

Tower Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116142
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326226
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Panter
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Tansley
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 November 2005
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and the work of current pupils, and looked at documentation including: the school improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, individual education plans and pastoral support plans of a number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, minutes of governors' meetings and over 50 parental questionnaires.

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

- the attainment, progress and learning of pupils, particularly boys and more vulnerable pupils
- the teaching and learning of early literacy and language skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- the impact of leaders and managers on improving teaching, learning and standards
- the key factors underpinning the personal and social outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a one-form-entry school in the Cove area of Farnborough with a Reception class which forms the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and around one in five comes from a range of other ethnic heritages. Around one in ten is learning English as an additional language, including a growing number who are at early stages in this when they join the school. Around a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. These mostly relate to language, literacy and communication, and emotional difficulties. A much higher proportion of pupils join or leave the school other than at the normal times of admission than is the case in most schools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Tower Hill Primary is a satisfactory school. The school is well led by the headteacher who, together with a team of keen and committed staff, is bringing about improvements to the school. These are reflected in the standards which pupils reach, in the enthusiasm for learning which is apparent in lessons and around the school and in its reputation in the local community. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are now average and a much higher proportion of pupils are now working at higher levels. For example, test results for 2008, yet to be validated, show that half of the pupils were working at above national expectations in science and around a quarter were doing so in English and mathematics. Most pupils make the progress expected of them, although the school recognises that they do not all yet make consistently good progress. The teaching team is enthusiastic but relatively inexperienced. Further involvement of managers and leaders in guiding staff on how to develop and improve their practice has rightly been identified by the school as an important next step.

A particular challenge for the school is ensuring that all pupils develop the expected skills in literacy, and particularly writing, by the end of Key Stage 1. The school is making progress with this. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 enjoy their daily sessions in small groups which help them link sounds and letters. In addition, teachers are successfully using different approaches to inspire pupils to read and write. Examples include the visit of a fire engine to the school and the use of the new drama studio and digital photographs to help pupils to act out and then write new endings for a story. The school also provides good extra support for pupils, often boys, who make slower progress in acquiring skills in reading and writing or whose emotional difficulties slow their learning and progress. However, on occasions teachers are not accurate enough in identifying the small steps that pupils need to take to make progress. Similarly they do not always make pupils sufficiently aware of these steps through their reviews of learning with pupils at the end of lessons or through their marking.

Improvements to the quality of the environment are a notable feature of the school. The environment has been 'revamped' in the past two years and now provides very good facilities for pupils. Pupils discuss these changes with pride. The changes have improved pupils' attitudes to learning and have enriched the curriculum. Pupils talked with excitement of their activities in the drama studio, the wide range of clubs and the stimulating activities which have been provided through the school's good

partnerships. Opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to learn independently through outdoor activities across the six areas of early learning are restricted due to the small size of the safely fenced outdoor area. The school rightly has plans to extend these opportunities both for children in the Reception class, and for pupils in Key Stage 1. These children and pupils would continue to benefit from such opportunities and have already benefited from the more creative curriculum which is now in place.

Staff plan well for improvement and carefully record and evaluate their progress against the challenging objectives they have set themselves. As a result the school has improved strongly since the time of the last inspection. In particular, standards of attainment and behaviour are much improved and the quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now good. The evident progress over the past two years is a clear indication of the quality of the school's leadership and management and confirm its good capacity for sustained improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the percentage of good teaching by strengthening the involvement of more senior staff in monitoring:
 - planning
 - learning objectives for groups of pupils
 - day-to-day assessment and marking
 - teaching,and by extending opportunities for staff to observe good practice in the school.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in acquiring early literacy skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that most reach age-related expectations by the end of Year 2 by:
 - improving the awareness of staff of the small steps in the development of literacy skills
 - involving pupils in recognising and working towards these.
- Extend opportunities for children in the Reception class and Key Stage 1 to learn independently through the outdoor curriculum.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

In most lessons observed pupils made satisfactory progress. They were well

motivated by the ideas and resources presented and were keen to please their teachers and other adults. This is a reflection of the strong moral code of the school which encourages good behaviour, attentiveness and hard work. Pupils generally respond well to this, although there are occasional lapses, such as when the tasks in lessons were too difficult. Targets set for pupils' progress are appropriate and well monitored. A common planning format prompts staff to consider the needs of different groups of pupils, such as those learning English as an additional language and pupils at different ability levels. This helps focus the work of additional staff in lessons. In addition there are well-targeted additional programmes. These approaches ensure that different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make the progress expected of them. Pupils generally develop into mature young people. By the end of Year 6 they are polite and helpful, and are keen to promote the work of the school and to support younger pupils. Taking on roles as school prefects, providing help in the school office or organising playground games for younger children are some of the ways that they develop and hone their social and personal skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Lessons are usually enjoyable and stimulate pupils' interest very well through the imaginative use of resources. Teachers set out clear objectives and sessions are well managed. Consequently pupils experience a mix of listening to the teacher, responding to questions and opportunities to discuss their work among themselves. This, along with good strategies to manage pupils' behaviour, means that pupils are generally attentive and display good attitudes to learning. Boys, including those who have more difficulty in managing their behaviour or are more vulnerable, are generally over-represented in the lower-ability groups in literacy. These groupings work well when tasks are finely graded such as during the Key Stage 1 phonics sessions. However, this is not the case in all literacy and numeracy sessions.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning and progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics is thorough. Staff use this information well to identify pupils who need additional support programmes. Day-to-day assessment is weaker. This means that in some lessons group work is not pitched at exactly the right level. Staff do not always pick up on this quickly enough through questions or feedback from pupils. Similarly, although marking is regular and rewards pupils' efforts, it does not always show pupils how they can improve nor consistently involve them in the process of 'getting better'.

The creative curriculum has been used well to enhance pupils' motivation to learn and to speed up their progress in English, mathematics and science. A number of examples were observed during the inspection which met the school's aim to make learning 'come off the paper and into real life'. The wide range of activities outside normal lesson times and off-site activities are supported by a good range of partnerships. There is a good range of extra opportunities for pupils of different abilities in particular subjects to work together with school staff or with outside agencies.

Staff work hard to provide effectively for the needs of pupils who are more vulnerable or who find behaving well more difficult. Although incidents of poorer behaviour sometimes occur, the school has strong evidence to show that these are decreasing and that parents and pupils have confidence in its procedures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have made a good impact on this improving school. Staff share a sense of common purpose and a drive to provide the best possible opportunities for all the school's young people. The inclusion and safety of pupils is given a very high priority. Procedures for safeguarding are rigorously monitored and its practices in promoting equality of opportunity have been shared locally as examples of good practice. Staff and governors keep a close check on the possible impact of their actions on community cohesion, but strategic planning to meet this duty is currently being further developed by the governing body.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2

Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the time of the previous inspection and is now good. Adults provide a stimulating and safe environment which children learn to use with confidence and great enjoyment. This means that although not all children join with the expected skills for their age, most are now reaching the expected milestones in most areas by the time they leave. Successful initiatives include the focus on developing their interest in sounds and letters and encouraging their social and communication skills through good interactions with each other and adults. A significant number of children have limited skills in reading and writing when they join. Although they make expected or better progress, assessments show that only a few of these children join Year 1 with the usual skills for their age.

Children have opportunities to learn through a mix of activities led by adults and those they choose for themselves. All the activities are very carefully planned. During the inspection, children were excitedly working on a holiday theme. Activities included booking holidays in a travel shop, boarding a 'plane' in the outdoor area and using clay to create models of planes. On occasions, staff intervene too readily rather than allowing children to make the most of the excellent resources provided.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents' views of the school were positive. Almost all parents felt that their children enjoyed school and were kept safe and healthy. Parents commented on the improvements they had noted at the school in recent years and the positive influence of the headteacher. A few parents felt that incidents of poorer behaviour were not well managed. The inspectors found procedures for managing more difficult behaviour to be very clear, consistently applied by staff and understood and trusted by pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- 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.



11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tower Hill Primary School, Farnborough, GU14 0BW

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school recently.

We enjoyed seeing how you work in your lessons, and sharing your assemblies, lunch and play times. We also enjoyed talking to your parents and reading their questionnaires. We worked very closely with your headteacher. We also spent time talking to some of your teachers and governors and looking at your work.

As a result of our inspection we have judged your school to be satisfactory. We were pleased to see how the school has improved since its last inspection. You are doing better in your studies and reaching higher standards. Children in the Reception class now get off to a good start at the school. The curriculum you study is interesting and we saw how much you enjoyed many of your lessons. We were particularly pleased to see that you usually behave well in lessons and in the playground, as this has improved. We were impressed by your very good behaviour in assembly – we thought all of you deserved to be sitting on the special chairs with your feet up!

The school quite rightly has lots of plans on what it needs to improve next. We have asked some of your teachers to get more involved in checking planning, learning objectives and marking. We want them to learn from each other as well. We have asked your teachers to think hard about how they can help all of you to become good readers and writers by the end of Year 2. They will want to involve you in this so that you can check on your own progress and do things to improve it. Your headteacher already has plans to develop the 'Quad'. We agree it would be a good idea for the children in Reception and Key Stage 1 to have more opportunities to learn outdoors.

A number of you said we were welcome back any time, which was lovely to hear. We did enjoy our time with you. Thank you again for your help and please pass on our thanks to all the adults who helped us too.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Davies
Lead Inspector

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