

School inspection report

16 to 18 April 2024

Tower College

Mill Lane

Rainhill

Prescot

Merseyside

L35 6NE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum combined with a nurturing approach. This supports pupils to make good progress and meets the prime aim of the school to give each pupil a well-rounded education. Pupils extend their experience and develop their interests through a suitable range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer.
2. Governors, who act on behalf of the proprietors, demonstrate relevant knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The leadership team have addressed the recommendations made in the previous report. Leaders have put in place an ambitious development plan which is based on effective self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.
3. Children in the early years are well cared for within a happy and safe environment. Careful planning by staff provides the pupils with a rich and varied programme of activities which is tailored to the needs of individual pupils across the required areas of learning and development.
4. Pupils are keen to learn and make good progress from their starting points. Teachers plan lessons to reflect the abilities and particular needs of pupils. At times, teaching does not fully engage pupils in their learning. This limits the progress some pupils are able to make in these lessons because pupils are less motivated to learn.
5. Leaders have designed and implemented personal, social and health education (PSHE), and a relationships and sex education (RSE) programme that meet the requirements to support pupils' personal development. Although effective in the lower school, teaching of RSE in the middle and upper school is less effective and pupils do not deepen their understanding of this subject as well as they could.
6. The relationships and interactions between pupils and staff are highly positive both in class and around the school. Behaviour in lessons is of a high standard and pupils approach their work with enthusiasm. The very few incidents of poor behaviour that do occur are dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Leaders have focused on strengthening their approach to supporting pupils' wellbeing in recent years and as a result, have created a supportive and caring environment where pupils are able to grow in confidence. This is reflected in pupils' pride in being members of the school community.
7. Pupils say they are confident to approach staff if they have any concerns and worries and this is a result of a well-developed pastoral system. Pupils have opportunities to share their views and experiences of school through direct communication with teachers and through the school councils. Pupils in the middle and upper school say that they can approach their teachers to express their opinions on school matters, however, there is no formalised system to enable them to ensure that their views and opinions are more widely recognised and responded to. This results in pupils feeling that they have limited influence on school matters.
8. The use of assessment data and developments in tracking and monitoring pupils has been a key focus for senior leaders in recent years. Leaders have provided guidance and support to enable staff to use this information effectively to plan the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs.

9. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to contribute to the community, for example through charitable fundraising and community service. Pupils are self-confident and develop leadership skills. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and are well prepared for life in British society.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- provide effective guidance and support to ensure that all staff are confident in using a range of teaching strategies so that pupils are motivated and engaged in their learning
- increase the mechanisms by which the views and opinions of pupils in the middle and upper school can be more widely recognised so that pupils feel they are better listened and responded to
- provide training and support to enable staff to teach the RSE programme more consistently across the school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders and managers are highly successful in creating a school culture and atmosphere in which pupils take great pride in being members of the school and as a result thoroughly enjoy their learning experience. This is a result of the school being successful in its aims to give its pupils a well-rounded education while ensuring that pastoral care of pupils remains a priority.
11. Leaders and governors have established a school ethos that aims to provide all pupils with a well-rounded education within the context of a caring community. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils are encouraged to work hard and enjoy their time at school. Leaders work to ensure that all pupils feel valued as members of their school community.
12. Leaders communicate and implement policies and procedures effectively and consistently. Staff and pupils understand what is expected of them. Senior leaders take care to implement appropriate plans, schemes of work and programmes of activities to meet the needs of pupils across the curriculum. Pupils who have SEND are well supported with appropriate strategies that enable them to make good progress.
13. Leaders ensure that the provision and maintenance of the premises provide a safe learning and recreational environment for pupils. The school meets the relevant requirements of the Equality Act. An accessibility plan highlights where adjustments are made to support the needs of all pupils.
14. Appropriate safeguarding processes and procedures are in place. There are well-established links with local agencies, including children's services, the local authority and the police, to access advice and support and to make referrals as required. As a result, pupils feel safe and well protected in the school.
15. An informative website and electronic communications provide parents with the information that they require. The school reports formally to parents on their child's progress regularly, but also keeps in regular contact in between formal reports and responds to queries relating to pupils' progress in a timely manner.
16. Leaders and governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and the areas which could be improved further. Leaders regularly analyse data in connection with behaviour, bullying and pupils performance which allows leaders to detect any trends and to make changes to practice when needed.
17. Leaders seek and welcome the views of parents, pupils and staff and use this information to inform their development planning. For example, the development of parental discussion forum groups has resulted in increased connectivity with parents.
18. The school complaints policy is published on the school website. Leaders respond to any complaints promptly and effectively. Detailed records are maintained as appropriate and these are reviewed by leaders to inform any necessary changes in policy or practice.
19. Leaders prioritise supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. This is reflected in recent initiatives which include the provision of allocated spaces in the wellbeing hub, which allow pupils easy and discrete access to pastoral support systems, including access to mental health nurses,

counsellors and the pastoral support team. This service is highly appreciated by pupils and is viewed as being valuable in supporting their enjoyment of school life.

20. Governors, who act as advisory board members, visit the school regularly and listen to the views and experiences of staff, parents and pupils to inform their oversight of leaders' work. Governors have an appropriate range of experience and knowledge. They work closely with school leaders to monitor policies and procedures and ensure that the Standards and statutory requirements are met.
21. Leaders and managers have a vigilant and appropriate awareness of risk. Those responsible for identifying risks and hazards have a clear understanding of their role. Their analysis of risks is used effectively to reduce the impact of potential risks on pupils' welfare. Suitable mitigations of risk are put in place. For example, in the production of robust risk assessments put in place for pupils taking part in high-risk activities such as adventurous training or on overseas expeditions, such as ski trips. The contextual risks of the school are well understood by leaders and staff, actions are taken as required and these include those in relation to children in the early years.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 22. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders have designed a suitably broad curriculum that covers the key educational aspects of learning, including English, numeracy, science, technology, languages and the creative arts. The curriculum appropriately meets the pupils' needs. Strategic decisions are made to improve pupils' experience of the curriculum, such as carefully advising pupils on curriculum options in consultation with their parents, which as a consequence focuses pupils on their academic direction. The curriculum is supported by an appropriate programme of activities which complements the subject curriculum and supports pupils well in developing their wider skills and interests.
24. Pupils' learning and progress is promoted by carefully planned lessons which take into account the needs of individual pupils. Tasks are well matched to the purpose of the lesson and give pupils opportunities to practise and apply their learning. Pupils are therefore motivated and make good progress across the curriculum. Teachers give clear explanations and respond well to pupils' ideas and questions. In science, for example, pupils in Year 1 undertake practical activities that help them understand how to sort animals into different categories and compare their size, diet and how they move. From this, pupils learn about how animals are organised into different species groups. In geography, Year 3 pupils effectively develop their understanding of why, how, and what happens when a tsunami takes place. Their learning is reinforced through practical activities that enable them to explore different wave types and their impact on their location. From this experience, pupils are also able to deduce how a tsunami might be caused by a volcano, earthquake or landslide.
25. Children in the early years experience an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum, with additional specialist teaching in a number of co-curricular subject areas such as physical education, music, Spanish and art. The individualised nature of early years education successfully covers all of the seven areas of learning. Every child is closely supported by an identified key worker, who observes, records, monitors, and regularly identifies the next steps for each child at a suitable level of individual challenge. As a result, children develop self-confidence and are very well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their education.
26. In the early years there is an effective programme of age-related activities which develop children's spoken language, and their physical and communication skills. For example, children's use of the environment helps them deepen their understanding of numbers and observation skills. Children learn well together which helps them develop their social skills and understand each other's feelings. Well-judged interactions with their teachers support children to become increasingly confident in using a wide range of vocabulary and language structures. This is supported by quality resources which support children's learning.
27. In the early years and lower school, purposeful external learning environments are created by teachers and ground staff, which engage the interest of pupils, promoting their learning and at the same time allowing the children to have fun. For example, this occurs when pupils gain access to the school's outdoor spaces, which include play areas, woodland environments and an outdoor classroom.
28. Throughout the school leaders have created a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere and as a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive. This is as a result of the effective PSHE programme and the importance the school places on developing relationships between both the pupils themselves and the school staff. Pupils communicate well with each other and listen carefully.

Pupils make valuable contributions to discussions in lessons. Sometimes, teaching in the middle and upper school does not fully engage pupils in their learning. In these lessons, pupils are less well motivated and do not deepen their understanding as well as they could.

29. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of assessment information to plan learning to meet pupils' needs. This is supported by increased professional development training of teachers and extra sessions on offer to all pupils who wish to access support lessons to increase their attainment and confidence in tackling examinations. Across all school sections, teachers provide useful feedback to pupils so that pupils have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve further.
30. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) receive suitable support, in the form of a reduced curriculum load and extra support lessons provided by learning support staff to enable them to better access the curriculum.
31. Across the school, teachers systematically and regularly check that pupils are making good progress in their learning. Pupils attain grades at GCSE in line with and or above those predicted. Children in the early years and the lower school make good progress from their starting points, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well in most subjects at GCSE, in particular in English, chemistry and computer science.
32. Teachers plan and explain learning well and use a range of approaches which help pupils to deepen their understanding. Pupils apply their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects, for example when using their mathematical understanding when plotting graphs to demonstrate the effects of climate change in science. Leaders develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills from an early age. Pupils are keen to answer questions in lessons and explain their learning. In the lower, middle and upper school, the consistent support and challenge, particularly around the teaching of English, mathematics and science, is of particular benefit to the pupils
33. The school has effective systematic procedures in place for gathering initial and ongoing assessment data regarding the pupils' learning and skills development, including those pupils who have SEND. This information is analysed, and the academic progress of pupils is closely tracked as they move up through the school. The data is then used to ensure that individual pupils' learning needs are supported accordingly, and if so required, appropriate strategies are put in place so that the progress of pupils of all abilities is maintained. This support helps to facilitate pupils at 16+ successfully gaining places at a range of local senior schools and sixth-form colleges to follow their desired course of study or training.
34. Pupils are well motivated and engaged in their learning, this is the result of the staff having good subject knowledge, which is then successfully delivered using a variety of teaching methods. Lessons are well planned and take into consideration the aptitudes and attainment levels of the pupils. The marking and feedback are consistent in quality and regularity, and impact positively on pupils' progress and learning outcomes.
35. An appropriate curriculum ensures that the pupils experience a wide range of ideas and cultural views. Teachers help pupils discuss complex issues in a sensitive way.
36. An appropriate range of lunchtime and after-school activities extends pupils' experience and allows pupils to deepen their knowledge and learn new skills outside of the timetabled curriculum.

Educational visits are planned to broaden pupils' aesthetic and cultural experiences. This includes field trips and visits to cities such as London and Barcelona.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

38. Mental health and wellbeing are prioritised by the school and pupils are supported to develop self-awareness and self-confidence, both in lessons and beyond. The mental health of pupils is a key focus of senior leaders, who encourage pupils through the PSHE programmes, form group sessions and year assemblies to become reflective and resilient. Pupils' wellbeing is closely monitored and tracked by the school, to enable support to be put in place when required.
39. The consistently high standards of behaviour expected by teachers in lessons, along with appropriate supervision, support pupils to accept responsibility for their actions. This results in a positive learning environment that promotes mental wellbeing. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are confident that staff will follow up on any worries or concerns they may have. Staff act promptly and respond to all reports of bullying. Pupils feel safe in school.
40. There is suitable indoor space for physical education and extensive use is made of the outdoor spaces. Physical education is delivered by knowledgeable specialist teachers, enabling pupils to experience a range of sporting activities and in many cases compete at school team level. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their physical education lessons and value the opportunity to compete in local and regional tournaments, including football, swimming and athletics.
41. Well-maintained teaching spaces, which include informative displays which aid pupils' learning, help pupils learn well and make progress. Effective use is made of the woodland environment areas allowing pupils to develop a range of skills, for example early years pupils being able to identify 'mini-beasts'. The dining room facility provides a broad range of healthy food options at lunchtime along with space for pupils to chat and relax with each other as they eat. A well-planned curriculum successfully ensures that pupils are interested in their work in the majority of lessons and are confident and self-motivated, and apply intellectual effort. The curriculum for English provides opportunities for pupils to explore British myths and legends. Pupils share their views enthusiastically, listening carefully to what each other has to say, and taking responsibility to capture everyone's ideas in writing.
42. The school-wide PSHE syllabus runs alongside the timetabled curriculum provision. The breadth of topics covered within this broader life skills subject informs, educates and positively supports the pupils' personal development, mental health and emotional wellbeing.
43. The school has suitable arrangements in place for pupils who have an injury, become unwell or have specific medical needs. All staff receive regular first aid training and have appropriate qualifications suitable for their roles. There is rapid contact with parents should a pupil become unwell during the school day.
44. Attendance registers are appropriately recorded and parents are contacted in the event of any absence, in line with the attendance policy. Observations of pupil registrations show that the local authority is appropriately notified when pupils join or leave the school.
45. There are formal and informal means for pupils to raise any concerns or ideas that they might have with senior leaders. This includes a lower school pupil council which provides opportunities for the younger pupils to put forward their thoughts and concerns about life in the school. Opportunities for

pupils in the middle and senior years to feedback on their views and experiences of school to leaders are limited. This means that leaders are not as well informed as they could be about the effectiveness and impact of policies on the experiences and outcomes of older pupils.

46. Pupils' spiritual development is supported through the religious education programme, assemblies, form meetings, and through visits to religious establishments. The PSHE programme supports the school's ethos of empowering individuality and promoting inclusivity. This is achieved by considering aspects of faith, inclusivity and diversity in assemblies form groups and through school focus groups.
47. Effective health and safety measures are in place and implemented effectively, through audits conducted by governing board members. The facilities management team ensures that health and safety issues raised by staff are acted on promptly. Systematic checks are made on fire safety equipment and fire drills are carried out termly. School staff are routinely trained on fire safety measures and health and safety risk reduction measures. Indoor and outdoor spaces are maintained to a high standard.
48. The school keeps parents informed of matters relating to safeguarding and mental health awareness through regular newsletters. This supports parents to continue wider conversations to reinforce messages to help pupils keep themselves safe. These have recently included, amongst other relevant guidance, the school's '10 top tips' for parents.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 49. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

50. Pupils show respect for each other and for staff. They take responsibility for their behaviour and are clear about the high expectations staff have of their behaviour. Pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils are polite and courteous and speak positively about their experiences at the school.
51. The PSHE curriculum helps pupils to deepen their understanding of tolerance and respect. Pupils are well informed about issues relating to equality and they celebrate diversity. Pupils know that individual characteristics require protection. Leaders have designed the curriculum so that pupils have opportunities to discuss increasingly complex issues sensitively. RSE is taught effectively in the lower school. However, pupils in the middle and senior schools do not recognise the importance of the programme to their learning and development. This means that pupils are not fully engaged in RSE lessons and do not learn the curriculum as well as they could. Staff who teach RSE in the middle and senior schools lack the specialist knowledge to teach the programme well.
52. Pupils from the early years onwards can successfully explain their understanding of British values, such as those of the rule of law and respect for others, and point out relevant displays in their classrooms and corridors which they have helped to produce. Younger children regularly select stories to read from different traditions and cultures. Visits to public institutions help pupils develop their understanding of public services. Visits to the school by representatives from the police force and fire service bring pupils' learning about the rule of law and legislative processes to life.
53. There are suitable but limited opportunities for the pupils to be involved in the wider community outside of school, with charity fundraising being the main vehicle for community links. Pupils have some understanding of the local community and this is usually focused around local sports fixtures or charitable work. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of pupils whose beliefs and practices differ. This is in part due to the wide coverage of the PSHE programme and focused assemblies which encourages mutual respect and the acceptance of pupil diversity, including those with protected characteristics. This is also supported by the opportunities that arise from having pupils from a wide range of backgrounds attending the school, which pupils say promotes an acceptance that pupils have the right to be different.
54. Pupils and parents value the school's work to help pupils feel well prepared for their future. Pupils know their strengths and areas for development and this helps them select their best next steps. Pupils in the upper school are given appropriate support and guidance in preparation for choosing GCSE subjects. This involves meetings with subject teachers in which information about the GCSE course is discussed and considered. Support and guidance for life beyond the school is provided in the form of a 1:1 meeting with the career's teacher, as well as through focused careers days. This results in most pupils being motivated by future opportunities and being well prepared for sixth-form opportunities.
55. Pupils learn about the laws and institutions and the concepts of democracy through the taught PSHE curriculum. The curriculum for religious education (RE) enables pupils to learn about different faiths and traditions. This promotes pupils' awareness of the differences and complexities in society. Pupils are well prepared for life in line with the school's aims. Teachers' sensitive handling of complex themes in RE enables pupils to explore religious subjects in more depth. For example, pupils discuss

the ways different religious groups apply their teachings to the way they lead their lives, for example, in supporting the victims of conflict. Pupils gain a deeper understanding of the role that religious groups play in society.

56. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum and wider experiences, such as the sporting and extra-curricular opportunities offered, which combine to promote pupils' personal development. This is complemented by the extensive whole-school PSHE programme. The PSHE programme covers a range of relevant topics that extend pupils' knowledge and awareness of wider social, cultural and economic matters. Pupils learn how to manage their finances. They apply this learning in organising fundraising activities.
57. Pupils are respectful and polite. They understand and follow the school rules and recognise the importance of rules and laws in society. The school positively promotes the values of kindness and respect. This helps prepare pupils to be good citizens who can contribute positively to society.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 58. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

59. There is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented consistently by all staff. There is a nominated governor with safeguarding responsibilities who has an appropriate oversight of safeguarding.
60. The school safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory requirements. The safeguarding team receives appropriate higher-level training to enable them to carry out their roles confidently. The team readily engages with local agencies for guidance and support, including providing training for governors. Referrals to the local authority children's services, including when necessary the police or other specialist agencies, are made promptly.
61. Staff and governors, are well trained and regularly briefed on safeguarding matters. They are knowledgeable of child protection procedures and practices including those for online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism.
62. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. Pupils from the early years to Year 11 learn about online safety through their weekly PSHE and computing lessons. Suitable filtering and monitoring systems are in place to ensure the safety of pupils and staff.
63. Rigorous reviews of safeguarding incidents take place, any necessary changes in protocols are identified, and appropriate actions are taken where required. The school carries out an annual safeguarding audit as requested by the local authority. Senior leaders undertake an annual review of safeguarding, as required by the governing board.
64. Pupils are aware of how to report abuse, bullying, and inappropriate behaviour and can raise concerns whether they occur within school or out of school time. Pupils are confident that they can speak to a range of adults in school if they have any worries or concerns.
65. Senior managers are trained in safer recruitment procedures, and robust recruitment checks are in place for all staff, agency staff, volunteers and governors. A suitable central record of appointments is kept which is accurate and well maintained. Leaders and nominated governing board members check the single central record of appointments regularly to assure themselves that the processes are robust and followed diligently.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 66. All the relevant Standards are met.**

The quality of the early years foundation stage in the registered early years provision

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

67. The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is inadequate.
68. Weaknesses in leadership and management mean that there are breaches of requirements which impact on children's personal development, safety and wellbeing. These relate to changes that must be notified to Ofsted, suitability of premises and adequate supervision during mealtimes. Therefore, safeguarding is not effective.
69. Staff carefully plan the curriculum. They use their observations of children's learning to ensure that teaching reflects children's needs and interests. Staff set children's individual targets and they organise their provision to ensure that it supports all children. For example, staff seek advice from outdoor agencies in a timely manner. They implement strategies, such as providing sensory resources and activities to promote children's focus and involvement. This helps to promote positive outcomes for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
70. Children understand how to develop their skills well because adults model effective learning and engage with them in their play. Children learn to access resources confidently and use their own ideas with enthusiasm, such as when they revisit prior learning and look at books independently to seek facts about birds.
71. Staff are positive role models and they encourage children to use good manners. Children frequently say 'please' and 'thank you' in their interactions with their friends.

Quality of education

72. The quality of education is good.
73. Staff design the curriculum well and the skills they want children to learn are sequenced appropriately as children move from one room to the next. For example, as children move on from the baby to the toddler rooms, staff expect them to transition from babbling and responding to their name to using single words with meaning.
74. Staff promote opportunities for children to explore, discover and be curious. For instance, young babies show an interest in balls and their different colours. They experiment with balls and roll them back and forth to staff. This helps to build their hand-eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills, spatial awareness and grasping skills. Babies show similar interest in sensory resources, such as mirrors and lights. They eagerly crawl over to experiment with them alongside their key person.
75. Staff effectively model good speaking and listening skills and encourage children to develop their language and communication. Staff use opportunities to introduce new vocabulary and new concepts well. For instance, children learn bird names and about the concept of 'camouflage' when making bird nests from different materials.

76. Staff help younger children to develop their co-ordination, balance and large-muscle movements well. For example, young children are supported to learn to climb up steps with control. They show delight as they make it to the top and then push themselves down the slide.

Behaviour and attitudes

77. Behaviour and attitudes are good.
78. Children have high levels of respect for others. They show confidence in social situations and are happy to talk to unfamiliar adults and answer questions about their learning. Young babies greet guests with a smile and a wave. They appear happy and settled in their environment.
79. Children show many characteristics of effective learning. For instance, children develop their imaginations when dressing up and taking on the role of people who help us, such as a police officer. Young babies engage in imaginative play as staff support them to re-enact everyday tasks familiar adults complete, such as making phone calls.
80. Overall, children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, staff do not manage transition times fully effectively. For example, children sit at tables waiting for prolonged periods in anticipation of mealtimes or for their turn to wash their hands. They quickly become restless, and staff do not reflect on how to use these times more effectively for learning.

Personal development

81. The personal development of children is inadequate.
82. Leaders do not consistently ensure that children are adequately supervised whilst eating and children do not equally benefit from social and well-organised mealtimes. For example, in the toddler room, children are not supervised well enough. Some children leave the table with food in their hand and they continue to eat as they move around the setting. Staff are unaware and they continue with other tasks, such as group activities and tidying up. Children remain unnoticed for a significant period and at times they are out of sight. This poses a choking risk and therefore a risk to their safety.
83. Staff develop positive partnerships with parents. For instance, they ask parents to share information about children before they start attending in order to help them to settle in. Leaders have recently reviewed their food menus following completion of nutrition training. Leaders are keen to work with parents to accommodate preferences. However, they are not consistently clear with parents about the importance of a healthy diet. In some cases, leaders do not sufficiently challenge parents' requests for them to provide less-healthy food options as part of their provision. In these cases, leaders agree to provide children with alternative less healthy food options. This is not fully effective in helping to promote healthy eating habits and choices at home and in nursery.
84. Staff organise play spaces effectively to develop children's independence. For instance, they make sure that toys and resources are easily accessible. There is sufficient outdoor space and staff use the school grounds to enhance opportunities for daily fresh air and exercise. Young children benefit from frequent walks and older children complete forest school activities. Children also learn about their local community, such as during trips to the train station.

Leadership and management

85. Leadership and management are inadequate.
86. The leader demonstrates some understanding of times when notifications need to be made, for example about serious incidents or illnesses. However, leaders do not understand their roles and it is unclear who takes responsibility for making notifications. Since registration, there have been significant changes to the premises and number of children cared for, which have not been notified in line with requirements of registration.
87. Since the changes in premises that are used for childcare, leaders have ensured that buildings meet indoor space requirements. However, procedures to ensure that the premises are fit for purpose and suitable for the activities provided are not robust. The leader and her team can explain the procedures for checking rooms where the temperature can fluctuate. However, this is not monitored effectively enough and the leader does not have an accurate oversight of how and when rooms are being used. Staff do not consistently follow procedures for assessing when it is and is not appropriate to use rooms. This means that on occasion, children spend time in rooms that have an unacceptably high temperature and to manage this they remove multiple layers of clothing. This puts children at a high risk of overheating.
88. Leaders focus on improving staff knowledge. They provide frequent opportunities for staff to attend training. This has a positive impact on children's behaviour and learning. For instance, staff find out how to support children's feelings and emotions. They share their learning with staff in other rooms and prepare resources which help them to explore feelings and emotions with children. Children are now increasingly able to express and identify emotions, such as shocked and show empathy for their peers.
89. Leaders ensure that staff feel well supported in their roles. For instance, they regularly check in on staff wellbeing and they ensure that staff have an appropriate amount of time to complete their duties.

Safeguarding

90. Safeguarding is not effective. Breaches in requirements from the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage have a significant impact on the safety and wellbeing of children.

Areas for action

- Area for action – EYFS 3.87 Changes that must be notified to Ofsted.
- Area for action – EYFS 3.64 Suitability of premises.
- Area for action – EYFS 3.35 Staff-child ratios with particular relation to adequate supervision during mealtimes.

Recommended next steps

- Strengthen partnerships with parents and ensure that they understand nursery policies and procedures from the outset, in particular, to promote healthy eating.

- Support staff to help them understand and share good practice of how to manage transition times effectively.

The extent to which the school meets the requirements of the early years foundation stage

- The school's registered provision for childcare does not consistently meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006. A schedule of unmet requirements is included below.

Schedule of unmet early years foundation stage requirements in the registered early years setting

Section 3 – The safeguarding and welfare requirements

The relevant requirements are not met.

| Paragraph number | Early years foundation stage requirements |
|------------------|--|
| EYFS 3.35 | Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, including whilst eating, and decide how to use staff to ensure children's needs are met. |
| EYFS 3.64 | Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements. |
| EYFS 3.87 | All registered early years providers must notify Ofsted of any change: To the premises which may affect the space available to children and the quality of childcare available to them. |

School details

| | |
|---|--|
| School | Tower College |
| Department for Education number | 342/6001 |
| Registered early years number | EY437686 |
| Registered charity number | 526611 |
| Address | Tower College Mill Lane Rainhill Prescot Merseyside L35 6NE |
| Phone number | 0151 426 4633 |
| Email address | office@towercollege.com |
| Website | towercollege.com |
| Proprietor | Christian Schools Limited |
| Chair of governors | Mr Daniel Oxley |
| Principal | Ms Andrea Bingley |
| Age range | 0–16 |
| Number of pupils | 305 |
| Number of children in the early years registered setting | 185 |
| Date of previous inspection | 15 to 18 June 2021 |

Information about the school

91. Tower College is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged 0 to 16 years. It is a charitable trust and operates as Christian School's Limited, which is a limited company, the directors of whom are the school's proprietors. The work of the school is overseen by the directors who are assisted by governors who act in an advisory board capacity. The school has a pre-preparatory department for children aged 3 to 5 years in the early years, a lower school for pupils aged 5 to 9 years, a middle school for those aged 9 to 13 years, and an upper school for pupils aged 13 to 16 years.
92. The school has a registered early years setting, the Tower Tots, which provides day-care throughout the year for children aged 0 to 5 years.
93. The school has identified 44 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
94. English is an additional language for 5 pupils.
95. The school states its aims are to provide a well-rounded education which provides pupils with the opportunities and support to gain fundamental life skills, to be outward-looking and confident in their abilities and to become responsible citizens, able to solve problems both individually and as part of a team.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

96. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

97. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

98. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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