



Marshlands School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124518
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281739
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 17 October 2005
Reporting inspector Steven Parker RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Lansdowne Way
School category	Community		Wildwood
Age range of pupils	3 to 19		Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 4RD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 356385
Number on roll	51	Fax number	01785 356385
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Belinda Whale

Age group 3 to 19	Inspection dates 17 October 2005 - 17 October 2005	Inspection number 281739
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Marshlands is a small school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Consequently, attainment on entry is well below national expectations, with most pupils functioning within P levels. As a result of ongoing reorganisation in the county, the school started this current academic year with no pupils above Year 10. The expectation is that it will be providing for just primary-aged pupils by next September. There are 44 pupils on roll. Nearly two thirds are boys, and a third are on the autistic spectrum. Another 10% have profound and complex learning difficulties. There is only one pupil from a minority ethnic background. No pupils are identified as having English as an additional language. The social background of pupils reflects the overall mixed nature of the school's catchment area.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, where pupils make good progress and achieve well. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Very good teamwork between teachers and their teaching assistants is effective in supporting each child to succeed. Children in the Foundation Stage are given a particularly good start to their education.

The school is well managed at all levels and governors provide good support and challenge. This collaborative approach has been important during the current unsettled period of re-organisation. Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school has a relevant curriculum that is thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of all its pupils well. Systems to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness are not yet fully secure. The school provides good value for money.

There have been very good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in relation to pupils' achievements and the environment where they learn. The school knows itself well and its judgements accord with those of the inspection team. It plans effectively to ensure its continuous improvement and is very well placed to make further improvements. Parents are justified in their appreciation of the school.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- make better use of assessment information to record the progress of each pupil more thoroughly
- improve the way it checks how well it is doing, with a stronger emphasis on what has been successful, what has been less effective, and why this is so.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good, with some pupils, particularly those in the Foundation Stage, performing very well. Staff have high expectations of their pupils. They set realistic but challenging targets for them to work towards. As a result, pupils make good progress, often from a very low starting point, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. A small number of pupils make such good progress that they are able to transfer to mainstream schools. There are no discernible differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils. The needs of pupils with autism are especially well served.

Improvements since the last inspection have been substantial across all subjects, but especially in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Parents are very appreciative of these outcomes.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The provision for pupils' personal development and well-being has an outstanding impact. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to develop their independence and social skills and to face the world with confidence. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Many activities, such as school productions, extend pupils' social skills. A notable feature of the school is the care and consideration pupils give to each other and the adults who work with them. Their behaviour is outstanding. Attendance is also outstanding and there is no unauthorised absence. In lessons, pupils persevere with tasks for long periods because they enjoy them. On being asked the best thing about the school, a ten-year-old immediately answered, 'learning'! The pupils benefit from effective teaching to stay safe and adopt healthy lifestyles through sensible diet and physical activity.

The school council, and very well organised opportunities to integrate with mainstream schools, help pupils to make a positive contribution to the community. By developing literacy, numeracy, information, and communication technology (ICT) and social skills, the school greatly enhances the pupils' future capabilities to live as successful and independent adults.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. Some examples of excellent practice were seen during the inspection. Teachers and their assistants work very well together to encourage and facilitate successful learning, as seen in pupils' work, especially their writing. Staff know their pupils very well and plan learning opportunities effectively to meet their individual needs. Assessment, though thorough, is generally informal. The school accepts the need to do further work to make its structured approach to collecting information about pupils' achievement more rigorous. The very positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school is the direct result of very good relationships between all staff and pupils and the highly effective way that staff manage behaviour. When combined with the imaginative and engaging activities that teachers plan, pupils enjoy themselves and give of their best.

There is an appropriately strong emphasis on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Teachers use the widest range of approaches and materials available to them. These include signing, visual timetables and symbols to ensure that all pupils, especially those with autistic spectrum disorders, can take part in the full range of learning opportunities presented to them. Teachers are particularly effective at helping pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a well-planned curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. To ensure that activities take pupils on to the next stage of learning, teachers carefully adapt their plans. For instance, more able five year olds are learning to read and write at a similar standard to mainstream pupils. The school rightly concentrates on developing the basic and social skills needed for adult independence, but ensures that lessons include the full National Curriculum, enhanced by visits and after-school activities. The effective use of computers enables pupils with coordination difficulties to achieve high standards of presentation. Pupils especially enjoy physical activities, such as swimming and horse riding. Appropriate emphasis is placed on personal, social and health education. The valuable involvement of the school nurse in the sex and relationships education programme is an example of how the school strives to meet pupils' individual needs.

There is a good range of out of school activities. The after-school sports club is attended by one third of all pupils, demonstrates how well the school includes all pupils, whatever their age or disability.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care from staff at all levels. The presence of a qualified school nurse enhances this, as she is able to respond immediately to any medical needs. She also advises parents on health issues. Pupils are well provided with support from other services such as speech and language therapy. There are appropriate arrangements for child protection and for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Parents especially value the level of care their children receive and the ways in which independence is encouraged.

The school works well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils and their parents get good guidance on how work can be improved in preparation for the next stage of education. The annual progress report and separate review of statements of special educational need provide parents with a comprehensive picture of their child's progress.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has had a significant impact on all aspects of the school, and understands what still needs to be done to fulfil her vision for the school's future success. The impressive improvements she has made on the whole school environment and in the way staff work together has had a powerful impact on morale. This, in turn, has resulted in the improvements to pupils' learning

since the last inspection. The strong partnership that she has built with her able deputy and the supportive governor body has enabled the whole school community to cope well with the changes it is experiencing. Everyone, including parents, pupils and governors, feels valued for their opinions and involved in decision-making.

Whilst the school knows itself well, this knowledge is based mostly on informal monitoring. The school recognises the need to gather more detailed information about its activities, and use that data better to evaluate the impact of its work, which will guide its plans for improvement.

Finances have been very well managed and all resources are used to very good effect. Governors have had an important influence on these aspects and, despite the fact that they are not up to full strength, are actively and productively involved in the life of the school. They plan to recruit new governors with particular skills, and expect to visit the school more frequently in their monitoring role.

Grade: 2

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Marshlands School Lansdowne Way Wildwood Stafford ST17 4RD

7 November 2005

Dear Pupils,

We really enjoyed our recent visit to your school, because you made us feel so welcome. Thank you for talking to us and telling us about how much you enjoy going to school.

There were lots of things we liked about your school

you work very hard and learn well about all sorts of things

you behave very well and are kind to each other

your teachers and support staff do their very best to help you learn, no matter what your difficulties are

your very good headteacher runs the school well, because she makes sure she knows about you and your work. She has done a lot to make your surroundings very attractive

your parents and carers are right to think that you go to a good school. You have good reason to be proud of it.

We thought your school could be even better if:

teachers find out more about how well you learn and how you can be even more clever

the headteacher and governors collect more information about how your school works to make it more successful. We are sure that your school council can help them with this.

Yours sincerely

Steven Parker Lead Inspector