



Marshbrook First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124148
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292903
Inspection date 18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	First	School address	Teddesley Road
School category	Community		Penkridge
Age range of pupils	4-9		Stafford ST19 5BA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 712780
Number on roll (school)	135	Fax number	01785 712 476
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Paul Evans
		Headteacher	Nicola Walker
Date of previous school inspection	19 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Marshbrook is a small school situated in the village of Penkridge, which is about six miles south of Stafford. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. About a quarter of the pupils join the school after Year 1. When children enter the Reception class, their skills are similar to those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marshbrook is a good school providing good value for money and there is the potential for it to become even better. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are very happy, thoroughly enjoy their work and parents are overwhelming delighted with the education provided. The sentiments of one parent were mirrored by many others when she commented that her child 'has enjoyed her time at Marshbrook and literally runs into school. I believe that says a lot.'

The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The good start the children receive in the Reception class provides them with a very secure foundation for further learning. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. As a result, pupils achieve well and standards in the key areas of English and mathematics are above average. Over time, results in national tests for Year 2 pupils have been much better in English than in mathematics. As a result of the refinement of its procedures to track how well pupils are doing, and the provision of more challenging work, standards are improving in mathematics. Provisional test results for 2006 indicate that many more pupils are attaining the higher level in this subject than in previous years. However, the school acknowledges that it is not yet consistent in making pupils aware of their targets and in ensuring teachers accurately match work to what pupils are capable of doing. There are occasions when some of the more able pupils repeat mathematical activities unnecessarily.

The pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school because the teaching is good and they are provided with interesting work to undertake. They are proud of the opportunities they are given to take on responsibility. Older pupils were particularly keen to describe their involvement in planning and planting a 'sensory garden'. After compiling a bid the pupils were given money by a large superstore and were awarded a prize as part of the Stafford in Bloom competition. Pupils are fully involved in charitable activities and the school band and choir perform regularly for village activities. They are well looked after and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with good support, enabling them to take a full part in all aspects of school life. Pupils are prepared well for the future. They acquire a good understanding of what they need to do to lead a healthy life and regularly take part in sporting and physical activities.

Leadership and management are good. There is a very clear focus on raising standards and new initiatives are embraced wholeheartedly by all staff. For example, the development of improved assessment procedures in mathematics has helped raise standards. This openness has resulted in the forging of excellent partnerships with parents, other schools and the various professionals supporting the school. Parents have confidence in the headteacher and feel that their views are fully considered. The headteacher has accurately identified what could be made better and there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of the more able pupils in mathematics by making pupils more aware of the targets they are expected to attain.
- Ensure teachers match the work closely to the ability of pupils in mathematics and avoid unnecessary repetition of work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards attained in national tests at the end of Year 2 show that pupils achieve well overall. In 2005, standards were significantly above the national average in reading and writing but they were only average in mathematics. The unvalidated test results for 2006 indicate that standards will be the same in reading and writing as the previous year but that there has been a significant improvement in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that standards remain above average in Years 3 and 4 and achievement remains good. Occasionally, a small number of more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics because they are not always challenged sufficiently. In the Reception Year, children make good progress and attain the level expected for their age in all areas of learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle. This is evident during playtimes when pupils of all ages play together safely and happily. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know how to get help from staff if they experience any problems. Behaviour is mostly good, and pupils respond well to strategies to promote good behaviour. They enjoy the opportunities which they have to work together in pairs and groups, but do not always listen carefully to each other. Older pupils help younger ones by acting responsibly as playground marshals. The school's POW WOW group takes pupils' ideas and concerns on board and works with staff to improve the school environment. Pupils engage in lessons and activities with enthusiasm and enjoy the range of activities which they experience. Attendance at school is satisfactory. Although the school is doing all it can to improve it, attendance has fallen to average from above average in recent years. This is largely because of holidays taken in term time but also because of a marked increase in illnesses. Spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well through activities like circle time and school assemblies. Creative arts week makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and this ensures that the pupils' progress is good in all year groups. The pupils make good progress because lessons are planned well and teachers are clear about what the pupils are to learn.

Teaching is matched well to the needs of most pupils. Occasionally, a small number of more able pupils could do better in mathematics. Although teachers are now providing the pupils with more challenging work, it is not always matched closely enough to what these pupils are capable of doing. Pupils are also required to repeat work with which they are already familiar because teachers do not always plan work that matches the individual's targets. In the Reception Year, good teaching of basic skills provides the children with a very strong foundation for the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school meets statutory requirements and provides a good range of interesting activities for the pupils. At the moment, planning does not fully include literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects, but this is being addressed. The opportunities to develop creative skills are good and a flourishing band and choir entertain within the school and the local community. The science, physical education and personal, social and health education programmes effectively promote healthy and safe lifestyles. These are supported by a number of activities such as basic cycle training, water safety awareness and swimming lessons. Enrichment opportunities are varied and good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills and the development of teamwork make a good contribution to pupils' understanding of future economic life. This is also enhanced by activities like the recent gardening project, which enabled pupils to plan and create a sensory garden.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's provision to ensure that pupils are safe and healthy is good. Health and safety procedures and systems are given a high priority and are effectively checked. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good, both from the school's staff and from the very strong links with outside agencies. Pupils are well integrated into all aspects of school life and make good progress with their work and personal development. Classes and groups are made aware of their learning targets and there is good support to help pupils achieve them. However, learning targets are not sufficiently matched to individual pupils' needs in mathematics. As a result, the more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in their learning. Arrangements

to support pupils and parents when moving into the school or on to the next school are very effective. The school works very well in partnership with others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The school's day-to-day procedures are firmly established, enabling it to run smoothly. Governors are fully involved in the strategic management of the school, helping to ensure the finances are directed to the areas of greatest need. The headteacher makes good use of support from the local authority and other sources. This has helped it to identify, and begin to eradicate the pockets of underachievement seen in mathematics. There are ample opportunities for the views of parents and pupils to be sampled through the school's questionnaires and these are taken into account when identifying areas for future development. The school has rightly identified the need to ensure senior staff monitor more effectively how teachers are planning work for the more able pupils in mathematics.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
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?	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	2
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	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.

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

Thank you all very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. The school is providing you with a good education. Here are some of the highlights of your school

- You are making good progress with your reading and writing.
- Your good behaviour and your enthusiasm for lessons and other activities.
- The very good relationships you have with one another and with the staff.
- The good range of interesting activities that you take part in.
- The school looks after you well and gives good help to those who need some extra support.

These are the things we have suggested the school does now

- Make sure the teachers look at how well you are doing in mathematics and use the information to give you work that isn't too easy.
- Make sure that you know what your targets are in mathematics and that you know what to do to get better.

I hope you continue to work hard and enjoy your time at school.