

Marshlands Primary School

Marshfoot Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2PH

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2014

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

- Although the school's improvement this year has been striking, teaching and achievement need further consolidation. Pupils' progress in Years 3, 4 and 5 is not yet consistent enough.
- Not all teachers give pupils specific advice on how to improve their writing, especially their spelling, handwriting, grammar and punctuation.
- Not all pupils in Key Stage 2 persevere, behave well and show the same, strong commitment to learning as those lower down the school.
- Some classes in Key Stage 2 have had a series of temporary teachers, with varying approaches and expectations. The amount and quality of work in pupils' workbooks fluctuates, especially their writing.

The school has the following strengths:

- The acting headteacher, consultant headteacher and interim executive board have had a marked impact on improving teaching and achievement at Marshlands.
- Teaching is consistently good in the majority of classes, namely Nursery, Reception, and Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Pupils' different, and individual, needs are given high priority. Leaders' decisions are based firmly on what is best for pupils' welfare and achievement.
- The school is a very caring community with a clear focus on making sure pupils feel happy and keep safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, four of which were short visits. The lead inspector observed lessons jointly with the acting headteacher on previous monitoring inspections.
- Meetings were held with all senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed an assembly, heard pupils read and met with two groups of pupils from Key Stage 2. They spoke with pupils informally when visiting lessons and looking at their work.
- The number of responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, was too small to take into consideration. Her Majesty’s Inspector took other evidence into account to find out about parents’ and carers’ views, including informal discussions with parents and carers on previous monitoring inspections.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information on pupils’ progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils’ workbooks in writing and mathematics were reviewed.

Inspection team

Margaret Dickinson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Julie Sackett

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Marshlands is smaller than the average size primary school. The school will become a sponsored academy from September 2014. Since April 2013, it has been led by an acting headteacher with support from a consultant headteacher. An interim executive board has provided governance since January 2013. Prior to this inspection, the school had four monitoring inspections.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, at 60%, is well above average. This funding is provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs who need some extra help is broadly average. The proportion who need more support, from outside agencies, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to consistently good or better in Years 3 to 5, by:
 - urgently providing effective teaching for the Year 3 class so that these pupils' progress is at least good in English and mathematics lessons for the remainder of this academic year and the next
 - making sure all teachers check how well pupils are learning during each lesson and adjust their approaches promptly if learning starts to falter for groups or individuals
 - making sure all teachers, including temporary staff, routinely use the school's assessments to plan work at the right level for the range of ability in the class.
- Improve the consistency of pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing, by:
 - setting clear expectations for how often, and how much, pupils should be expected to write each week
 - raising the profile of writing in all classes so that pupils want to produce their best writing and can be justly proud of their achievements
 - ensuring teachers focus more on pupils' weaknesses in spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting and give the pupils specific feedback on what they need to put right
 - strengthening middle leaders' skills in checking the effectiveness of the projects they lead so they play a key role in lifting pupils' achievement to good.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment has shown marked improvement, especially in reading and mathematics. The school's checks on progress show attainment in both areas is closer to average, far more so than it has been in the past. Pupils in Year 6 are in a much better position than those who left last year because they have benefited from better teaching.
- Achievement is not yet good because pupils' writing, while improving, is not yet strong enough in Key Stage 2. Here, many pupils lack essential knowledge of punctuation, grammar and spelling to enable them to write at an appropriate level for their age. In addition, many do not have good handwriting skills.
- In Years 3 to 5, pupils' workbooks show their achievement is inconsistent, particularly for the pupils in the Year 3 class, who have had a lot of temporary teachers this year. There are some long gaps in pupils' books between pieces of writing in Years 3 to 5; writing does not have a high enough profile. More-able pupils are not achieving as well as they should because not all teachers set their sights high enough for these pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs, and those who need to catch up and close gaps in their learning, are making accelerated progress. No time is wasted to put support in place for these pupils, when needed. The extra sessions, for individuals or small groups, are making a clear difference to pupils' achievement.
- While in special measures, attainment in the school has needed to rise quickly in English and mathematics for all groups, including those who benefit from the pupil premium and the more able pupils. Any differences between the attainment of groups is closely and regularly monitored in leaders' drive to ensure all pupils have an equal chance to do their best and reach their potential.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well, supported by an interesting and varied range of activities. They enjoy exploring, making things and being active. Their early reading, writing and number skills are developing strongly. These children are being prepared successfully for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have caught up rapidly and made up considerable ground from the end of their Reception Year, when many left Reception with limited skills and gaps in their learning. The pupils in Year 1 have made outstanding progress this year. Pupils in Year 2 are moving to Year 3 with a good grounding in basic skills and a clear enthusiasm for learning.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement and is not yet good, because there is too much variation in teachers' expectations in Key Stage 2, typically, but not exclusively, when classes are taught by temporary teachers. The impact of this weaker teaching is more evident in pupils' writing than in their reading and mathematics.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children's personal, social and emotional development is nurtured successfully. Teachers provide a supportive, encouraging atmosphere. Children know the routines and what is expected of them. Adults take every opportunity to encourage children's talk. The 'learning journeys' provide a helpful and full record of each child's achievements.
- In Years 1, 2 and 6, teachers' expectations are high and pupils rise to the challenge. Activities are planned carefully, so that they are set at the right level for different abilities. Teachers check pupils' learning as the lesson progresses. They make adjustments as required, or give the more able pupils harder work, in order to lift learning even more. These strengths are not as evident, or consistent, in Years 3 to 5.
- The teaching assistants who lead extra sessions know exactly what they need to focus on because they are well briefed. Activities are closely linked to pupils' specific targets. To a large extent, these extra sessions are boosting pupils' achievement where there are weaker aspects in

the class teaching.

- Teachers' marking and feedback vary in quality in Key Stage 2. Pupils are not receiving enough specific guidance on what they could do to make their work even better. The teachers' marking mostly follows the school's policy but does not pick up enough on pupils' individual weaknesses in grammar, spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Most pupils behave sensibly when moving around the school and during breaks. They report a few pupils struggle to behave well in lessons and at playtimes but are clear that behaviour has improved a lot over the last year.
- Pupils respond very well in the lessons where teachers and adults encourage them, bring in a touch of humour and acknowledge their hard work and successes. When the approach is right, pupils across the school show interest in lessons, stick to their tasks and work hard.
- In the lessons where teachers do not engage the pupils well, some pupils, usually boys, and mainly in Years 3 to 5, lose their concentration and show less interest in their learning. This weaker aspect of pupils' behaviour is in marked contrast to lower down the school, where pupils' attitudes to learning are exactly the opposite.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know they learn in a safe environment where the staff are caring and give good guidance and support. In one meeting with pupils, they all agreed with one child's view: 'The teachers are the best thing about this school; they make the school a better place.'
- Pupils report that the acting headteacher has made a real difference to behaviour and that any signs of bullying or unkind behaviour are dealt with promptly. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to use the internet responsibly and safely and talk readily, and in some detail, about all the things they have learned in assemblies to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils' attendance has shown marked improvement this year. The school is on course to meet this year's attendance target and to be broadly average by the end of the year.

The leadership and management

are good

- The acting headteacher, consultant headteacher and interim executive board have driven improvements very successfully. They have focused on the right things at the right time and ensured a much better educational experience for the pupils at Marshlands.
- The acting headteacher has provided steady, calm, determined leadership and has played a significant role in improving the school's effectiveness. She has kept her focus on what is best for the pupils and not shied away from making difficult decisions. Weak teaching has been tackled and the school is now at the stage where lessons taught by the more established teachers are typically good.
- Improving teaching has been at the heart of leaders' work, to enable pupils to learn successfully and catch up on the gaps in their learning. Difficulties in recruiting temporary teachers have led to too many changes, particularly for the Year 3 class. The acting headteacher has, rightly, changed the teaching arrangements for the rest of this academic year, to give these pupils a better chance of making accelerated progress.
- Each pupil's progress in reading, writing and mathematics is closely monitored by senior leaders. The consultant headteacher collects the information from pupils' assessments and presents this in a clear format for the acting headteacher and interim executive board. The progress of all groups of pupils is therefore closely monitored to check if any group, or individual, is making slower progress than they should.
- The school's provision in Nursery and Reception has improved considerably over the last year as a result of good leadership. While the school has been in special measures, the acting deputy headteacher and Key Stage 1 leader have been supporting the most essential priorities for the school: improving teaching and achievement. This has been entirely appropriate. Recently, with

guidance from the acting headteacher and external consultants, they have been developing their roles further, through leading two projects. There are signs that pupils are beginning to benefit but both projects are at a relatively early stage and need more time to make a difference.

- The range of subjects provides an appropriate balance between pupils' academic progress and their personal, social and cultural development. Pupils appreciate the clubs, the opportunities they have to take responsibility and the chances to take part in events beyond the school, such as tournaments and trips. While the school has been in special measures, there has been less focus on monitoring the impact of the primary sports funding. This is entirely appropriate, given the school's circumstances.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The interim executive board has been instrumental in the school's rapid improvement over the last year. The Chair of the Interim Executive Board, in particular, has kept in close touch with the school's progress, asked astute questions and ensured a tight focus on the most pressing priorities. She scrutinises the information on pupils' attainment and achievement and asks the right questions to provide helpful, professional challenge for the senior leaders. As a result, members of the interim executive board are knowledgeable about the progress of different groups in each class, including the pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. They are equally knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and the work of teachers who are paid more to fulfil leadership roles. The interim executive board is diligent in checking that the school does everything it should to keep pupils safe. The local authority's representative, also a member of the interim executive board, has carried out regular visits to check the school's progress and provided valuable insight and challenge for the school's leaders.

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	441607

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Penny Gaunt
Headteacher	Jane Ireland (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	25 October 2012
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