

Marshland St James VC Primary School and Nursery

School Road, Marshland St James, Wisbech, PE14 8EY

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Pupils' achievement has declined over the last three years. Standards are typically low at the end of Year 2 and were below average at the end of Year 6 in 2014.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in Years 1 and 2. Their progress is not consistently good in Years 3 to 6. The most-able pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently good progress. Gaps in attainment, between them and other pupils, vary across the school because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not make enough progress.
- There is too much weak teaching which does not challenge pupils sufficiently. Extended staff absences have had an adverse impact on learning.
- Pupils do not have consistently positive attitudes to learning and this limits their progress.
- The school's curriculum does not ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are fully met.
- Until the appointment of the current headteacher, leadership capacity has been limited. Key subject leaders did not contribute well enough to school improvement and they are still not consistently effective.
- Learning support staff are not always effectively deployed to help pupils to achieve well.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is effectively leading developments in teaching and achievement. Her checks on teaching have secured some improvements.
- Recent appointments have strengthened subject leadership and the quality of teaching.
- Provision in the early years is good and children achieve well. Results in 2014 were well above the national average.
- The school's provision to keep pupils safe is good.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved and results in the Year 1 phonics check rose significantly in 2014.
- Pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage are supported well.
- Behaviour has improved and pupils enjoy taking on additional tasks. Attendance has risen and is now broadly average.
- Governors are now more aware of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They now make a much greater contribution to school improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in six lessons, all of which were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked closely at pupils' written work for the current school year. He listened to some pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, the school's senior and subject leaders, two representatives of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector took account of the 16 responses to a staff questionnaire and the 10 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement and records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. He also considered notes of visits from officers of the local authority, reports from the performance officer, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to check pupils' progress.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Marshfield St James VC Primary School and Nursery is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There is a small group of pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school, other than at the expected points, is higher than is found nationally.
- At about one in every six, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is close to the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is about one in every four pupils and is around the national average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- There are four classes. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, most children of nursery age attend either a morning or an afternoon session, with a few attending full time. Children in the Reception year all attend full time.
- The school has experienced significant instability in staffing in the last two years, with several periods of extended staff absence.
- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2013. The senior teacher joined in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently at least good and encourages pupils to develop more positive attitudes to learning by:
 - all teachers having high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - setting consistently challenging work for all groups of pupils, and particularly for the most-able pupils
 - planning activities in lessons to engage pupils and motivate them to learn
 - encouraging pupils to be actively involved, enquiring and ambitious in their learning
 - providing better support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, which enables them to make at least good progress.
- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 1 and 2, by ensuring that:
 - the progress of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is closely monitored and that effective additional support is provided
 - the most-able pupils make more consistently rapid progress.
- Improve the impact of leaders and governors by ensuring that:
 - the effectiveness and impact of subject leaders is at least good
 - the curriculum meets the learning needs of the full range of pupils
 - the work of learning support staff is closely monitored, and guidance is provided so that the effectiveness of this support, in accelerating pupils' progress, can be measured
 - the evaluation of the impact of the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is more effective.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Until the appointment of the current headteacher, leadership has lacked the capacity to tackle underlying staffing issues. Extended staff absences in the last two years and frequent changes in staff have adversely affected pupils' achievement. Key subject leaders have not been fully effective in driving necessary improvements. The recent appointment of an additional leader has strengthened further the scope to accelerate the school's programme of change.
- The headteacher promotes a positive ethos for the school, has high expectations for pupils' achievement and is effective in bringing about improvement. Children's progress in the early years improved in 2014, as did pupils' attainment in the phonics check at the end of Year 1. The number of behaviour incidents has declined significantly and attendance has risen. Governors have begun to provide more effective challenge and support. This track record of better performance under the school's new leaders indicates they have the capacity to drive further improvement.
- Action is now being taken, supported by the local authority, to tackle the longstanding weaknesses in teaching. In most respects, the monitoring of teaching is now effective. The school's actions are improving the quality of work in pupils' books and teachers' marking is more thorough. The procedures for setting targets to improve teachers' practice are now more securely established.
- The recent appointment of a senior teacher is providing greater strength in the school's leadership and a model for a more consistent approach in challenging weaker teaching. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The quality of subject leadership is not yet consistently effective and the school is currently tackling these concerns.
- The school is preparing well for the implementation of the new National Curriculum. However, the implementation of the current curriculum does not fully meet the differing needs of all pupils, especially the most able. The school has maintained its existing assessment system so that it has access to detailed information about pupils' progress. It is working effectively with other local schools to identify a system which best meets their future needs, when levels are discontinued.
- The headteacher evaluates the impact of pupil premium expenditure and is aware that there are still inconsistencies in the achievement of these pupils across the school. However, governors do not yet have such a detailed knowledge of these pupils' attainment and progress and so they cannot hold the school to account effectively for their achievement.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher has a clear view of where improvement is needed. Some effective appointments have been made so that pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is currently at least at the level expected. The quality of pupils' work has improved significantly. However, residual weaknesses in teaching elsewhere remain a barrier to more rapid improvement.
- Additional funding to extend pupils' opportunities in sport is used well to improve training and to provide specialist sports clubs. More pupils are now involved in after-school sporting activities and competitions.
- The local authority was initially slow to tackle underperformance in the school but, for the last year, it has provided intensive support to boost achievement and improve teaching. This help is enabling the school to tackle its more challenging staffing issues.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural social development is well promoted. Links with the parish church are sustained well. Further links with an inner-city school in Leicester promote awareness of diverse cultures. British values are promoted effectively through, for example, teaching pupils about the British parliamentary and judicial systems. Consequently, pupils gain understanding of their rights and responsibilities as British citizens.

- The school is striving to ensure equality of opportunity for all. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. However, the school has not had a strong enough focus on ensuring all groups of pupils achieve as well as they should.
- The school has positive links with parents and carers and with neighbouring schools. Links with other schools have contributed positively to the development of the curriculum and provide opportunities for teachers to observe good practice in other settings.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust. All staff are trained frequently to the expected levels.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - In the past, the governing body has not held the school sufficiently to account for its performance. It has not made sure that the school's additional funding has been used effectively. As a result, the gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are not closing consistently, or quickly enough, in all year groups.
 - A recent review of governance has resulted in significant restructuring of the governing body, so that it is now more efficient. Governors are now much more involved in school improvement and monitor progress closely. Retraining is contributing to better practice. The governing body now holds school leaders to account more effectively.
 - Governors know that school performance has dipped in relation to schools nationally and that the quality of teaching is not good enough. The management of teachers' performance and effectiveness is now securely in place. Governors ensure that pay increases for staff are closely aligned to the outcomes of this process.
 - Governors are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships. They are now monitoring the performance of all groups of pupils more effectively to ensure that underperformance is eliminated.
 - The governing body, with the support of senior leaders, ensures that statutory duties are met, including those for pupils' safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils have mostly positive attitudes to learning but are compliant rather than enthusiastic. They now make a greater effort to produce good-quality written work but they do not show a real hunger for learning yet. Particularly where teachers' classroom management skills are less secure, or where activities do not inspire them, pupils tend to lose concentration.
- Pupils contribute well to the smooth running of the school through taking on tasks in the classroom or playground. Pupils routinely look out for each other and establish friendships across the age groups.
- Pupils' conduct has improved and the number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced. Detailed records of any incidents are maintained. Exclusions are rare and pupils' behaviour around the school is well managed.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school site is secure and risk assessments are thorough. Staff are fully checked prior to appointment. Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They believe that adults will help them deal with any difficulties.
- Pupils learn about fire safety, road safety and safe cycling. They understand the risks of cyber bullying. The school helps pupils to protect themselves from the dangers of internet abuse.

- Pupils understand that bullying may arise in different forms. They do not consider it a significant issue in school. They are aware that the school will respond quickly and firmly should any issues arise.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- For some time, teaching has not enabled all pupils to make sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' expectations are not high enough. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not build sufficiently upon pupils' skills when they leave the Reception year. As a result pupils join Year 3 behind where they should be. A lack of continuity of staff and some weaker teaching in the last two years means that pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not caught up and have underachieved.
- Good teaching ensures that the youngest children make good progress in the early years. With more recent appointments, the quality of teaching is now improving in Years 3 to 6, leading to better progress. However, some underlying weaknesses in teaching have not yet been fully addressed.
- The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and for disadvantaged pupils, has been too varied and has not had the impact it should have had. Consequently, these pupils' progress has varied considerably between year groups. A recent review, of the use and impact of support staff, has contributed to improvements and these pupils are beginning to make better progress. Nevertheless, overall, the impact of learning support staff on pupils' progress varies too much.
- Teachers now have higher expectations of the quality of pupils' written work. More effective systems have been introduced to check pupils' progress and provide better support where it is needed. The impact of this work is more evident in Years 3 to 6. Older pupils have individual targets in writing and mathematics. The marking of pupils' work has improved, although the current good practice seen in the marking of writing is only occasionally evident in other subjects. Older pupils usually respond to the guidance teachers provide.
- Pupils make better progress where they receive more challenging work. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were successful in their learning because the range of activities to promote understanding of coordinates in up to four quadrants ensured that all groups were suitably challenged and engaged.
- Homework contributes effectively to pupils' learning. Tasks are set and marked regularly.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 is average at best and has shown little improvement over time. Pupils enter Year 1 in most years with skills and knowledge above those expected nationally. However, there is insufficient challenge in the teaching in Years 1 and 2 to help pupils continue learning at a good pace. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards in writing and mathematics were below average in 2014. Too few pupils attained the higher Level 3, particularly in writing or mathematics.
- Standards at Year 6 were low in 2014, particularly in reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils' learning in 2014 was particularly adversely affected by the extended absence of staff. Consequently, their progress was inadequate. A lack of continuity in teaching has adversely affected the progress of pupils across Key Stage 2 in the last two years.
- Other than in mathematics, too few of the school's most able pupils have had the opportunity to work at the higher levels in Years 3 to 6, although evidence seen during the inspection suggests that more challenging work is now being set for all ability groups. In Years 1 and 2, these pupils are not sufficiently challenged to fulfil their potential. Work set does not engage their interests or provide sufficient motivation.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were working approximately one term ahead of the others in their year group in reading and writing and at a similar level in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils were around

three terms behind all pupils nationally in reading and mathematics, and further behind in writing. Disadvantaged pupils also did much better than the others in the school in Year 2. However, while there were some improvements in attainment in Year 6, the gap in attainment is greater in other year groups.

- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies too much. In 2014, those pupils in Year 6 made inadequate progress. Across the school, the progress of these pupils is generally better in mathematics than in reading and writing. As with other pupils, teachers' low expectations in Years 1 and 2 constrain this groups' achievement in Year 3 and beyond.
- Pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach higher standards in 2015. Currently, these pupils are making more consistently rapid progress, although this may not completely compensate for past deficits in their learning. Progress in writing, a weakness in 2014, is showing steady improvement across the school.
- Following intensive work by the headteacher, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in the screening check of phonics in Year 1, in 2014, rose significantly and was well above the national average. Insecure knowledge of phonics has constrained progress in reading. However, younger pupils are now better placed to make more rapid progress. A new reading scheme is being introduced.
- The effective support provided for pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage, to address gaps in their learning, ensures that they make close to expected progress.

The early years provision

is good

- The early years provision has improved. Provision is better here than in the rest of the school because leadership and teaching have been securely good for an extended period. Recently, improved teaching of phonics and more rigorous assessment are ensuring that children make better progress. Expectations of children's personal, social and academic development are high.
- Most children enter the Nursery year with skills below those typical for their age. Children mostly have limited pre-school experience. They make good progress so that, on entry to the Reception year, their skills improve, although still below those typically found. Children's attainment on leaving Reception is, in most years, above or well above what is expected nationally. Following a significant dip in 2012, outcomes in 2013 rose considerably. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well above the latest national average in 2014. Children are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- The school regularly reviews the areas of learning to ensure that children are effectively challenged to achieve well, including those who have special educational needs. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and free-choice activities. The school ensures that children have regular access to the spacious outdoor learning area.
- Children show self-sufficiency when selecting resources and settling down to activities. They build positive attitudes to learning. As the current morning Nursery group is much larger than usual, appropriately, staff are modifying their organisation to ensure that this group is managed effectively.
- Staff ensure that children behave and that they are safe and well looked after. Good links are established with parents, who have a positive involvement with the school.
- Staff know individual children well. Detailed checks and observations provide accurate information about children's developmental needs and support the effective monitoring of their progress.

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	121073
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	442050

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sahra Van de Velde
Headteacher	Sarah Durrant
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2013
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