

Tower Hill Community Primary School

Moor Avenue, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6NB

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In the past, leaders and managers have failed to maintain a good standard of education at Tower Hill. As a result, pupils' achievements have fallen.
- Leadership throughout the school is not yet secure. Leaders are over-reliant on support from the trust to help secure vital improvements.
- Teaching is inconsistent throughout key stages 1 and 2. Sometimes work is matched poorly to pupils' needs. In mathematics, work is often too easy, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Some pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are not supported well enough to practise their reading. Too often, pupils are not assisted to choose reading books that match their reading ability.
- Some pupils do yet demonstrate the behaviours to be successful learners. Currently, staff do not have common expectations about what good learning looks like in the classroom.
- Despite recent improvements, some pupils, particularly in key stage 2, do not achieve highly enough in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, appointed just over a year ago, has taken quick action to improve teaching and learning at Tower Hill. He is well respected by staff, parents and carers.
- Provision in the early years is good. This is because teaching is effective and learning is planned carefully.
- Important action to improve pupils' achievements is beginning to have a positive impact. Recent national key stage 2 assessments show a rise in pupils' outcomes, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. There is a strong nurturing ethos at Tower Hill.
- Safeguarding is effective. All statutory requirements are met. Pupils have the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe.
- The school's values are embedded well. They are promoted consistently and provide a strong seam that unites pupils, staff and parents.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all senior and middle leaders have the skills, knowledge and confidence to lead their areas of responsibility to a high standard, and support the headteacher more effectively
 - assessment information is used more effectively throughout the school to drive improvements in teaching and learning.
- Improve teaching and learning, and secure better outcomes for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that:
 - where teaching is weaker, learning is more carefully matched to pupils' abilities
 - the teaching of mathematics is suitably challenging, particularly for the most able pupils
 - the books that pupils read are carefully matched to their ability
 - there is a consistent approach throughout the school to developing pupils' good learning behaviours.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In the past, leaders and managers, including the trust and governors, did not monitor the school's effectiveness stringently enough. Standards fell and remedial steps to stem the decline in pupils' achievements were not taken. As a result, too many pupils underachieved in a range of subjects.
- Leadership at Tower Hill is too reliant on additional support from the trust. In part, this is because middle leadership has not been developed sufficiently over time. Many of those with subject-leadership responsibilities have not been trained or supported well enough to lead their areas of responsibility confidently. Additionally, the school has been without a deputy headteacher for an extended period. Consequently, subject leaders' impact on teaching and learning is limited and the headteacher is not fully supported in leading the school.
- Leaders have only recently introduced an accurate assessment system. This means that their ability to monitor effectively pupils' progress and achievements at Tower Hill is in its infancy. School improvement planning for teaching and learning is only recently becoming precise and well informed.
- The headteacher evaluated quickly and accurately the school's overall effectiveness. He swiftly gained the confidence of staff and parents and took immediate action to improve standards at Tower Hill. The early, positive impact he made has secured improvements in outcomes in phonics in Year 1 and rising achievements in national assessments in key stages 1 and 2.
- The school has recently introduced a new curriculum. This is being implemented successfully and ensures that learning is broad and balanced. Teaching is enriched with a range of educational visits and activities. Pupils are beginning to enjoy learning much more earnestly.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has strong subject knowledge that she uses to support to a good standard pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. She works closely with other professionals and external agencies to tailor the care appropriately. Effective communication and close working between the inclusion team and class teachers ensure that provision for this group of pupils is good.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium grant, is being spent well. Leaders monitor closely disadvantaged pupils' achievements and target additional support effectively for the pupils' learning and personal development. There is clear evidence to show that this group of pupils is beginning to attend better and their welfare needs are being met well.
- The sports premium funding is used to good effect. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to engage in physical activities, including rugby, cricket, netball and Tri-Golf. A high proportion of pupils participate in competitive matches and enjoy representing the school in local competitions.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. This is because the school's broad values prepare them for life in modern Britain and to become good

citizens. For example, pupils' good manners emanate throughout the school. Inspectors were particularly impressed with how older pupils serve lunch in the dining hall, and how positively children engage with each other at mealtimes and breaktimes.

- Parents are broadly supportive of the school. One comment, typical of many, was: 'I cannot praise the school enough. They have such belief in my child and have worked wonders.'

Governance of the school

- Historically, neither the trust nor governors monitored the school's effectiveness closely enough. They did not work well collaboratively to check how well pupils were achieving. For too long, falling standards at Tower Hill went unchecked.
- Governance has strengthened considerably. Governors' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is much more precise. They now demand robust, accurate assessment data from school leaders. They carefully scrutinise this information and use it to inform further monitoring of leaders' actions. Governors are using successfully a range of evidence to hold leaders to account more stringently.
- Support from the trust has improved. The school's improvement partner visits frequently and helps the headteacher with sharp evaluations of teaching and learning. Together, they have put in place important action plans to drive rapid improvement. The trust and school governors are now a much more effective partnership.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- When recruiting staff, all appropriate background checks are made. These are recorded accurately in the school's single central record. Leaders are scrupulous in ensuring that all staff and volunteers are suitably vetted to work with children.
- Leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date regarding safeguarding. Effective systems are in place to refresh staff members' child-protection knowledge and remind them of the actions to take to keep children safe.
- Pupils learn how to look after themselves well. For instance, they know to keep personal information private when using the internet. Pupils know that if they see something online that worries or frightens them, they must tell a trusted adult. E-safety learning at Tower Hill ensures that pupils know the right actions to protect themselves from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently strong throughout key stages 1 and 2. For example, pupils' assessment information is not used effectively enough to inform teachers' planning. Where teaching is weaker, some lessons and learning activities do not take into account pupils' knowledge and understanding. Consequently, learning is not well matched to pupils' needs and does not move them on quickly enough.

- Mathematics teaching, particularly in key stage 2, does not stretch most-able pupils sufficiently enough. Some pupils commented to inspectors that they found the work set for them too easy. Work in this group of pupils' exercise books demonstrates that they do not grapple with more challenging mathematics frequently enough. As a result, they make slower progress than that of which they are capable.
- Currently, some pupils are not provided with the necessary guidance to choose suitably challenging reading books. Some pupils who read to the inspector brought books that contained words that were too difficult for them. This stops them reading fluently and limits their ability to make good progress in reading.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers use effective questioning to probe what pupils do and do not know. They use this information skilfully to adapt their teaching to help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, in Year 4, the class teacher identified accurately a group of pupils struggling to identify the greatest and smallest values in a range of four-digit numbers. Careful, additional support strengthened these pupils' understanding of place value.
- Typically, the support provided by teaching assistants is of a good standard. They demonstrate appropriate subject knowledge and maintain high expectations of the pupils with which they work. Frequently, with patience and care, they provide clear explanations and additional effective guidance to help pupils achieve more successfully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Everyone at Tower Hill has the children's best interests at heart, and none more so than the dedicated inclusion team of the SENCo, the 'home-school link' worker and the attendance officer. These well-trained, nurturing staff members go above and beyond to support vulnerable pupils and children. The inspectors were particularly impressed with their passionate support of the school's young carers.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school at Tower Hill. They say it is a friendly and warm place to learn and play. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that, if they ever have problems or worries, there is always an adult to turn to.
- Pupils know the school values well. For instance, they model 'responsibility' well by taking an active interest in the school's 'values' council. They are respectful of one another, know the importance of not discriminating against anyone for their faith or sexuality and are, consequently, well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that the majority of pupils have good learning behaviours. For instance, some pupils do not listen closely when their class teacher is talking. Sometimes, a few pupils slouch in their chairs during lessons or sit with their heads on their desks. Critically, staff do not yet tackle the few pockets of low-level

disruption consistently throughout the school. Because of this, behaviour at Tower Hill requires improvement.

- Typically, however, where teaching is at its most effective, pupils participate in learning much more enthusiastically. They join in with classroom discussions and produce work to be proud of.
- Pupils behave well in and around school and incidents of aggressive behaviour are very rare. When it does occur, it is managed swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Rates of attendance are improving. Systems to ensure that pupils miss school less frequently are now more robust. The attendance officer works collaboratively with the local authority to provide challenge and support for families of pupils who struggle to attend as regularly as they should. Raised expectations and stronger links between school and home are having a positive impact on pupils' rates of absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, pupils' achievements in a range of subjects dropped significantly. For too long, leaders failed to take appropriate action to stop this decline. More recently, pupils are beginning to achieve better but leaders are aware that more needs to be done to secure stronger outcomes for pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, particularly in key stage 2.
- Too few pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieved the expected standards in the 2018 key stage 2 national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. However, these results, particularly in reading and mathematics, demonstrated a significant improvement on those achieved by pupils in 2017.
- Throughout the school, most-able pupils do not typically achieve at the highest standards. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics, where learning is not consistently challenging enough for this group of pupils. Leaders know that more must be done to ensure that most-able pupils achieve more highly.
- In 2018 key stage 1 national assessments, most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2018, a significantly larger proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check than in previous years. This is because phonics is taught more systematically and staff have been trained appropriately to deliver the school's phonics programme.
- Stimulating and engaging learning in art and physical education (PE) helps pupils achieve well. In these subjects, pupils' endeavours are commendable. Pupils' fantastic artwork is displayed throughout the school, and inspectors were impressed with the pupils' achievement in PE lessons and in competitive sports.

Early years provision

Good

- Children achieve well in the early years. Learning is planned well and takes into account each child's needs. Teaching is good. For example, adults actively support,

encourage and question pupils well, sparking children's natural curiosity. As a result, children are well placed to succeed in the next stage of their education.

- The Nursery provides a vibrant and productive environment for children to start their learning journeys. Staff are adept at assessing well children's early development, using careful observations to track and monitor the progress they make. Importantly, children in the Nursery take positive first steps in learning the building blocks to become readers and writers.
- Close effective links are formed with parents. For example, in the Nursery, when planning activities for children, staff make good use of the extra information provided by parents. This ensures that learning is relevant and encourages children to participate enthusiastically.
- Children enjoy learning in the Reception Year. The curriculum is wide, covering all areas of the early years curriculum. For example, children were enthusiastically developing their artistic skills when making dramatic autumnal pictures with leaves and glue. Staff supported this learning effectively by asking pertinent questions that also developed children's vocabulary and language skills.
- All statutory safeguarding and health and safety requirements are met thoroughly. Importantly, children learn routines well and follow adults' instructions diligently. Children are safe and behave well and, as a result, the early years setting is calm and harmonious.

School details

Unique reference number	142449
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10053492

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Rev Jason Boyd
Headteacher	Mr Paul Thomas
Telephone number	01993 702 599
Website	www.tower-hill.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.2303@towerhillschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Tower Hill Community Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for their SEN and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is similar to the national average.
- The school is part of the River Learning Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their books. Some observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils, a group of governors and a representative from the River Learning Trust.
- Parents' views were gathered at the start of the day, and 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector also analysed 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents were reviewed, including: the school's development plan and self-evaluation document; the school's single central record of employment checks on staff; information about pupils' achievement, attendance, behaviour and safety; information about the school's performance management of staff; and governing body reports and trust reports.

Inspection team

Dom Cook, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynn Martin

Ofsted Inspector

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