

Marsh Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103233
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	331579
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	399
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jerry Cregan
Headteacher	Marlene Douglas
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Marsh Hill Erdington Birmingham B23 7HY
Telephone number	01214 642920
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Marsh Hill is a large school situated on the outskirts of Birmingham. The majority of pupils come from the local area, and the rest from surrounding neighbourhoods. The proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals or are from minority ethnic groups are much higher than average. The school has full-time Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Reception. The school provides a breakfast club for the children who attend the school. The school was last inspected in April 2008 and was subject to a notice to improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Marsh Hill is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. One parent typically reflected, 'I want to congratulate the teachers and management on making the school an enjoyable place for my child to come. I feel the school has really improved over the past year'. Achievement has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. This is because a good system for monitoring, assessing and tracking the progress made by pupils is now in place and used by all staff. When a pupil is not making the expected progress, they are quickly identified and appropriate support is provided to put them back on track. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress due to the diligent care and support they receive from staff. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is now good. Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with national averages. As a result of the progress made and in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

There are, however, still issues to tackle in the school. Underachievement has been eradicated, but the progress made by pupils across the school is uneven in places. When children enter the school their skill levels are generally in line with those expected for their age although there is variability, and skill levels in key areas such as reading, writing and aspects of mathematics are below expectations. Children in Reception achieve well. Pupils in Year 2 make good progress and by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages. Older pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress, for example in Years 5 and 6. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 have improved, although they remain below average.

All this change has happened due to the good leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, who, supported by the senior team, has ensured that there is now a stronger sense of direction in the school's work. Leadership and management across the school are satisfactory overall, as wider leadership roles and responsibilities have not yet been spread to all middle managers. The school has a clear understanding of the main areas for development and its self-evaluation has been effective. School improvement planning is clearly linked to raising standards and the school is satisfactorily placed to continue to improve.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now satisfactory overall. Many lessons observed were good, however the good quality teaching has not yet had time to impact fully on pupils' progress and some inconsistencies remain. For example, pupils sometimes spend too long sitting on the carpet and lose concentration. The curriculum has improved and is now satisfactory. Pupils are given the opportunity to participate in an appropriate range of enrichment activities. A key strength of the school is the effective way in which it cares for its pupils. Academic guidance, including marking, is good and pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. The pupils are polite, have positive attitudes to learning and are provided with many opportunities to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There have been considerable improvements to the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. The coordinator has been effective in creating

a vibrant learning environment and a common sense of purpose among the staff. Children's welfare needs are well met and children report that they feel safe and secure. Children are proud when they accomplish something new. For example, one child used different shapes to build a tower and then rushed off to share her excitement with a teaching assistant, saying, 'Look what I've done!' Children know the impact of exercise on their bodies and in dance sessions show tremendous enthusiasm and enjoyment as they readily join in with the actions. In teacher-led learning, very occasionally the pace is on the slow side and in these circumstances children find it hard to concentrate but their behaviour remains good. Classrooms are attractive and stimulating, and children have good access to any resources they might need. Better use is being made of the outdoor areas, although opportunities to make the most of these resources are sometimes missed. Staff make good use of assessment information to effectively identify children who are falling behind and to plan the next steps for children's learning. Parents are very positive about the provision and are increasingly being involved in the assessments of what children know and can do.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- Increase the proportion of consistently good or better teaching.
- Ensure that all middle managers make a greater contribution to school improvement.

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

Pupils' achievement across the school is satisfactory overall, and in some year groups good. By the end of Year 6 standards are now closer to national averages. Children make good progress through Reception due to effective teaching, complemented by a broad and balanced curriculum. Satisfactory progress is made through Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 standards are broadly average, although standards in mathematics are above average due to the introduction of a comprehensive assessment system. In Key Stage 2 a legacy of previously inconsistent progress means that some pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, are still only making satisfactory progress. Inconsistent and slower progress in the past is still having a detrimental effect on test results at the end of Key Stage 2 as pupils have to catch up on the gaps in their learning, although there is strong evidence that pupils are responding well to better quality teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is seen in their improving attendance. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Pupils are clear about what to do if they have problems, and know whom to turn to if they are worried, although a small number said they felt the school could do more to discourage bullying. Behaviour is satisfactory. The majority of pupils behave well around the school and in lessons, but a few pupils show signs of inattentiveness if they are not fully engaged in their learning. Pupils value the recently introduced house system and work hard to earn house points. The school councillors are proud of their work. They regularly raise money for charities and contribute to improvements in the school environment. They have

been successful in enhancing the outdoor area and in bringing about improvements to school dinners. Pupils acquire satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills to prepare them for their next steps in learning and later life. Cultural development is good, as seen in their understanding of the diversity and range of other people's cultures and faiths. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They are aware of good eating habits and a good proportion get involved in extra-curricular sporting activities; although they admit that they look forward to the school lunch of pizza and chips on a Friday.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in the Reception classes is now much improved and children are generally engaged in work that is interesting and well matched to their needs. In good lessons in the rest of the school, teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Pupils are well supported in their learning by caring and attentive support staff. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a wide range of learning strategies. Pupils respond well in these lessons and generally make good progress. In a small number of lessons teachers spend too long on their introductions and opportunities are missed for pupils to reflect on their learning. On occasion, basic skills are not fully developed because of the overuse of worksheets. Teachers' marking of work is positive. It is used consistently to challenge pupils and move them on in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Some aspects of the curriculum are good, including provision to promote pupils' personal development. The introduction of a programme to support the development of social and emotional skills has been effective. This is evident in improved behaviour, good relationships between pupils, and the high levels of respect that pupils show for each other and for adults in the school. A particular strength of the curriculum is the way in which diversity is valued and celebrated. A large map of the world is used very effectively to show the many and varied countries from which the school population is derived. Residential visits for the older children are very popular. Currently these are only open to pupils in Years 5 and 6, but this is to be extended to include Year 4.

Most classrooms now have role play areas, which are used appropriately to support pupils' writing and their speaking and listening skills. This has brought improvements in these areas, although standards in writing have not yet risen far enough. The range of extra-curricular activities is sound, and music features highly. Provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is at an early stage but is developing appropriately.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong care, guidance and support for pupils are underpinned by positive relationships, robust monitoring procedures and effective partnerships. There have been notable improvements since the previous inspection. The school has worked closely with the education welfare service and as a consequence attendance and punctuality have improved significantly. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities has also improved, as has their progress, because tracking and assessment procedures are now robust and thorough, special programmes

are well matched to their learning needs, and they benefit from skilled teaching from teaching assistants. Health and safety and safeguarding procedures are robust, and staff are all aware of their responsibilities. As a result vulnerable pupils are well supported.

Academic guidance is a strength. Pupils' books are marked regularly and comments are helpful. Pupils know through good target setting procedures what it is they need to do to improve their work and progress further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher was appointed in September 2008 and her good leadership is having a positive impact on moving the school forward. With regular support from the local authority, the senior team is now developing a more robust capacity to make the necessary improvements. However, the headteacher realises there is still work to do in holding all managers accountable for the standards achieved and progress made by the pupils. The quality of self-evaluation is good and school improvement planning is systematic and clearly linked to raising standards. The governing body are very supportive of the school and are determined to raise achievement and standards. They are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and increasingly hold the school to account for the standards attained by the pupils. Partnerships are strong; many parents hold the school in high regard. One typically commented, 'My child benefits from being educated at Marsh Hill. I have lots of faith in the school, 10 out of 10!'

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	3
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marsh Hill Primary School, Birmingham B23 7HY

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know what we thought about your school and how it could improve.

- You go to a school that has improved a lot recently and is now satisfactory.
- You are making much better progress than you did a year ago.
- You clearly enjoy coming to school and you could help even more by attending every day.
- You and your teachers know how well you are doing.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.
- Your school council are good ambassadors for the school.
- You are polite and considerate young people.

In order to make your school even better, I have suggested that your headteacher and other teachers do the following things.

- Ensure that you do as well as you can in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- Ensure that your teachers give you every opportunity to do as well as you can in lessons, by making more of them good or even better.
- Ensure that all the leaders in your school help the headteacher to improve the school further.

Thank you once again for making us feel so welcome at your school. We would like to wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Marian Harker

Her Majesty's Inspector