

# Marshland St James VC Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121073
<b>Local Authority</b>	NORFOLK
<b>Inspection number</b>	291994
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rajinder Harrison

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	96
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jack Bantoft
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Jane Thain
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	School Road Marshland St James Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE14 8EY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01945 430378
<b>Fax number</b>	01945 430901

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This small school takes pupils from the local village and its surrounding rural area. Almost all pupils have White British backgrounds. The school has a small but significant proportion of pupils from Traveller families and the number of pupils moving in and out of the school is high at nearly 50%. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average.

Since the last inspection, the school has faced considerable staff changes. The addition of a nursery two years ago has improved provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they have a good understanding of what is needed to stay safe and healthy. The welcoming, caring environment helps pupils feel happy and secure at school. Relationships are very good and pupils trust the adults who work with them. Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly but the school's efforts to improve attendance have had little impact on a hard core of pupils who have a consistently high rate of absence. An eagerness to learn and sound academic progress prepares pupils satisfactorily for the future.

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are generally below those typical for their age. Their literacy and numeracy skills are particularly weak. With well organised activities, provision is good in the Foundation Stage so children gain confidence, enjoy learning and achieve well. At the end of the Reception year most children reach the expected levels in all areas except communication, language and literacy. Significant disruptions to teaching in Years 1 and 2 have resulted in pupils making inadequate progress during this school year and current standards in Year 2 are below average. Pupils have made satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 and overall standards have improved since 2006. In Year 6, standards are now broadly average in mathematics and science. The rate of progress has not been as good in English, where standards are still below average but are not as low as in 2006.

While the overall curriculum is satisfactory, pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their speaking and writing skills. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and result in pupils' overall satisfactory achievement. However, marking does not always show pupils what they have to do to improve their work in order to achieve their targets. Good individual guidance helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and those from Traveller families to achieve as well as their classmates. Clubs, educational visits and other activities enhance learning well. Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care arrangements are good and parents are confident that if problems arise these are dealt with promptly.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has led school improvement well and standards have improved since the last inspection. Due to the numerous staff changes, many leadership and management responsibilities have fallen entirely on the headteacher. Improvements have been slow to take effect because she has not had the time or the support to assess quickly enough whether actions to effect change are effective. Support from the local authority (LA) has been valuable in helping the school move forward. Through improved teaching and careful checking of pupils' progress, standards are rising. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and manage finances well but their involvement in checking the school's performance is limited. The school accurately judges itself as satisfactory. In light of the recent improvements and a good understanding of what still needs to be done, managers have the capacity to improve the school further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in English, especially in pupils' speaking and writing skills.
- Establish subject leadership and ensure that all managers and governors check the school's performance rigorously and put in place systems to raise pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 and 2 in all subjects.
- Make sure pupils understand how to improve their work and achieve more.

- Work more closely with parents in looking at ways to raise pupils' attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Good teaching, interesting activities and careful assessments support children's good achievement in the Foundation Stage. They leave the Reception year having reached the levels expected for five-year-olds in all the areas of learning except literacy.

In the 2006 national assessments, Year 2 pupils attained standards that were below average in reading, broadly average in mathematics but exceptionally low in writing. Current data shows little improvement on these results and with the disruption to their learning, pupils have made inadequate progress. The improved standards in mathematics and science in Year 6 this year suggest that the strategies to improve teaching and check pupils' progress more closely have started to take effect. However, strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills, especially in speaking and writing, have yet to have sufficient impact. With the additional support they receive, those pupils who have learning difficulties and those from Traveller families make similar progress to other pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They behave well and show kindness towards others. For example, 'playground buddies' look after pupils who fall over or are upset. Through various social activities including community events, pupils learn to work successfully with others. Local studies, for example, a project on the heritage of the Fenlands, help the pupils understand their cultural heritage well. They regularly celebrate the different cultures within the school but their understanding of the diversity of multi-cultural Britain is limited. Thoughtful assemblies and a good programme for personal, social and health education help pupils understand their role in society. They regularly organise fund raising events, for example, 'Seeds for Africa'.

School council members are actively involved in decision making, for example, how to spend their council budget and which recycling projects to adopt. While pupils understand that eating healthy food is important, many fail to make the right choices at lunchtimes. However, they take regular exercise through the various sports clubs on offer and many walk to school.

They know the dangers of drugs and who to go to should they feel threatened or bullied. Visits and visitors introduce pupils to the wider world of work. Attendance remains below average, largely due to parents taking holidays in term time despite the best efforts of the school. Pupils' good personal development and generally satisfactory progress in their academic skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Most lessons are managed well. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to help all pupils participate fully and are particularly sensitive in supporting those who need individual help. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage where children learn through practical activities and teachers encourage them to independently explore new activities. In Years 1 to 6 teaching is generally satisfactory although, because of the many changes to staffing this year, it has been very variable in Key Stage 1. Most lessons move at a lively pace and pupils are clear about what they are going to learn. Pupils particularly enjoy practical tasks and 'learning through doing'. Where teachers use the interactive whiteboard to explain new information, pupils find it easier to follow what they have to do and respond enthusiastically. However, there are times when the purpose of each lesson is not clear and pupils are not sure what they are learning about. This is because teachers make insufficient use of assessment information to match work accurately to pupils' needs. Opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to talk to each other and think for themselves. An overuse of worksheets hinders pupils' progress in independent and creative writing.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

With the establishment of the nursery, an improved outdoor area and better resources, the Foundation Stage curriculum is now good and supports children's good achievement. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 has improved since the last inspection and ensures planning builds on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils' computer skills support their work in many subjects but they have insufficient opportunities to practise their speaking and writing skills and this limits their progress in English. Effective intervention programmes help pupils with LDD make satisfactory progress. Many additional activities that include a range of visits, visitors and various out of school clubs enrich learning well. Good links with the community help pupils learn about life beyond the school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care arrangements are good and procedures for child protection, health and safety, reporting of racial incidents and safeguarding pupils are all secure. Pupils trust all the adults that work with them and know help is available if problems arise. Pupils learn how to live healthy lives and stay safe. Those with learning difficulties or who are particularly vulnerable are cared for sensitively. Their needs are identified early and effective action is taken to help them achieve satisfactorily. Pupils from Traveller families are given additional specialist support to help them make satisfactory progress. External agencies are involved where appropriate.

Pupils' progress is checked closely and, where the information is used well to inform target setting, for example in the Reception class, children make good progress. However, pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not always understand what they need to do to improve their work and achieve their targets because the advice teachers give through marking is not always detailed enough to offer clear guidance.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Within the context of considerable staff changes, the headteacher has worked hard to make improvements. With support from the LA, teaching, learning and the curriculum are now satisfactory. The new nursery accommodation has enhanced provision for the Foundation Stage. Subject leadership is not secure. Procedures to check the quality of teaching and track pupils' progress are all in place. However, subject leaders have not been involved sufficiently and consequently improvement has not been rapid enough to secure higher achievement throughout. Governors carry out their duties satisfactorily but are not involved enough in checking the school's performance especially regarding pupils' achievement. Nevertheless, most issues from the last inspection have been addressed satisfactorily. Provision for mathematics, science, and information and communication technology has improved and standards are rising. Pupils enjoy learning and parents are very satisfied with the school. The capacity of the school to make necessary improvements is satisfactory.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marshland St James Primary and Nursery School, Marshland St James, Wisbech.  
PE14 8EY

I am writing to tell you what I found out about your school when I visited recently to look at your work and talk to you and your teachers. It was lovely meeting you all and thank you for being so friendly and polite. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their opinions of the school. I was really impressed with your beautiful gardens where you are growing healthy foods to eat and I think the clay heads you have made to decorate the outside walls are brilliant - you obviously worked hard to make them look so scary!

Your school is satisfactory but some things are good and some need improving.

- You try your best and your results are improving but I think some of you could do even better, especially in English.
- The work you do in all the subjects is now more interesting but more speaking and independent writing would be good.
- The school takes good care of you and your teachers listen to you and help you if you have problems.
- You know how to stay fit and healthy but I think some of you should think more carefully about choosing healthy food for your lunches.
- I was particularly impressed by how much you do to help others.

These are the four things I have asked your teachers and governors to do to improve your school. They should:

- Make sure you do more speaking and writing activities in literacy.
- Give you more advice about how you can improve your work.
- Check that the work you do in every lesson is good enough to improve your results.
- Ask your parents to take fewer holidays during school terms so that you spend as much time as possible in school and learn more.

There are things you could do to help too, for example you could make sure you come to school as much as you can.

I am pleased that you are happy at school and have good friends; I hope that you continue to enjoy school and make progress.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison

Lead inspector