

# Marshland High School

School Road, West Walton, Wisbech, PE14 7HA

**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2012

<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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Not all students are making good progress or attaining the grades of which they are capable.
- Teaching does not always meet the needs of all the students. Sometimes work is not matched closely enough to the stage that students have reached. Some work is not hard enough to challenge the most able.
- In some lessons the pace of progress slows down and students do not move on as quickly as they should.
- Marking does not always explain to students how they can improve their work.
- Some of the plans to increase the rate of students' progress and to make teaching even better have not been in place long enough to have had their full effect.

### The school has the following strengths

- The progress of many students is improving and standards are rising.
- GCSE results for 2013 are on course to be the school's best ever.
- The amount of good teaching is also rising.
- Behaviour is good and most students work hard in the majority of lessons.
- The way in which teachers and other staff support students with their personal development is a significant strength.
- The governing body, headteacher and senior leaders are a strong team. Together they are bringing about significant and rapid improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 41 lessons (lessons at Marshland High are 100 minutes in length). Inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher or a member of the school’s senior leadership team on 24 of the observations.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the senior leadership team, some heads of department, students and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the work in students’ books and discussed their work with students.
- Account was taken of the school’s information about students’ attainment and progress, its self-evaluation and plans for future improvements. Inspectors also looked at a range of documents and policies concerning school management and keeping students safe.
- Consideration was given to 33 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and to 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Hawkes	Additional Inspector
St John Burkett	Additional Inspector
John Hucker	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is a little smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from other ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are low. A small number of students are from the Traveller Community.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus is a little above average. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional government funding through the pupil premium (funding which supports the learning of those students known to be eligible for a free school meal, those in the care of the local authority and for some whose parents are deployed in the armed forces) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better by:
  - ensuring that work is consistently and precisely matched to the stage that students have reached and builds on what they have already learned
  - making sure that the work set for the most able students is always hard enough to extend them further
  - maintaining a good pace of learning throughout all lessons
  - marking students' work in ways that give them clear advice about how to make their work even better.
- Maintain the current pattern of improvement so that all students make at least good progress by building on the recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Over the last two years a clear pattern is seen of significant improvement in students' progress and in the standards they attain. In 2011 the progress of some students was inadequate and the proportion attaining five GCSE passes at A\*-C grades, including English and mathematics, was below average.
- In 2012 standards, while still below average, improved markedly as did the proportion of students making or exceeding the expected progress. The school's records of students' attainment and progress, confirmed by the work seen in their books and during lessons, show that the trend of improvement is on course to continue in 2013. Even so, standards in science continue to lag behind those in English and mathematics.
- In the current group of Year 11 students a higher proportion than ever before are either making or exceeding the progress expected of them. The percentage of students gaining five GCSE A\*-C grade passes, including English and mathematics, is set to be very close to the national average and will be the highest ever achieved by students from this school. This is the result of a concerted effort to improve the quality of teaching. However, this work is not complete as there are still some students who are not making as much progress as they could.
- A similar pattern of improvement is also evident in Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9), where more students are making at least the progress that is expected of them. Standards in these years are also coming closer to the nationally expected levels. This is particularly so in reading, where the school's policy for students to read each day in registration and to spend time reading at the start of every English lesson is paying dividends. Consequently, more students are making good progress, usually having entered the school at below average starting points.
- The policy of helping students to improve their writing in all subjects is also contributing to rising standards, although this policy is not universally applied by all teachers. With just a few exceptions the school has curtailed the early entry to GCSE examinations. This is to give students a better opportunity to attain higher grades.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are achieving on a par with other groups and an increasing proportion are making better than expected progress. The same is true of students from the Traveller Community and those who speak English as an additional language. There is clear evidence, in their books and during lessons, that students who are entitled to benefit from additional government funding are also making better progress. The school's data show that the gap between the attainment of students who are entitled to the pupil premium and that of others is narrowing. In the case of all these groups, improvements are happening because careful attention is given to meeting their needs and they are supported well by teachers and by teaching assistants.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The residue of inadequate teaching has been addressed and there is an increasing proportion that is good and some that is outstanding. This is as a result of a concerted focus by the headteacher and senior leadership team to improve teaching. This better teaching is resulting in improved progress. Even so, some inconsistencies remain and not all teaching is good.
- In some lessons teachers do not meet the needs of the full range of abilities. This happens when

planning does not give sufficient consideration to using the stage that students have already reached. This applies most frequently when the work set for the most able students is not hard enough. That said, in the best lessons, even when students are already grouped by ability teachers and teaching assistants give significant attention to meeting the needs of each student.

- There are lessons in which the pace of students' progress slows down. Sometimes teachers talk too much at the expense of involving students in practical activities, responding to questions and taking part in discussions. These were often lessons in which the teachers did not give enough attention to building on what students already knew. During the inspection lessons were seen in which students were well motivated and engaged throughout. This occurred when teachers gave careful consideration to building on what students had done before and regularly discussed their progress with them. For example, in a Year 11 German lesson the teacher frequently referred to precisely what students needed to do to attain an A\* or A grade. The guidance they received made them confident that they would attain these grades.
- Assessments of students' attainment and progress are accurate and frequent. However, the marking of students' work is inconsistent. In some cases teachers do not give students enough advice about how to improve their work. On the other hand, there are also instances in which teachers work consistently to ensure that students are well-informed about the level they have reached and about what they need to do to improve their grades.
- Teaching assistants, often under the leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator, provide good support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs and for those who benefit from additional government funding. Many of these students gain a great deal from individual support, from opportunities to work in small groups and from work that is carefully tailored to their particular needs.
- Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Positive relationships between adults and students and opportunities to work together and to support each other are encouraged effectively. There are frequent, good opportunities for students to learn about world affairs and to consider the plight of those less fortunate than themselves.

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

- Students behave well and have predominantly good attitudes to learning. They are well motivated and value the consistent recognition of their efforts and celebration of their successes by staff.
- Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe in school. The majority of students agree with this view.
- Students are full of praise for the support and guidance they receive for their personal development. They are confident there is an adult they can turn to at times of crisis or when facing difficulties. Students particularly appreciate the guidance provided by the careers adviser and the support they receive from the excellent pastoral team.
- Prior to 2012, attendance was below average. It is now above average. The school, uses some of the pupil premium funding to pay for an attendance officer, whose work is proving to be central to the significant improvements in attendance.
- The proportion of students who are excluded for unacceptable behaviour has also fallen

significantly. This is mainly because of the skilful and consistent way in which staff support students and manage instances of unacceptable behaviour. Disruptions are infrequent and learning is rarely impeded.

- Instances of bullying in its various forms have also reduced. This is because of the effective work to raise students' awareness. Again, the work of the pastoral team is central to these developments. Students are aware of how to stay safe and understand the potential dangers posed by the internet and mobile phones. Students also recognise the anxiety that can be caused by physical and verbal abuse and other forms of intimidation. They show respect for those who are from different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and senior leaders, in a relatively short time, have formed an influential and dynamic leadership team. In partnership with the governing body they have established a powerful drive for improvement and clear plans to tackle any remaining areas of underperformance.
- School leaders have united the staff in the ambition to maintain improvements. Heads of department are working effectively to ensure consistent approaches across all subjects to tracking students' progress, assessing their attainment and improving the quality of teaching. All staff are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to eliminating all forms of discrimination.
- While no one is complacent, the governing body and school leaders are rightly confident that the current rapid improvement can be sustained. For example, inspection evidence clearly shows that standards are rising, there are significant improvements in students' progress, more good teaching is evident, attendance has improved and the number of excluded students has reduced dramatically.
- Leaders set ambitious targets, and plans for continued improvement are linked closely to students' needs and the continued commitment to driving up standards. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and recognises the areas of the school's work that still require improvement.
- Teachers have good opportunities for continued professional development. The performance management and appraisal of teachers is linked appropriately to the teaching standards and to teachers' pay and conditions. Promotions and additional pay awards are tied in closely with the school's targets for continued improvement.
- The range of learning opportunities and the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contribute well to their academic and personal development. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has a justifiably high profile and students participate with great enthusiasm. Sporting events, termly musical presentations, annual productions (this year it is the Wizard of Oz), educational visits in the United Kingdom and further afield are all embraced by the students. Students also willingly take responsibility and give generously to a range of charities.
- There is good alternative provision in the form of vocational courses in the workplace and at the local college of further education. These are valued by the students for the opportunities they provide and the qualifications that can be gained.

- The school works effectively to ensure that parents and carers are well informed about their children’s academic and personal development.
  
- The local authority has made a highly effective contribution to school improvement. However, the level of support has been reduced. This is because the local authority recognises the strength of the leadership team to ensure the school can stand on its own feet.
  
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are frequent visitors to the school and are great advocates for its work. They are well informed about all aspects of performance, including the quality of teaching. They are also fully involved in self-evaluation, target setting and the performance management of staff. Governors understand how the school is improving and are fully aware of what still needs to be done. Having accessed appropriate training they are also well placed to compare the performance of the school with that of similar schools and with the national picture. Governors have a particularly strong approach to overseeing the careful use of the school’s budget. This includes the allocation of pupil premium funding and the evaluation of how it is helping to close the gap in terms of the progress these students make in relation to that of others.

## 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>	121212
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	406008

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	810
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Shaun Prendagast
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Dormor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01945 584146
<b>Fax number</b>	01945 581225
<b>Email address</b>	office@marshlandhigh.co.uk

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