

# Townsend CofE School

High Oaks, St Albans, AL3 6DR

**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Progress in some subjects is not rising as rapidly as it has in English and mathematics.
- Too much teaching requires improvement. Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough in these lessons and so the work they give students is sometimes too easy. Progress slows as a result.
- Opportunities for students to work independently and to lead their own learning are limited, especially when the teacher talks for too long.
- Marking does not always show students how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.
- Attainment is rising again following a dip but too few students are reaching the highest levels at GCSE, AS and A level.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Here, and in some subjects, leaders are not checking data about progress in fine detail so they can quickly improve it.
- The well-thought-out policies and procedures designed to ensure improvement are not yet fully implemented in some subjects.
- Governors are very supportive but are not fully effective in checking on and improving the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and deputies know what has to be done and are doing the right things to raise standards.
- Progress is speeding up, especially in English and mathematics.
- The emphasis on respect for all is apparent in good behaviour and relationships across the school.
- Students are proud of their school. They feel safe, well supported and valued as individuals.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Links with the local and church communities are well developed.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 42 lessons taught by 40 teachers.
- They held meetings with governors, staff, a representative from the local authority, and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 108 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and carrying out the inspection and also spoke to parents and carers.
- They observed the school’s work and looked at the school improvement plan, assessment data, monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, a range of policies, and arrangements for safeguarding. They looked at students’ books in lessons and in a separate check of work.
- Inspectors listened to students reading.

## Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Isobel Randall	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector
Sherry Gladwin	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Townsend Church of England School is a smaller-than-average secondary school and is the only voluntary aided Church of England secondary school in Hertfordshire..
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional income provided to the school (the pupil premium) is below average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Relatively few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled students, of those who have special educational needs, and who are supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Some sixth form courses are taught in other schools, and some courses taught in Townsend are taken by students from other schools.
- Four students attend the local authority education support centre, The Links, in St Albans for part-time GCSE equivalent qualifications or for one of their subject choices..
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- Numbers on roll have fallen recently.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better by:
  - ensuring that there is appropriate challenge in all lessons with consistently high expectations of student progress and demanding targets for them
  - making all marking and assessment as effective as the best in showing students exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further
  - ensuring that there are frequent opportunities for students to take the lead in their learning and to practice their communication , literacy and mathematical skills in other lessons
  - developing teachers' questioning strategies and getting students to explain the reasoning behind their answers, including in the sixth form
  - giving teachers further opportunities to learn from each other's good practice.
- Improve the effectiveness of subject leaders and other managers by:
  - ensuring they make more focused use of data to closely analyse the achievement of all groups, with quicker follow-up wherever necessary
  - making sure they implement key policies and procedures quickly
  - closer monitoring of the work of all subject leaders and other managers, and of their impact.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most students enter the school now with attainment in line with national averages, although the profile varies from year to year and attainment is sometimes lower. Results dipped in the last two years. The school has implemented well-focused plans to raise achievement and improve the consistency of teaching and teachers' expectations. Students' achievement has risen as a result, especially in English and mathematics. It still requires improvement in some other subjects to rise to good levels.
- Sixth form results are improving, especially at A level, but pass rates at the highest grades remain below national averages, as they do at GCSE, and some variability remains between subjects. The school is now analysing success rates and the progress of groups more effectively to reduce gaps in achievement.
- Students in the main school are making better progress now because teaching is improving, especially in mathematics and English where some outstanding teaching is leading to high levels of engagement in lessons. Current Year 11 students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are on track to attain broadly average standards.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates as a result of carefully targeted support which is adjusted each term in line with progress made.
- Pupil premium funds are being used effectively to provide additional support for vulnerable students in order to speed up their progress, ensure it is in line with their classmates, and develop skills in literacy and numeracy across all subjects studied. In 2012 its use was less successful. The funds did not have sufficient impact on the gap between the GCSE points scored by eligible students and others.
- School leaders have focused on developing students' skills in speaking, reading and writing in line with the current emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy across the school. Support programmes are effective in helping less able readers to develop their skills and participate more regularly in lessons.
- The very large majority of parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire were happy with their child's progress. Some expressed concerns about the arrangements for homework. Inspectors found that homework is regularly set throughout all year groups and in all subjects.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The amount of good teaching is increasing; some teaching is outstanding but too much still requires improvement. Expectations and challenge vary sometimes from lesson to lesson and between subjects. Teachers do not yet have enough opportunities to share what they do best in lessons and learn from each other.
- Courtesy and good manners are expected in all lessons. Classroom procedures are clear. However, students' keen attitudes do not lead to good or better achievement often enough. In some lessons, planned tasks do not fully engage students and meet the needs of all ability levels. Sometimes lessons are pitched too low, lack pace or the teacher talks for too long.

- Tasks in lessons do not always encourage students to participate actively rather than listen, or require students to take the lead. This limits opportunities for students to work on their own at the highest levels to acquire new skills and deeper understanding. Teachers' questions, even in the sixth form, do not always demand that students explain their understanding.
- Literacy, numeracy and communication skills are secure but are not reinforced consistently in all lessons.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make effective use of electronic technology. Learning support assistants provide careful support, either in class or through interventions carried out elsewhere in the school. Students say that they enjoy school because learning objectives are clearer in lessons and teaching methods are improving.
- In a Year 11 mathematics lesson for a group in which pupils had already taken their GCSE examination, outstanding teaching, which included targeted questioning on algebra, fast pace and continual challenge about how to work out the answers, led to rapid progress. Similarly, in a Year 10 English lesson on the poem, 'My Last Duchess', learning was outstanding. Students' attention was first captured by the way the teacher introduced the poem and then by an insistence that they prove any points they made from the text.
- Marking and assessment procedures vary in quality between lessons and subjects in providing enough constructive feedback to ensure rapid progress especially by indicating what students need to do next to improve their present performance. Students know their targets but these are not always adjusted upwards rapidly enough once achieved. Work is regularly marked and there is a consistent emphasis on good quality presentation.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Calm and mature behaviour is characteristic of classrooms and around the school. Students are well aware of the emphasis which the school places on respect for all and of the policies and procedures to ensure that the school is an orderly community where they can get on with learning.
- Students work co-operatively with each other, teachers and other adults because they are keen to learn, even in lessons that are less engaging. They listen respectfully and respond helpfully when other students encounter difficulties. Older students set a good example by the way in which they carry out their responsibilities in partnering younger readers.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs behave well because they are well supported in and out of classrooms and arrangements are regularly reviewed.
- Students say they feel safe and parents and carers agree. Students are confident that there is always an adult to whom they can bring any problems and that these will be quickly and effectively sorted out. They enjoy opportunities to contribute to the school, such as through the school council, and would welcome an extension to these opportunities.
- Bullying is rare. Students report that homophobic, racist and cyber bullying is not accepted in their school and that the school deals swiftly with any cases through its effective pastoral and disciplinary systems. Extremist behaviour and discrimination of any kind are not tolerated.
- Attendance is in line with national averages and improving over time. Persistent absence rates

are falling. Students are punctual to lessons and to school in spite of the distances travelled by many. Exclusion rates are low and there have been no permanent exclusions for several years.

## **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The experienced headteacher, ably supported by his deputies, has been successful in improving progress significantly in English and mathematics. They have raised the quality of teaching across the school, even though it is not yet consistently good. School self-evaluation is accurate. Nevertheless leadership and management are not yet good because the use of data by some middle leaders is not sufficiently fine-tuned to identify how improvement can be accelerated more rapidly, and so they have not all made a full contribution to raising standards.
- One reason for the improvements this year has been the attention to arrangements for middle leadership. Pastoral leaders feel that the policy whereby they move on with year groups increases their capacity to deal with issues. Subject leaders value the renewed emphasis on whole school approaches, such as in teaching of literacy, numeracy and communication skills.
- However, some subject leaders are at an early stage of implementing and reviewing the well-designed key policies and procedures aimed at ensuring that all students receive consistently effective provision. Subject leaders' work in this area has not been consistently well monitored.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form also requires improvement; further analysis is needed of success rates and of outcomes for specific groups of students to ensure that achievement continues to rise. Courses provided with other schools, however, are regularly reviewed, and make a good contribution to the breadth of experiences the school can offer its sixth form students. Good numbers of sixth form students progress to university because subjects on offer in the school have engaged them.
- Performance management systems have been effectively developed with reference to national 'Teachers' Standards' and with a whole school emphasis on raising achievement. Further refinement of dates and action points is under way to ensure teachers' accountability for results.
- Visits and visitors enhance the broad range of subjects taught. Additional reinforcement is provided for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs when they have problems with areas of literacy or numeracy. Extra classes help to raise standards in individual subjects like history.
- Students are entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. Variations in expectations and in the quality of teaching previously have limited the ability of more able students to reach the highest grades. Some of the teaching for this group is now outstanding, and they are being prepared well for further study of the subject. Students who do not gain the grades they should will have appropriate opportunities to retake in the summer.
- The part-time placements for a small number of students on courses equivalent to GCSE at The Links in St Albans complement their study at Townsend well. The Links was judged outstanding by Ofsted in its last inspection.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a school strength. Cathedral staff visit the school regularly. The climate of mutual respect in the school reinforces relationships through a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Understanding of other nations and cultures is enhanced by links with Ethiopia and Taiwan.

- Safeguarding arrangements are effective with regular training for staff and governors.
- The local authority is providing appropriate support to the school as it implements new procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance requires improvement. Governors are supportive. They demonstrate their commitment through good attendance at meetings but the challenge they offer is not yet sufficient to help the school move more rapidly forward. Governors recognise the need to improve teaching, raise results and increase students' aspirations and apply these principles in assessing teacher performance. They acknowledge that governors need further training in using and interpreting data to speed up improvement and to understand how the school's results compare to other schools. Most governors know the amount of the pupil premium and how it is used but have not yet fully reviewed the impact of these initiatives.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117555
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	405713

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	767
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	112
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Downs
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Wellbeloved
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 853047
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