so that they can be sure all is going well, and take action if necessary.

You can help with these improvements by continuing to work really hard.

Thank you for a very enjoyable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector

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