



Marshland High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121212
LEA NORFOLK LEA
Inspection number 292058
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Ian Middleton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	School Road
School category	Foundation		PE14 7HA
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01945584146
Number on roll	810	Fax number	01945581275
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr.A W Greer
Date of previous inspection	30 April 2001	Headteacher	Mr. John Bennett

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 5 July 2006 - 6 July 2006	Inspection number 292058
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Marshland High School is a smaller than average secondary school serving a wide rural community. A high proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is lower than the national average. A very small number of students are from minority ethnic groups. The school was awarded specialist science status in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marshland High School provides a good quality of education and care for students of all abilities and backgrounds. The vast majority of students and parents value the positive ethos that is created by staff who work well together and make learning enjoyable. The school is well respected in the community and demand for places is high. Effective leadership and management by the headteacher, senior and middle leaders enable students and staff to do well. The well-being of all who make up the school community is a high priority. This creates a mutually supportive environment that students and staff enjoy working in to achieve their best. The school knows which aspects of its provision are more effective than others. There are accurate plans in place and appropriate actions taken to develop strengths and overcome weaknesses. The headteacher and governors are skilled in deploying resources judiciously given the constraints of finance and staff recruitment; good external links contribute well to overall effectiveness. Within and between different departments there are particularly good examples of teaching, learning and support that show how the progress of students accelerates when their interest is captured and involvement active. Indications are that Specialist Science College status is being used effectively to make these features widespread. However, some variability remains particularly in the quality and use of assessment and some improvements, particularly in English, although now evident, have been slow. The issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed accordingly and show good capacity of further improvement. The school rightly has high aspirations for its students and therefore judges effectiveness as satisfactory. However, students' achievement, personal development and well-being, and continuously improving results show that the school is already good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English. - Address inconsistencies in the quality and use of assessment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average although there are fewer higher attaining students starting at the school compared with the national average. By the end of Year 9 standards show a rising trend except in English where results have been below average for several years. However, teachers' assessments in English indicate improvement in the 2006 results. Performance in the National Curriculum tests in 2005 was marked by a significant improvement in mathematics and science results, but not in English. Nevertheless targets in each were achieved. Unvalidated test results in mathematics and science show further significant improvements in 2006. GCSE examination results rose sharply in 2005 to exceed the challenging target set for the year group. The performance of girls is often better than that of boys but both are in line with national averages. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C

grades and the proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades were slightly above average. These results are a good reflection of performance relative to attainment on entry. Nevertheless because of staffing difficulties, students' progress was significantly better in mathematics than it was in English. The school is implementing a variety of strategies to raise standards and there are indications that new subject leadership is having a positive impact. In 2005 students achieved particularly well in science, design and technology, home economics and modern foreign languages but less well in English, geography, history and business studies. Students' wider achievements, for example in sports and work-related skills, are good and increasingly valued through accreditation offered. The school evaluates achievement and standards as satisfactory. Consistent with the drive to raise standards, more challenging targets have been set for 2006; inspection evidence indicates that they are likely to be achieved. Overall, students from all social and ethnic backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities enjoy their work and achieve well; achievement and standards are good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. The vast majority of students enjoy their education, participate well in lessons and extra-curricular activities and develop a good sense of responsibility. Students feel safe at school; good behaviour is the norm and bullying is rare due to the caring attitude and supportive approach of staff and students. Many students get actively involved in school life and take responsibility for themselves and others seriously. For example, students recognise opportunities to induct new pupils and their parents into the school as a chance to show personal qualities that are valued in the world of work and in their life beyond school. A small number of parents expressed the view that behaviour should be better. Although behaviour is generally good and sometimes excellent, a very small proportion of unsatisfactory behaviour is evident where students do not understand the relevance of what is expected of them or where learning is not as active as other lessons. Attendance has been consistently below average but the 'Fast Track' system involving parents, teachers and students in agreeing targets for attendance is effective and improvement evident. A strong feature of students' personal development is their contribution to the local and wider community through active charity work, from supporting the elderly, for example, to considerable fund raising and work with Malawi. Students describe these experiences as life-changing ones to treasure. Although their good social and moral qualities are most highly developed their spiritual and cultural development are now satisfactory due to improved provision since the last inspection. Students with wide ranging skills in sports show a good level of awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle. Many take an active interest in their fitness and the school council has contributed to a healthier range of food options although the work of the school council has not yet influenced other policies more closely connected to learning in and out of school. However, this is an inclusive school that enables all students to express their views and gain a good sense of belonging; the vast majority are very sociable and mature in their response.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has improved teaching and learning since the last inspection; overall they are now good. Teachers now match work more closely to students' abilities and their adaptability to different teaching styles means that learning is now more effective in most subjects. Students respond particularly well to teachers that set a brisk pace by managing time efficiently and structure learning through a sequence of activities that involve the students in teaching and learning. Interest is quickly sparked in lessons that stimulate students visually; many teachers now use computers effectively as a teaching tool and a smaller number develop students' responsibility to use information communications technology (ICT) as a resource for learning. The school Intranet is fast developing as an opportunity for students to prepare for and follow-up lessons independently. Teaching and learning sampled during the inspection showed that monitoring and evaluation within school is accurate and effective. This is particularly successful when clear identification of strengths and weaknesses in teaching is followed up by sharing good practice within school and with other schools. For example, in physical education, links with a specialist sports college have led to outstanding use of assessment to inspire learners of all abilities. However, across the school the use of assessment information to shape lesson planning by teachers and students is widely variable. In subjects such as mathematics, science and design and technology, students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses helps them improve their performance in key areas. A small but significant proportion of teaching remains dull to the pupils with the result that learning slows and behaviour deteriorates. In some cases insufficient subject knowledge limits teachers' expectations and restricts their confidence to use challenging questioning. The school's drive to fulfil the needs of the more able pupils, including those with particular gifts and talents, takes account of this area of inconsistency. The views of students gathered frequently by the school and expressed during the inspection shows that the vast majority appreciate the enthusiasm of teachers and respect their expertise, particularly when it is used to provide clear and critical individual feedback. This is a strong feature of support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities that promotes their good progress. There is evidence of good parental involvement in students' work record books and their contribution to consultation events.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. In Years 7 to 9 it provides a broad and balanced range of experiences that meet the needs of students. Apart from discontinuity in art and drama, the curriculum builds systematically on pupils' knowledge and skills. In line with targets as a specialist school links with primary partner schools are beginning to develop in order to better build on students' prior experiences in science although this progression is not yet established fully across the curriculum.

The range of options in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The 'preparation for work day' supported by local employers, a two-week work experience placement in Year 10 and Asdan Youth Award for lower attaining students contribute to a good programme of work-related learning. Opportunities for students to pursue vocational courses were enhanced in 2005 with the introduction of ICT, health and social care. The school's priority to develop the business and enterprise dimension of the curriculum is appropriate. Effective links with nearby provision for further education enable teachers to prepare students well for the next stage of education. Changes to the curriculum made for September 2006 fulfil statutory requirements including provision for ICT, a weakness at the time of the last inspection. An effective personal, social and health education programme promotes safe and healthy lifestyles. The good range of enrichment activities is popular and makes a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school life and physical well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care and guidance for students. The support and respect between students of different ages, teachers and students, is a strong feature of the school and reflects the good care and support that students recognise between staff. Child protection procedures are firmly established; appropriate attention is given to health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Inclusion is a strong feature of the school. Vulnerable students are well supported by the school and make good progress as a result. There are good opportunities for students to develop responsibilities, for example, through the house system, 'buddy' grouping and the role of prefect. Students are also clear about adults they could seek help from if they encounter problems. In addition to staff, other adults such as the community police officer and school nurse are accessible. The school's 'Behaviour Consequences' discipline system is understood by students and is particularly effective when applied consistently by staff, although a few inconsistencies remain. Students are given good guidance about option choices. A good range of careers advice is also provided through a formal careers convention and information about further education that is tailored to their individual skills and interests. Preparation for the world of work is also enhanced by the process of applying for and being interviewed for house and prefect roles and there are activities in lessons such as compiling curriculum vitae in French. Students in Year 10 are encouraged to find two-week work placements to promote independence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong commitment to continuous improvement is reflected in the modest self-evaluation that leadership and management are satisfactory; inspectors judge leadership and management to be good. The headteacher provides a clear and well-informed vision for the school. He uses efficient strategies to identify strengths and address weaknesses in order to realise the aspirations he has for others. The school works well together; the support of senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff

and governors is cohesive and well directed. Regular and rigorous evaluation of all aspects of the school by senior leaders helps them form an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school's provision. Middle management is predominantly good and contains innovative individuals driven by their dedication to the school and their subject with the needs and success of students a high priority. Staff development is used effectively to improve the quality of teaching. A comprehensive departmental and pastoral review system contributes to the high quality of school evaluation. Pupils and parents are effectively involved but would like more feedback about how their views are used. Departments recognise that assessment data to check the progress of students against targets is generally sound within their own area of responsibility, although it does not yet add up to a coherent system that enables students, parents and different teachers to have an overview of progress. The school has used its specialist science status well to improve resources, such as computers and interactive white boards, but it is too early to judge the impact of improvements upon the quality of education provided. Governors make an excellent contribution to the effectiveness of leadership and management; this represents marked improvement since the last inspection. Governors are strong 'critical friends' and they set a strategic direction which has standards and achievement, in addition to the welfare of students, at its core. Financial planning is secure and is based upon very good day-to-day management of resources and high quality strategic planning. Leadership and management contribute highly to the school's continuous improvement; capacity for further improvement is good.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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

On behalf of the inspectors who visited Marshland High School on the 5 and 6 July, I would like to thank you for introducing us to your school. We enjoyed the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in lessons and through discussions. Many of you helped us find our way around and made us feel welcome by speaking to us politely and enthusiastically on our way to and from lessons. We think that Marshland High School is a good school and thought you might like to know why we think that. What we liked about your school: - you support each other very well and value your teachers - you show a caring attitude towards the wider community - you enjoy teaching that makes learning interesting by getting you involved - your standards of work and examination results are good and rising - your school is very well led and managed - your school continues to move forwards through accurate improvements - you get good support if you have problems or work becomes too difficult - you are given good advice about building on your achievements at the school What we have asked your school to do now: - develop equally high standards across all areas of the school - develop a common approach to assessment that reflects the best practice The inspection team wish you continued success in striving for and 'Celebrating Individual Achievement' together as a school community that everyone can look forward to coming to as an adult or pupil. Ian Middleton (Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools)