

# Marshlands Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114442
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	322784
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Browning

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	127
<b>School</b>	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Linda Tallwin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Gibbins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Marshfoot Lane Hailsham BN27 2PH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 841420
<b>Fax number</b>	01323 440139

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Marshlands is a smaller than average school. The attainment of children on entry to the Foundation Stage is much lower than expected for their age. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has significant numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has been through a challenging time, experiencing some significant staffing instability, including at senior management level, with several interim headteachers running the school for short periods. A permanent headteacher started in April 2008. The school has moved into a new building since its last inspection in November 2006 when it was judged to require special measures to help it improve. Due to budgetary constraints, high pupil mobility and falling rolls, the school has reduced from seven to five classes and a nursery.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Nevertheless in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the inadequate achievement and standards in pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills, particularly in their use of spelling. The presentation of pupils' work and basic skills in mathematics and science are also in need of improvement.

The school is not yet effective in moving all pupils forward from their low starting points. The newly appointed headteacher has accurately analysed the school's strengths and weaknesses and has built on the priorities identified for improvement. She is moving the school forward at a quick pace, has high expectations, and is ably supported by senior leaders. Already the focus to improve attendance and behaviour and raise pupils' low self-esteem has been very successful. The school is calmer, with children more engaged in their learning. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils' attitudes have improved from inadequate to satisfactory. This supports pupils' satisfactory personal development. Despite recent difficulties pupils say, 'We enjoy coming to school, we want to learn.' They show a good understanding of how to lead healthy, safe lives and are well cared for.

Priorities are well focused on raising standards and lifting pupils' achievement. Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with much lower skills than expected and make satisfactory progress due to the good emphasis on their personal and social development. The below average standards in Years 1 to 6 are beginning to rise. Pupils' achievement is inadequate and uneven although there are some signs pupils are beginning to make up for 'lost ground'. Weaknesses are being remedied systematically, but there is still scope to improve pupils' basic skills. Teaching and the curriculum have improved and are now satisfactory, with some good features. There is still not enough good teaching to ensure pupils make consistent progress and tasks set for pupils are not always well matched to their abilities. Although the curriculum is satisfactory, enrichment is good and pupils enjoyed running a French café as an enterprise venture, especially when their parents visited and it made a profit.

The school has settled well into the new accommodation, which has had a hugely positive impact on learning. Developing the skills of staff has been a priority. Subject leaders are increasingly effective and accountable but, as yet, their impact on raising standards has been limited. The school has received substantial support from the local authority, but progress in raising standards and improving teaching and learning was hampered by significant staff turbulence. Strong leadership by the headteacher, improved governance, and satisfactory leadership and management overall demonstrate a sound capacity for improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills much lower than expected. Aspects of their personal, emotional and social development are particularly weak. Children make a good start in their personal, social and emotional development so settle well and gain confidence. This is because staff set high expectations and encourage positive behaviour and attitudes.

Standards in this area are close to the national picture. In other areas, children make sound progress and standards are below average by the time they enter Year 1. The introduction of a programme linking sounds and letters is having a positive impact on their progress. The balance of child chosen and teacher led activities help children to develop the expected levels of independence. Children's progress is assessed regularly so that next steps are identified effectively. Satisfactory use is made of the outside area, but there is scope to make more imaginative use of it to extend and develop skills across a wider range of learning. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and give particular focus to the development of pupils' speaking, listening and writing and presentation skills.
- Ensure teaching is consistently good and tasks are always well matched to pupils' needs to help raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress.
- Develop the roles of subject coordinators to have a greater impact for raising the standards pupils reach in their subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Given their low starting points, children make satisfactory progress by the end of Reception Year to reach standards that are close to nationally expected levels. Last year standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 were exceptionally low and pupils did not make the progress they should. Standards are beginning to rise but are still below average. Pupils' progress, although inadequate, is beginning to improve. Both Years 2 and 6 have suffered from significant staffing turbulence but pupils have responded well. They are now making faster gains in their learning, but for Year 6 this has proved too late to raise standards significantly. The legacy of past underachievement is reducing, partly due to improved behaviour and less disruption to learning. Better checking of pupils' progress has also identified those not achieving as well as they should. Suitable support and 'catch up' opportunities have helped plug the gaps in pupils' learning, especially for those pupils with specific learning needs. Pupils are better at reading than writing and in Years 1 to 5, their progress in mathematics is marked, as the school has received much support from the local authority. Speaking and listening skills and writing are still relatively weak and continue to be a major focus for improvement.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved significantly. The few who still exhibit challenging behaviour are more aware of the need to consider others and there have been no recent exclusions. Pupils like the recent changes and say 'learning is more interesting'. Earning 'commitment tokens', which can be exchanged for goods in the school shop, have proved very popular. As a result, attendance has improved significantly. However, the development of skills pupils will need in adult life is inadequate. Pupils really understand the need for keeping fit and healthy, shown in their energetic playtimes and uptake of sport. Shelling peas at playtime, they talked about how vegetables were good for you. Pupils have set up codes of conduct and organise games and equipment at playtimes. Pupils say they feel very safe and know who to go to for help. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Many have low self-esteem but now readily undertake challenges and are proud to be school

councillors, playground leaders, and sports referees. After the success of the French café, pupils are now busily running cake stalls to raise funds for end of term trips.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now typically satisfactory, with some improved features. Teachers have a much clearer picture of what they expect pupils to learn in lessons and this is usually shared with them at the outset. A common approach to behaviour management is proving effective in reducing disruption in lessons, and leading to improved behaviour. Teachers are developing a clearer understanding of the levels at which pupils should be working by making better use of the good tracking systems. This means that they can now keep a close eye on pupils who are not doing as well as they should and identify those who would benefit from additional support. Lessons are most successful when work is pitched at the correct level for all abilities. While there is generally a much better match of work to the abilities of different groups of pupils, there are still instances where all pupils are set the same tasks and where expectations of the most able are not high enough. This is particularly the case in writing and in developing pupils' basic skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school recognises the ongoing need to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. With this in mind, it is reviewing the curriculum to make learning more interesting and is exploring creative links between subjects. Whilst lesson plans are beginning to be adapted and different resources are being used to enliven learning, there is more work to be done to make learning really exciting. Some imaginative ideas have already been used, such as when Years 5 and 6 enjoyed writing about everyday life at Marshlands, made small models, and used information and communication technology (ICT) equipment to record an animated sequence to go on the school 'blog' and website. Nonetheless, tasks are not always well matched to pupils' wide ranging abilities. The reorganisation of support for those with specific learning needs has meant that their needs are better met. Enrichment through visitors, such as storytellers, and after school clubs is popular. Links with a local sports college and a mini Olympics add to pupils' enjoyment.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pastoral care is good, but academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils feel safe with plenty of adults to provide support if needed. The re-opened breakfast club, run by parents and teachers, has proved very popular. The school is also running social groups among the year groups to support better attitudes and these are helping to change pupils' behaviour. Health and safety, risk assessment and child protection procedures are secure. The arrangements to assist pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved considerably. Reviews of their progress and good links with external agencies have secured support for those at most risk. Pupils have a better understanding of their targets in English and mathematics. However, teachers do not always give enough feedback when marking pupils' work to help them improve and do not always make sufficient use of assessment information when planning work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management have strengthened recently after a period of significant turbulence. The headteacher's strong leadership, ably supported by senior leaders, is setting a positive learning environment with a firm focus on raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. Clear expectations have been set for the quality of teaching. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the impact of changes made are used effectively to plan the next step and have led to improvements in pupils' progress. Positive procedures for managing behaviour and promoting good attendance have already led to significant improvement. Systems to check pupils' progress are used well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and to put in place 'booster' groups for pupils who might be underachieving. As the school is not yet performing as well as it might it does not yet give value for money. The continuing strong support from external consultants has given subject leaders the confidence to gain a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. They are being held to account but their work has yet to have a significant impact on standards and pupils' achievement. Governors have gained in confidence and are better placed to move back to delegated powers with a new committee structure and an experienced governor ready to take over the role of chairperson. Links with parents and local communities are improving and the school is keen to involve them.

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## Annex A

## 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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

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

<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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	4
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?	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marshlands Primary School, Hailsham BN27 2PH

Thank you for being so helpful to us, particularly those of you who talked with us. You told us how much you thought your school had improved and we agree, but it is not yet as good as it could be. It still needs special help to improve. Better teaching is beginning to help you make more progress than before but you still have a lot of catching up to do. This is why the results that Year 2 and Year 6 pupils get in English, mathematics and science have not been as good as they might be.

The best things about the school are:

- children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly and make satisfactory progress
- you really know how to keep healthy, fit and safe
- your behaviour has really improved. Well done!
- the headteacher, staff and governors, with help from the local authority, are working successfully to improve the school
- your attendance is much better. Congratulations!

The main things that need to be done to improve your school further are:

- to improve your standards in English, mathematics and science and especially your speaking and listening, writing and presentation skills
- to make sure that teaching is always good and that the work you are asked to do is at the right level for you
- to improve the work of subject leaders and make sure they make a difference for the better.

You can help too. Politely tell the teacher if the work is too easy or hard and always try to do your very best.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning Lead inspector

3 July 2008

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Lead inspector