

Marshland High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121212
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	343770
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	808
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Goddard JP
Headteacher	Matthew Parr-Burman
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2009
School address	School Road West Walton, Wisbech PE14 7HA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 46 lessons, taught by 33 different teachers. In addition, they held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, a representative of the local authority and three groups of students. They observed the school's operation, talked to many students informally, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including students' assessed work in lessons. In addition to returns of 156 parental questionnaires, inspectors considered responses from 52 staff and 137 student questionnaires.

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

- the progress made by students in lessons, particularly for different groups of students including higher ability students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and all students in English lessons
- the extent to which the school is monitoring and improving the quality of its teaching, learning and assessment in all subjects
- the impact of the school's specialist science status on the students' experiences, motivation and achievement
- how effectively the school has evaluated and monitored the quality of its work across all areas, particularly that of different groups.

Information about the school

Marshland High School is a smaller than average comprehensive school located near Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The vast majority of students are White British and speak English as a first language. Around 5% of students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, much lower than that found nationally. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although the number of students with a statement outlining their needs is double that found in similar schools. The school has a higher than average proportion of students with a Traveller background. The school gained specialist status for science in September 2005 and holds the International Schools Silver Award. At the school's last inspection in May 2009 it was given a Notice to Improve. A subsequent monitoring visit in November 2009 deemed the school to be making good progress against the issues raised.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Marshland High is a satisfactory school that is improving. In some key areas it is improving more markedly than others. Since its inspection in 2009, the school has increased its focus on teaching and learning, and diversified its curriculum. A culture of high aspirations is being embedded successfully by the headteacher, the senior management team and by staff and students alike. As a result, students' attendance has improved further and is now good, and standards, particularly in English and mathematics, are rising rapidly. The school recognises that there is more to do to improve the achievement for all groups of students, to improve results in English and to increase the overall number of students gaining the highest grades.

Several aspects of the school's work, although judged satisfactory on this inspection have good features. For, example, students' behaviour has improved. Students behave appropriately when moving around the school and inspectors observed much good behaviour in assemblies and lessons. In several lessons, however, the behaviour of a significant minority of students was disruptive and impeded the learning of others. Behaviour, in a few of these cases, was not always managed well by the teacher.

The increased tracking of individual students' progress has enabled the school to provide good support for those at risk of falling behind. Particularly good support exists for students with a Traveller background and those who are looked after by the local authority. Most students enjoy lessons and are punctual. The quality of lessons is improving but not all lessons plan well enough for students with differing abilities and, as a result, the pace of students' progress is slowed in some cases. Students benefit greatly from the increasing number of opportunities available to take on positions of responsibility, with some students even creating additional roles for themselves.

It is too soon to see the full impact of the school's recent initiatives on all areas of student achievement. In addition, its monitoring and evaluation of a few key aspects of its work is still not sufficiently rigorous, making it difficult to identify patterns in performance. The governing body has played a major role in the improvement of safeguarding, which was a key issue at the last inspection, and the school's arrangements are now good with outstanding features. Although members of the governing body are highly supportive of the school, they do not receive enough information in a format that gives them a clear overview of all students' performance over time or receive enough detail about the performance of different groups. As a result, they are unable to challenge leaders and managers as effectively as they could. The school's capacity for sustained improvement across all areas of its work is satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further for all groups of students including the proportion of highest grades, particularly but not exclusively, in English, for the more able, and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - ensuring that every lesson is carefully planned and implemented to give students of all abilities the opportunity to extend their learning fully
 - sharing more widely the best assessment and teaching practice that exists in the school
 - improving the consistency of students' behaviour in lessons and the way in which it is managed so that all students can make at least good progress in the time available.
- Ensure that the school evaluates with equal rigour all aspects of its work so that this provides a clear basis for improvement by:
 - using trend data more consistently to measure clearly the impact made by initiatives
 - providing more consistent and coherent monitoring and evaluation in key areas, such as its equalities promotion and specialist status
 - ensuring that the analysis and monitoring of different groups of students is undertaken in sufficient detail to aid targeted improvement planning.
- Improve the reporting to the governing body on the performance of students, particularly how well different groups are doing by:
 - providing frequent, summarised reports to the governing body which indicate headline information on all students' performance over time so that governors are in a better position to gain a clearer overview and challenge leaders and managers more effectively.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average or just below. Standards have risen rapidly over three years from a low base and in 2009/10 the proportion achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was close to that found nationally. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades, although improving, remains low. Inspectors' scrutiny of workbooks and their observations in lessons confirmed the school's view of that attainment is average and improving. Inspectors observed much good learning in several lessons. In a number of other lessons, however, they found the progress of some students, particularly those of higher ability and occasionally students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, being impeded because the activities planned were not sufficiently stretching or engaging to enable them to make good progress. Inspectors' observations showed students making at least satisfactory or better progress in English and mathematics.

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Attainment of both genders improved in 2009/10 with a notable increase in the standards reached by boys. The school recognises the gap in performance between genders and although girls' attainment has improved each year, the rate of improvement is slower than that of boys. Students' achievement in science subjects is uneven.

The school has successfully created a friendly environment in which students feel safe. The regular promotion of health, well-being and sporting activities is improving, although the full impact of this and how it is helping students make informed choices is not yet fully evaluated. Students are prepared well for life after school, with a high proportion of students progressing successfully into further education after Year 11.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers show good subject knowledge in lessons and are confident in their approach. Good teaching exists across the school, although several lessons are too teacher-led and are not planned well enough to ensure that the activities and pace cater for all ability ranges. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) in lessons observed by inspectors was satisfactory, although in a few lessons it was used creatively to motivate and engage students. The school monitors the quality of its teaching carefully and frequently, and has been successful in increasing the number of good lessons. Assessment is improving, although the quality of written feedback still varies too much.

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The wide and varied curriculum has led to improvements in students' personal development and well-being. For example, the growing range of enrichment activities on offer has high take-up rates, which adds considerable enjoyment to students' time at school and enables them to get more actively involved in the life of the school and local community. The school's specialist science status has increased participation and interest in science subjects, although it has yet to impact more widely across other subjects or consistently improve students' achievement in science subjects. The care and support of students, especially for those who are vulnerable or who have barriers to learning, are strengths of the school. For example, increasing numbers of students from Traveller backgrounds are staying on through the school until Year 11. All students value highly the support they receive. The tracking of individual students' progress is much improved and has contributed to significant rises in attendance over three years for all groups of students. Support for literacy has resulted in marked improvements in the number of students successfully gaining a grade C or higher in English.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior team are working effectively to promote a positive ethos and, together with middle leaders, they provide a clear and ambitious direction for the school. Students' attainment and attendance is rising at a rapid rate, although some inconsistency in results by subjects remains. Subject management is improving, but trends in results in some subjects are uneven. The school has made improvements to the rigour of its monitoring and evaluation in several areas, such as departmental subject reviews and its comprehensive overview of teaching and learning. The evaluation of other aspects of the school's work, such as its overall self evaluation, community cohesion and equalities monitoring, is less robust because it does not focus sufficiently on the impact of initiatives, particularly through the analysis of trend data.

Safeguarding arrangements are very comprehensive. The school's tracking of its single central register and its accredited training to raise awareness on safeguarding is exemplary features. Safeguarding procedures are monitored well by the governing body but its monitoring of other key aspects is less rigorous. Governors are not always provided with a sharp enough picture about trends in performance or the achievement of different student groups. The school has improved further its engagement with parents and carers, but recognises that more needs to be done to ensure all parental queries and/or concerns are responded to swiftly. In order to improve this, the school is in the process of organising a parent and carer council.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A fairly low proportion of parental questionnaire returns were made during the inspection. The parental questionnaires revealed that most parents and carers who responded were supportive of the school's work. Parental responses and comments did identify that a minority of parents would like the school to improve communications arrangements and swifter response times. Parents and carers would also like the school to deal more effectively with unacceptable behaviour in some, particularly mixed ability, lessons. Inspectors endorsed the majority of parental views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marshland High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 156 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 808 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	37	84	54	5	3	7	4
The school keeps my child safe	46	29	96	62	5	3	6	4
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	24	85	54	17	11	4	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	21	86	55	11	7	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	26	17	85	54	17	11	4	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	19	77	49	27	17	7	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	15	100	64	13	8	5	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	20	85	54	15	10	5	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	17	87	56	14	9	9	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	21	68	44	23	15	13	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	13	77	49	25	16	9	6
The school is led and managed effectively	29	19	81	52	14	9	14	9
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	22	90	58	15	10	7	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Marshland High School, Wisbech, PE14 7HA

I would like to thank you all for welcoming me and my four colleagues to your school. We found the overall effectiveness of your school to be satisfactory and that your school no longer requires a Notice to Improve. We noted several good features, including your school's curriculum which is giving you a growing range of subjects and extra-curricular activities to choose from, allowing many of you to take on additional roles and responsibilities and get more involved in the life of the school. Marshland High is improving and the number of you who are successfully gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE is improving rapidly. You told us that attendance and behaviour has improved notably in your school and think many of your lessons are good - although you said that in some lessons your learning is spoilt by the silly behaviour of a few students. We agree with what you say.

There are three areas we felt your school could improve further:

Improve your GCSE results, particularly in English and improve the number of you gaining the highest grades. We felt the school could do this by making sure all of your lessons challenge and engage you so you can make good progress in lesson time and by ensuring behaviour is good in all lessons so you can learn more effectively.

Increase the thoroughness with which the school monitors and evaluates several areas of its work, so it can better celebrate what it does well and plan more effectively for what it needs to improve.

Make sure your school's governing body gets really clear information on how all of you are doing so it can help managers to continue to successfully improve all of your achievement.

The staff at Marshland High School want your education to be an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. You can contribute to your school's improvement by practising your spelling and grammar and working as hard as you can in all lessons to achieve your very best. Thank you again for your help in this inspection. I would like to wish you all the best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins

Her Majesty's Inspector

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