

Marlfields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111040
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	288836
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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 on roll	
School	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Gartside
Headteacher	Mrs S Isherwood
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002
School address	Waggs Road Congleton Cheshire CW12 4BT
Telephone number	01260 272555
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size primary school serves a socially mixed area. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. The school has a unit catering for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils joining and leaving other than at the usual times is higher than average. The school has gained the Inclusion Charter Mark, Dyslexia Friendly Schools status, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy School award, Cheshire Kite Mark Family Learning, the International School Award (Foundation Stage), the ActiveMark and Eco-friendly status.

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 achieve well and learn very happily. There are significant strengths, not least pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being which reflects the good quality of care, support and guidance they receive. Pupils' wholehearted enjoyment of school, seen in the multitude of smiling faces around the school, also mirrors the good curriculum and range of learning opportunities provided for them. The headteacher, staff and governors share a united and effective commitment to nurturing a love of learning within each pupil and this permeates the day-to-day life of the whole school. Links with parents and other agencies are also very successful in sustaining the pupils' well-being. Parents give their wholehearted support to the school. A typical comment is: 'My children love this school, feel highly valued and they are making excellent progress.'

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is good. Children make a good start to their education and progress very well in their personal development. Standards by the end of Year 6 are average and this reflects pupils' good achievement from their low starting points when they first enter the school. Pupils also develop their speaking, listening and independent learning skills effectively as they move through the school. Raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 has been identified by the school as an area for improvement. However, its work here has yet to lift standards significantly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive good support from teaching assistants and from all staff, particularly those within the learning support unit.

Leadership, management and self-evaluation are good. Effective teamwork underpins the work of staff and governors. Senior staff and subject leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. However, while they identify effectively the school's strengths and areas for improvement, the way they evaluate successes within the school improvement plan is not sufficiently sharply focused.

Consistently good quality teaching and learning throughout the school is one of its real strengths that enable pupils to make good progress. Teaching is lively and interesting. Pupils know what is expected, enjoy learning and respond positively to the challenges presented to them. The curriculum is considerably enriched by well attended clubs and good use of information and communication technology (ICT). It is well matched to pupils' needs and interests. As a result, pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and contribute enthusiastically to the school and wider community. They make an outstanding contribution to community events, for instance through the work of the school council and the international links which the school has in place. Inspectors agree with the school's effective self-evaluation. Nevertheless, the school is rather cautious in its judgement of personal development, which it judges to be good while inspectors find it to be outstanding. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue this into the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the quality of school self-evaluation by assessing the impact of strategies for improvement more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. As a result of swift identification of their needs, coupled with high quality teaching and support, they make good progress during the Foundation Stage. By the time they begin Year 1, many of the children, because of their low starting points, are still working towards the expected learning goals. Standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 2 in the 2006 tests and assessments in reading, writing and mathematics were below average and they are still currently at this level. Given a well below average start to school, high levels of pupil mobility and high numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, this represents good progress in Years 1 and 2. However, there is more that can be done to raise standards further. Progress within Years 3 to 6 continues to be good and by the end of Year 6, standards reached are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The present Year 6 is on track to achieve the challenging targets set. The good quality individual support given to pupils who find learning difficult helps them to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy being at school and this is evident in their good attendance, positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show a very clear understanding of people's different backgrounds, customs and faiths. Assembly topics, visits and visitors enhance pupils' experience of different cultures and effectively develop their understanding of what is right and wrong. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They trust their teachers and see them as good role models. The caring culture of the school is reflected in the way that older pupils look after the younger ones. Pupils also take on responsibility in the school community through, for example, the work of the school council. The effective pupil voice of the school council has led to developments such as the improvement to the school's outdoor areas. The benefit of the Healthy School and Activemark awards is felt by all pupils. Consequently, they know about the importance of healthy lifestyles through the choices of regular exercise, healthy food and personal hygiene. Pupils are developing good collaborative and basic skills in literacy and numeracy which will equip them well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. In the Foundation Stage, lessons are well organised and are particularly effective in promoting children's personal and social development. This gives children a good start to learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary and, as a result, pupils are keen to work hard and do their best. The teachers have the ability to capture and hold pupils' attention and to promote their enjoyment. Classroom management is good and promotes good behaviour. Questioning is used well to check pupils' understanding and to develop their confidence in speaking and listening. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to provide interesting and exciting learning experiences within some curriculum areas. Teaching assistants are skilfully deployed and well

briefed to ensure that vulnerable pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are provided with tasks which cater well for their individual needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and is enriched through strong social and cultural links with the wider community. For example, the pupils speak with excitement about enjoying immensely the visiting Watoto choir from Uganda. Enrichment also takes place through the careful links which are developed between subjects so that learning becomes relevant and meaningful. There is a good balance between subjects which supports the pupils' personal development and academic development. The curriculum meets the needs of the majority of pupils but some of the younger pupils can be challenged further to realise their full potential. Pupils are appreciative of the many enrichment opportunities offered. They say how much they enjoy taking part in the wide range of educational visits and after-school clubs, for example art club and gardening club, and the opportunities they have to learn to play musical instruments. The success of these is reflected in the achievement of Eco-friendly and International Schools awards. Residential visits help pupil cooperation and team-building skills. These activities have a high take-up rate and have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and self-esteem. The Foundation Stage is a well organised and stimulating place for young children to learn. The support given by external agencies and links with other schools make an outstanding contribution to pupils' well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Parents affirm this overwhelmingly, stating that Marlfields is a school in which every child matters. Liaison with outside agencies is used effectively to support the well-being and development of all pupils. Robust procedures are in place to ensure the safety of everyone working within the school. All safeguarding and risk assessment requirements are met and aspects of health and safety are successfully promoted and monitored. Systems for behaviour management are developed with the help of pupils and are effective. Pupils are confident about who to turn if they have a problem. The support and nurture group is particularly effective in promoting partnerships with parents. Pupils receive good academic guidance. They know what they are expected to learn in lessons and most are given good opportunities to evaluate what they have achieved and how well they are doing. Some of the pupils in Years 1 and 2, however, would benefit from further support to attain higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is particularly skilful in developing her staff as an effective team. Staff at every level of responsibility fulfil their duties diligently and collaborate effectively. They share a wholehearted commitment to sustaining a school community where every pupil is valued, becomes an effective, confident learner and does well academically and personally. This is evident in the stimulating range of activities provided and is seen in the pupils' enjoyment of school. Parents, local organisations and outside agencies are fully consulted and involved in pupils' learning. These strengths ensure that the pupils' personal development

and well-being are nurtured extremely well. The enthusiastic subject leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their subject areas. However, the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is not focused sharply enough on pupils' achievements to enable it to know how well it is doing. Governors are well informed and know the strengths of the school well. They challenge in a positive way as well as providing support. The school is well resourced, provides good value for money and has a good capacity to continue to improve into the future.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Marlfields Primary School, Congleton, CW12 4BT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. It was wonderful to talk to so many of you and to see what a happy time you have there. We really enjoyed talking to members of the school council and hearing the school choir sing so well during assembly.

We agree with you that you have lots of great opportunities to visit interesting places, work with artists and musicians, and learn about people's different beliefs and customs. Your mums, dads and carers think that your school is a good place to be and we agree with them.

Your school works hard planning all these interesting activities and we know that you appreciate them. Your teachers and teaching assistants are good at teaching you and they know exactly what each of you needs to learn. We think that your behaviour is good and that you try hard in lessons. You have a clear understanding of your targets and how to achieve them and the teachers' marking of your work helps you improve it. One of the things that make your school so good is that the headteacher and staff always want to improve things for you.

We have asked them to do two things which will help make your school a better place in which to learn.

- Help children in Years 1 and 2 to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- When teachers decide how they want your school to improve, they need to develop clear ways to check that these improvements are happening.

Thank you very much for being so helpful to us during your school's inspection. We hope that you are all proud of what you, the staff, governors and parents have achieved and wish you and the school all the best for the future.