

# Townsend Church of England School

Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117555
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312651
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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>Number on roll</b>	
School	836
6th form	111
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr I Downs
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr A Wellbeloved
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	High Oaks St. Albans Hertfordshire AL3 6DR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 853047
<b>Fax number</b>	01727 834523

---

<b>Age group</b>	11-18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 March 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	312651

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Townsend Church of England School is a smaller than average voluntary-aided school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years that has been over-subscribed in recent years. The school is located on the outskirts of St Albans in Hertfordshire and draws pupils from a very wide geographical area. Its sixth form is run in conjunction with other schools and a local college. Most of the pupils are White British although there are a growing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The largest minority ethnic group consists of pupils of European background who now make up four percent of the total cohort. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. A much lower than average proportion of pupils claim free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below that of similar schools. The school holds a number external accreditations including, the Charter Mark for Excellence in Public Services, Investors in People, the Gold Sports Mark, the Silver Arts Mark, Healthy Schools award, the Careers and Guidance Kite Mark, and the Eco-Schools award. The Buncefield oil depot explosion structurally affected the school building in December 2005 and much management time has been used to address this.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Townsend Church of England School has some significant strengths and provides a satisfactory standard of education for pupils aged 11 to 16. Provision for students in the sixth form is good. The school's approach to inclusion is outstanding, particularly around the promotion of its core Christian values, which lie at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, the development of pupils' spiritual, social and moral awareness and their general well-being are also exceptionally strong. The school is held in high regard by the community and by parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent reflected the views of many by saying 'I have been very impressed by the wonderful spirit this school has and the holistic approach to developing each child.'

Standards are satisfactory overall. A decline in some standards over the last three years, particularly in English, has been identified by the school and a number of recent changes, such as improvements to monitoring and assessment, are beginning to improve outcomes this year. Raising standards further, particularly in English, is a key challenge for the school. Overall, most pupils make progress at the same rates as their peers in other schools. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exceptionally well supported and make good progress.

High attendance and good behaviour reflect pupils' enjoyment of school. Teaching is satisfactory overall; not all lessons enable pupils to learn as well as they might and opportunities for independent learning are sometimes limited. Some lessons were good and, occasionally, some were outstanding because they were fun, topical and the planning of activities effectively matched the needs of individual pupils. The quality of assessment and written feedback is variable, ranging from the exemplary to the mediocre. A well-considered curriculum and high levels of pastoral support provided by all staff greatly enhance pupils' educational experience.

The headteacher, along with his senior management team and the governing body, are highly successful in driving forward the school's philosophy of celebrating diversity. Partnership working with external agencies and other educational providers is excellent, successfully enabling the school to break down the barriers to education faced by many pupils. The school's self-evaluation, whilst detailed and full of statistical analyses, does not enable all leaders to judge effectively the impact of what the school does on pupils' achievements. The school was therefore overgenerous in making some judgments about provision. The use of assessment data in the school is improving. This, in combination with recent new key appointments, and a passion for improvement from senior and middle managers demonstrates the school has a good capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Sixth form provision is good. Significant changes in the management of the sixth form have led to increased evaluation of student progress and of teaching and learning. As a result of the coordinated approach to mentoring during this academic year, student progress is being closely monitored and this is having a good effect on students' desire to remain in education and achieve well. Sixth form students make good role models for younger pupils. For example, they effectively run the Year 7 to 9 breakfast club. Teachers develop students' independent learning well and most students are actively involved in their own learning. Students can choose from a wide range of academic advanced level courses and a small but developing range of vocational

options. They speak highly of the strong pastoral support they receive, although guidance in preparing them for further study is not always comprehensive.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards, particularly in English.
- Ensure the best assessment and teaching is consistently applied so that all lessons are exciting and pupils can achieve their potential.
- Accurately and concisely evaluate the impact of intervention strategies on pupils' achievement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Most pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment and most make progress in line with expectations. In 2007, although standards remained generally high in most subjects by the end of Year 9, by the end of Year 11 GCSE results overall were only in line with those of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade C or higher in mathematics was above average. English results were below average. The school analysed the reasons for the underperformance in 2007 and has put in place a range of appropriate interventions and strategies. Current in-year assessments indicate the apparent slow progress made at Key Stage 4 in 2007 has been remedied, with most pupils on track to achieve their minimum target grades. Pupils with additional support needs and in some cases complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported exceptionally well, achieving at or above their target grades, and are making good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The personal development of the pupils is outstanding. They enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their high levels of attendance. Behaviour overall is good, both in lessons and around the school. Exclusions are infrequent, and are carefully managed to assist pupils successfully to reintegrate into the life of the school. Pupils feel safe and cared for. Relationships overall are very positive and pupils socialise well with each other and with staff. One student commented, 'Form tutors are amazing with us.' Incidents of bullying are rare, and where they occur, are dealt with effectively through the school's very thorough pastoral system. All pupils are encouraged to take regular exercise and eat healthily. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through the school's excellent support programmes, their many charitable activities, and their confidence to take responsibility and use their own initiative.

Their spiritual development overall is outstanding as a result of the school's very strong focus on high moral, social and cultural values. Pupils develop good skills to assist their future economic well-being. Through the school council pupils feel strongly that they are listened to and that their suggestions are implemented where possible.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good and outstanding class and individual teaching. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of their subjects. The features of many lessons are the good relationships between staff and pupils, the effective use of support staff and the inclusion of topical issues for discussion. For example, a lesson based on national no smoking day gave pupils the opportunity to consider their views on smoking and health issues, which were tied in to promoting anti-smoking messages in the school community.

In the best lessons, teachers' expectations are high, challenge is appropriate and pupils really enjoy their learning. However, in some other lessons insufficient use is made of interesting and challenging materials to fire pupils' enthusiasm and develop their independent learning. In some cases, this leads to low-level chat and off-task behaviour because activities fail to engage or maintain the motivation of all. The planning of lessons varies in quality between departments. As a result, the planning of different approaches and activities does not always enable either pupils who are struggling with their learning or very able pupils to progress as well as they could. The marking of pupils' work is regular although the quality of comments to help improvement is inconsistent.

The school's structured lesson observation programme is leading to the improved use of assessment for learning and the incorporation of interactive white-boards into teaching and learning. Monitoring has identified good practice and areas that need further support and training.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Curriculum provision is good, and meets the needs of pupils. The curriculum reflects the school's ethos of integration and equal opportunities. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is good, broad and balanced. Citizenship features in 'Learning for Life' lessons and the 'Breakthrough to Literacy' programme effectively supports pupils with educational needs. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is good. Pupils can choose from a wide range of GCSE courses. The way that the school creates the timetable enables the maximum number of student choices to be met. The range of learning opportunities for pupils is increased by some taking GCSE examinations early or studying vocational courses in school or at Oaklands College. Hearing impaired pupils and those with other learning needs are well integrated and supported.

There is provision to extend learning opportunities for gifted and talented pupils across the school and a range of activities is offered such as visits to places of interest, visiting speakers and weekends away. Pupils take very good advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular provision, especially in the outstanding opportunities for sport and physical activity which are highly valued by pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Strong pastoral support, which results in pupils feeling safe, provides a caring environment in which pupils of all ages flourish. The senior management team, year heads, form tutors, mentors and learning support assistants provide a wide-ranging support network across the school. The ways in which the school identifies pupils who may be vulnerable or at risk are thorough. Support for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties is outstanding. The school has extensive links with external agencies to meet pupils' needs. Child protection procedures are securely in place and safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements.

All pupils are given minimum target grades. These work well at Key Stage 3 where pupils make good progress. Aspects of academic support however, are less effective through Years 10 and 11. Pupils' are aware of their targets, but not all pupils find them helpful or motivating.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear direction and his supportive leadership is held in high esteem by pupils, parents and staff. Management strategies to raise standards have met with mixed success. In some subject areas, effective use of target setting has resulted in improved outcomes. For example, in science good target setting at Key Stage 4 has led to significant improvements in recent test results. Whole school monitoring and planning are detailed; the evaluation of outcomes is not yet consistent across all subjects. Professional development opportunities are used well to develop middle leadership within the school. Middle leaders are using an increasing range of strategies to monitor improvement. The committed and experienced governing body provides the school with good support. For example, governors supported the school leadership in planning structural repairs following the Buncefield explosion. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
---	----------------	-------

### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Townsend Church of England School, High Oaks, St Albans AL3 6DR

Thank you for welcoming us during our recent inspection of your school. We appreciated the time we were able to spend talking to you about your work and general life at school. This letter aims to summarise for you the main findings from our two days.

Your school is very caring and provides you with a satisfactory education, with many strong points. We found the sixth form to be good in all areas. A key strength of your school is the high level of support you receive. You told us you enjoy school and how much you appreciate the friendly atmosphere the school provides. Your headteacher gives your school clear direction and works very hard to make sure the school develops your personal qualities as young people. Your spiritual, social and moral maturity is outstanding and certainly impressed inspectors.

We found that some of you could be doing better in your tests, particularly in English, and your school is working to make sure you all achieve to the best of your ability. We agreed with you that some lessons were better than others - and that there is some very good teaching in places. The progress some of you make in lessons varies, as does the quality of the written feedback and the targets you receive to help you improve.

Our inspection identified three areas to help the school improve further.

- To raise standards, particularly in English.
- To ensure all lessons and assessment are equally as good as the best so all of you can achieve your potential and make good progress.
- To check the impact of actions taken by the school to improve your achievement.

You have an important part to play in helping your school to continue to improve by doing your very best in all of your lessons and prepare well for your exams. We wish you every success in the future.

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI