

Marshlands Primary School

Marshfoot Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2PH

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils' attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2 is consistently very low in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make inadequate progress.
- Many pupils leave the school without the basic skills they need for their secondary education. Three in every five pupils in Year 6 do not reach the expected levels in English and mathematics.
- Reading skills are poorly developed and so too many pupils are not confident readers.
- The senior and middle leadership of the school are inadequate. Senior staff are ineffective in improving teaching and ensuring pupils do better.
- Teaching is inadequate because teachers and senior leaders expect too little of the pupils.
- Pupils' work in lessons is usually too easy for them and so their work is of a low standard.
- The governing body is weak. It accepts the low standards and does not challenge the school to improve.
- The school's leadership does not recognise the problems. Senior leaders and governors responded inadequately to a critical independent review of the school in January 2012.
- The school's strategic plan is unfocused and not bringing about improvements. The school lacks the capacity to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- Children do well in Nursery and Reception because in these classes the teaching and curriculum are good.
- Day to day, the school runs smoothly and calmly. Pupils are looked after and cared for well.
- Parents are made welcome. They value the help and advice the school provides.
- The school's building and grounds are pleasant, inviting and well maintained.
- Pupils usually behave sensibly, play happily together and are ready to learn.
- Pupils enjoy, and benefit from, some interesting activities, such as clubs and educational visits.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed the school’s work including 12 lessons, involving eight teachers. Two of the lesson observations were carried out jointly with senior members of staff. The inspectors observed playtimes and two assemblies, and analysed pupils’ work in several subjects and listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, some parents and a representative of the local authority. They also considered the four responses about the school from parents through the online questionnaire (Parent View), which is on the Ofsted website.
- The inspection team looked at school documents including: the school’s strategic plan; its self-evaluation; data about how well pupils are progressing; minutes of meetings, pupil records and reports about the school.

Inspection team

Robin Hammerton, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Steven Popper

Seconded Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Marshlands is smaller than the average sized primary school, but growing, with a nursery.
- Most pupils are White British.
- Nearly half of the pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This is a much higher proportion than average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs being supported at School Action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at School Action Plus, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- In 2012, the school did not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By following the other improvement recommendations below, and as a matter of urgency raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics so that:
 - the school meets at least the floor standard for pupils' progress
 - standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 rise considerably and quickly
 - pupils in all year groups regularly meet challenging milestones, working towards these overall targets to overcome the current backlog of underachievement.
- Improve teaching significantly, so that it is consistently good and better by:
 - raising considerably the expectations of staff about what pupils can and should achieve
 - ensuring teachers set challenging tasks for pupils, based on assessments of their needs and precisely what they need to learn next
 - ensuring teachers use good questioning of pupils consistently to enhance and draw out their thinking
 - making whole class teaching sharper so that pupils spend less time listening to the teacher and more time engaging in demanding tasks
 - using staff performance management more robustly to hold teachers to account and support them in targeting and bringing about improvement
 - ensuring that pupils have consistent, well organised opportunities to read widely.
- Sharpen considerably school self-evaluation so that, in particular, the quality of teaching is robustly and accurately evaluated, and that the school is clear about how well all pupils are progressing as individuals and groups.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the school improvement planning by:
 - identifying clear targets and milestones for pupils' progress and attainment, for all cohorts and groups

- including within the plan, actions which are designed to achieve the milestones and show how these actions are rigorously and regularly monitored and evaluated
- ensuring that the Pupil Premium funding is carefully targeted and that the impact of this expenditure on outcomes for the pupils concerned is robustly checked.
- Improve quickly and radically the leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring senior leaders clearly and consistently raise expectations amongst the staff and demonstrate the skills needed to bring about improvement
 - providing support and challenge for staff as needed
 - planning strategically and evaluating the school’s work and its impact very carefully
 - allowing middle leaders to take more responsibility for the provision and standards in their areas, being clear about what is expected of them and ensuring they are well supported and held accountable for the impact of their work
 - immediately undertaking a review of governance and ensure that governors have high expectations of the school, can hold school leaders properly to account and show the skills necessary to undertake the tasks of governance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- As at the last inspection, children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They learn to work and play independently and cooperatively, and develop useful skills in literacy and numeracy. So although they start behind, by the age of five the children reach average attainment.
- This promising start is then poorly built on. Pupils make slow progress from Years 1 to 6. They work sensibly and show interest in their learning, but the work in their books and in lessons is mainly of a low standard. Too little is expected of them. Pupils themselves say that they want more of a challenge.
- In some lessons, pupils become confused because the work is not well suited to their needs. For example, pupils are bombarded with too many things to think about at once. At other times, the work becomes repetitive. This makes it hard for them to succeed.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and who are entitled to the Pupil Premium funding, is notably below that of pupils entitled to free school meals nationally. The same applies to all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Regular teaching of phonics has developed younger pupils' understanding of letters and sounds. However, too many pupils read poorly. They are sometimes uncertain of how to 'sound out' words, or of the meaning of passages in books. Some pupils do not change their reading books regularly enough, and are not helped enough to know what would be best for them to read. Their individual reading record books are not always kept up-to-date.
- Pupils' written work is too often untidily presented. Their handwriting is often incorrectly or carelessly formed, including that of many older pupils.
- Pupils' performance in national tests clearly reflects the low standards in the classrooms. At Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is exceptionally low and is declining over time. At Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is also consistently exceptionally low. Only two fifths of pupils reach the expected standards and few reach higher levels, especially in English.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching from Years 1 to 6 does not help pupils to learn quickly enough. The main weakness is that teachers expect far too little of the pupils. They are not sure how to plan the pupils' next steps in learning, so that these are challenging and right for each pupil.
- In a Key Stage 1 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed practical work, but it was too easy for them and they spent too much time cutting and sticking, and too little time learning mathematics. In a Key Stage 2 English lesson, the work set by the teacher lacked purpose and under-used the pupils' exciting experiences from a visit out the day before. The same thing happened in a Key Stage 1 history lesson.
- Teachers often talk too much at the start of lessons and sometimes when the lesson is underway. Pupils then have to wait too long to get on with their activities and work. The teaching is not sharp or demanding enough; staff do not routinely question pupils deeply to improve their understanding and thinking. In a physical education lesson, pupils were sitting inactive for too long on the playground and did not have enough time to work on their throwing and catching skills, or understand well enough how they could improve.
- The needs of different groups of pupils are too often poorly met. For example, work for pupils with special educational needs is often not well matched to their particular needs. Some pupils need help to improve their grammar when speaking, but staff are inconsistent in correcting or helping these pupils if they make grammatical errors.
- The school provides special teaching individually or in groups for pupils who members of staff

consider need extra support. These lessons are poorly checked on by leaders so it is not always clear how much progress pupils make as a result.

- The teaching in Nursery and Reception is good. In these classes, open-ended questioning by staff is often well used to encourage children to think for themselves. Staff plan the learning activities well, so that children's needs, which are carefully assessed, are closely met. Often the children choose and adapt the activities independently.
- Throughout the school adults offer much encouragement and support, and the pupils really like this. Teachers help pupils to work together socially and to understand moral values and rules.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- In lessons and assemblies, pupils usually behave well. However, some pupils begin to misbehave at times, especially when the teaching is weak, and this requires improvement.
- The school is a safe, welcoming and supportive place for children and their families. As a result, pupils are generally happy and want to learn.
- Pupils play together cooperatively in the playground and are well supervised and looked after there. They understand different ways that bullying can occur and say, if it does happen, it is dealt with well by staff. School records support this view.
- Staff work hard to involve all parents and families. The community cohesion leader has successfully developed family learning, a breakfast club and welcoming events for parents, such as coffee mornings. Parents' evenings take place regularly. Parents are supportive of the school and are pleased that their children behave positively.
- Staff, led by the headteacher, know the pupils and their circumstances well. Where some pupils' circumstances have made them particularly vulnerable, the school has successfully worked to help them and their families, so that the pupils can continue their education.
- Pupils benefit from having to produce business plans when setting up new club activities and application forms for jobs they want to do in the school. This gives them a sense of achievement and allows them to take some responsibility. Staff listen to pupils' opinions carefully when new ideas are being considered.
- Pupils' attendance remains consistently below average and this continues to require improvement. The school promotes better attendance through a range of strategies, including assemblies attended by parents and a careful following up of pupil absences.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- The local authority has been worried about Marshlands for some time, so it paid for an independent review of the school in January 2012. This review found many of the severe weaknesses also discovered in this inspection, including those in teaching. The local authority then offered to pay the person who led the review to help the school. The headteacher, however, refused this offer. She presented the review report to governors in over-positive terms and governors did not question this robustly.
- The school does not show the capacity to improve by itself. Although staff work hard, there is little urgency to recognise the problems and put them right. Low expectations of the pupils have become widespread amongst staff and governors.
- The school's own self-evaluation is much too generous. Despite the very low attainment and poor achievement of the pupils, the school considered that teaching was good, when it is inadequate. Senior staff too often use examples of individual pupils, who they consider have done well, to try to justify or counter the overall underachievement of all groups of pupils.
- Senior staff and governors do not check carefully on the performance of different groups of pupils to ensure that all have equal and fair opportunities. Too little store is placed on the underachievement of groups, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, or

those eligible for free school meals.

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is organised inefficiently. It is too focused on meeting the needs of some individuals, and does not use the staff and equipment available well enough to have a wider impact for more pupils. The school does not check robustly enough how well the pupils who are supported are doing.
- The money provided to the school through the Pupil Premium is, for the most part, poorly used. It is not aimed clearly enough at helping the pupils for whom it is intended. The effectiveness of the spending is not checked.
- The school's strategic plan, called the Single Plan, is poorly constructed and is not bringing improvement in pupils' learning. It does not address many of the weaknesses identified in the local authority funded review, nor pupils' very low attainment at Key Stage 1. Most of its objectives and targets are unclear and imprecise. The plan's impact is not checked rigorously.
- Middle leaders are insufficiently supported and guided by senior leaders. They work hard but without a sharp enough focus or purpose. Subject leaders are not empowered, or equipped, to set expectations and lead to achieve improved standards in their subjects. They do not gather robust evidence about how well pupils are learning. However, the newly appointed Key Stage 2 leader is showing useful initiative.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have a highly visible presence in the school. They have arranged suitable systems for managing pupils' behaviour and for engaging parents. Together, they ensure that staff feel valued. The deputy headteacher has effectively improved the system for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Pupils are safeguarded well. The school operates smoothly from day to day and has a strong sense of community.
- However, performance management of staff is not effective. The school carries out the necessary processes, such as target setting for individual teachers and lesson observations, but they do not improve the quality of teachers' work, or raise expectations and achievement. The salary progression of staff is appropriate.
- The school curriculum has sufficient breadth: all necessary subjects are taught. However, it does not ensure that pupils develop their skills and knowledge progressively and this contributes to the low expectations in many lessons. Pupils enjoy day trips, residential visits and a range of clubs, many of which they set up or suggest themselves.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is very weak. It is carrying vacancies and has too few active members. Although governors have asked why Marshlands pupils have low scores in English and mathematics, they have accepted the school's assurances and over-positive evaluations much too readily. Governors do not understand the weaknesses in teaching or check why staff performance management is not improving it. They are not aware of the school's failure to spend the Pupil Premium funding effectively. The Chair of the Governing Body is supportive of the headteacher, but governors do not challenge the school to improve.

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

Unique reference number	114442
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	401437

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Weiner
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Gibbins
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2009
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