

# 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>	339856
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Eadie

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jack Bantoft
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sheila Day
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	School Road Marshland St James Wisbech
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, policies and procedures regarding pupils' health and safety. They scrutinised data showing the progress that pupils are making and questionnaires that had been filled in by staff and by pupils in Key Stage 2. Inspectors also analysed thirty-nine questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Whether the rising trend in results at the end of Year 6 has been maintained and whether standards are now improving at the end of Year 2
- Whether girls are now doing as well as boys through the school and, if not, what the school is doing to address this
- The effectiveness of assessment systems in supporting pupils' learning.

## Information about the school

Marshland St James is a small rural primary school, which draws its pupils from quite a wide area. Almost all pupils are from White backgrounds and very few do not speak English as their home language. There is a small but significant number of pupils from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The numbers of pupils who leave or join at times other than the start of the school year is high. The school changed its entry arrangements for Early Years Foundation Stage children in September 2009, and now has a dedicated class for these children. The headteacher took up her post in September 2007.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Marshland St James is delivering a satisfactory education for its pupils. However, the school has made notable improvements. For instance, although pupils make satisfactory progress through the school, younger pupils and some of the oldest now make good progress. Standards have risen since the last inspection and are average by Years 2 and 6. Analysis of data within school shows that there is little overall difference between the progress of boys and girls despite the variations noted in the national assessments in 2008. The relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress; they are supported well because teachers make clear plans for their learning.

The school has identified the need to raise standards, particularly in mathematics and writing, and has put pertinent strategies in place. Although standards in mathematics are broadly average, pupils' mental calculation skills are weak. There are times in mathematics lessons when the wide range of abilities in each class is not catered for fully. In writing, pupils' relatively weak skills of grammatical construction and spelling are holding them back. Although displays in classrooms were used to try to widen pupils' vocabulary, they are not fully effective.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is good and this results in pupils' significant personal development. They behave well and say they feel safe in school. Snacks at break time are healthy and pupils take good advantage of a range of opportunities to take exercise, both within the curriculum and in break and lunch times.

The school places a high priority on providing equal opportunities for all and a good example of this is the full integration of the pupils from Traveller families. Their culture is celebrated well, alongside that of the local Fenland culture, and the school has worked hard to ensure the inclusion of them and their families. This is aided by very good use being made of the Local Authority Traveller Education Service, who regards the school as being a hub of excellence in this field. There is also valuable expertise on the governing body, which ensures the focus on this aspect. The high priority of inclusion is also demonstrated by the way that pupils, who join the school in Key Stage 2, are quickly assimilated.

Pupils' improved progress is due to changes in the quality of teaching. However, although it has improved it is inconsistent and there is insufficient good teaching. Pupils are generally engaged well in their learning and are motivated. They are particularly enthusiastic about science, where expertise from a local secondary school is used well to ensure that an investigative approach is nurtured. Teachers use assessment well to measure the progress that pupils are making and to identify any who are in danger of

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falling behind. Although marking is positive and teachers sometimes comment on how well pupils have met their objectives for learning, it does not consistently show pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

The governors have been instrumental in shaping the future direction of the school in the drive for higher standards. The headteacher, governors and staff have a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses and there is a shared sense of purpose within the school. There is a very clear plan of what needs to be done, which has been produced by leaders, aided by external agencies. This indicates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of assessment in supporting pupils' learning by:
  - Ensuring teachers know what skills and knowledge pupils have gained
  - Setting pupils clear next steps in learning so that they know how to improve their work, enabling teachers to use these targets when they mark pupils' work
  - Enabling teachers to monitor pupils' progress in relation to their next steps and involving parents in this process.
- Raise standards and improve pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - Ensuring pupils have secure mental calculation skills
  - Making sure pupils are always given work appropriate to their abilities
  - Using the whole-class parts of lessons more effectively so pupils who have already understood can get on with their tasks more quickly.
- Raise standards and improve pupils' progress in writing by:
  - Improving pupils' grammatical construction
  - Working to raise standards of spelling and handwriting throughout the school
  - Widening pupils' reading and first-hand experiences to improve their vocabulary and breadth of writing.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils' learning is satisfactory. In English lessons observed during the inspection for instance, they were fully engaged in following the storyboards that they have created while the teacher read the story. Pupils were keen to see whether they remembered to include all elements of the story in the right order. However, learning is adversely affected in lessons where teachers do not plan tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities. For instance, in a mathematics session with older pupils, pupils took too long to complete the task because their mental calculation skills were not secure, and so they made slow progress. Nonetheless, in the majority of lessons, tasks are set to suit the

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range of abilities. In many classes, good use is made of paired discussions to help pupils speak and learn from one another. Pupils, in their questionnaires, were unanimous in saying that they learn a lot in lessons.

Pupils' attainment has improved. In particular, far more pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now working at above average levels. However, this has not yet fully fed through the school into Key Stage 2. Although there were slight improvements in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and science in Year 6 in 2009.

One of the major advances since the last inspection is the improvement made in pupils' attendance. This has risen significantly in every year since then and is now only just short of the national average. Pupils are agreed in saying that they enjoy school. They make a comprehensive contribution to the school and local community, volunteering readily for tasks around the school and carrying them out responsibly and efficiently. They are also involved in the local community, helping with Christmas and summer fairs for example. Pupils are given wide ranging opportunities to reflect on their place in society, though their awareness of the range of cultures represented in Britain today is more limited.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

The proportion of good teaching is rising and several good lessons were observed during the inspection. This is due to well-focused evaluation of teaching and the determination of leaders and staff to improve provision for the pupils. Lessons have been made more interesting since the curriculum has recently been redesigned to incorporate a thematic approach. Pupils learn relevant skills and can practise their basic literacy and numeracy skills whilst studying a topic. Older pupils were very enthusiastic about their current project on the Egyptians and some good examples were seen where this had been used to inspire creative writing.

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires were universally positive about the care provided for their children. They say such things as, 'They care about all the children and even notice if my child looks a little under the weather.' Very well targeted support is provided for those pupils who may need it. As a parent typically said, 'They take each child and assess them individually according to their needs.' Instances of this support enable pupils to overcome considerable barriers to their learning and some are making remarkable progress, both academically and socially.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The governors have a significant impact on driving improvement. For example, they managed the budget very successfully to enable the appointment of a headteacher without a classroom commitment as they saw the need for a refocus on improving pupils' achievement. The school improvement plan is a clearly focused document, based on a careful analysis of strengths and areas for development.

The headteacher and governors ensure that all statutory requirements regarding safeguarding are met. There is suitable training for staff and sessions also include volunteers and governors. Checks on staff are rigorous. All other health and safety checks are satisfactory, though not all are recorded sufficiently regularly. Outside agencies are used well, when necessary, to advise and support.

Careful analysis of the school's context, involving all in the school community, has been carried out. This has enabled the school to work closely with various groups and in particular the Traveller community. A further good example of the effective promotion of

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community cohesion is the way the school has worked to enable newly arrived Muslim pupils to follow their faith while at school. Some analysis of the effectiveness of these measures has been carried out but this is in its early stages. The school is a harmonious community.

Good partnerships have been built with parents and a range of other agencies and providers. The effectiveness of the work done to promote partnerships with parents is seen in rising attendance at parents' consultations. Much of the credit for this is due to a local initiative, which has been running for three years or so. The school, and in particular the two administrative staff who have been trained, have worked very hard and successfully, using an imaginative range of events and courses, to involve parents. This has enabled parents to be more supportive of their children's learning.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Nursery with levels of skills and knowledge that are generally below those normally found. They make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes and, by the time they start in Year 1, they have reached broadly average standards. Some children start with poor language skills and standards in this area are relatively weak by the end of Reception. Children currently further up the school and those in Reception have not had the advantage of the new Nursery provision.

The key reason for the good progress that children are making is the good range of appropriately planned activities. These address all the areas of learning. For instance, adult-led activities are carefully structured to capture children's interest and engage



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them so that they enjoy learning. Children are confident about choosing activities; they play and work together well. Assessment is detailed and gives clear pointers to the next steps in learning. Parents are beginning to be involved in this process but this is in its early stages.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader took up her post in April 2008 and has made a good start. She has established an ethos of good teamwork in the setting and has established clear priorities for development. Progress data is analysed well for children in Reception, but systems have not yet been fully embedded for those children in Nursery. The leader has high expectations for learning and development and these are shared well with the other adults.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

The responses to the parental questionnaires and the views of those parents spoken to during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive. In particular, all those who responded to the questionnaire were happy with their child's experience at school, with almost two-thirds strongly agreeing. A few were not entirely happy with the way that the school deals with inappropriate behaviour but evidence shows that it is effective. Older pupils spoke of its success, even saying that a pupil who had previously found it difficult to conform was now 'an angel'. A few did not consider that their suggestions and concerns are sufficiently taken into account. Evidence from many other parents suggested that they find the headteacher and staff very approachable and always prepared to listen. There is also evidence to show how parents have influenced changes made by the school.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marshland St James VC Primary School and Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	56	17	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	62	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	49	16	41	3	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	54	18	46	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	56	17	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	51	18	46	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	49	18	46	2	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	38	23	59	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	54	17	44	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	31	22	56	5	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	46	14	36	5	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	46	17	44	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	64	14	36	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 October 2009

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing how much you enjoy your school. We were particularly pleased to read on the questionnaires that the older children completed how much you are enjoying the topic work on the Egyptians. At present your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. However, it is doing many things well and it is improving. For instance, standards in the national assessments in both Year 2 and Year 6 are improving. The major reason for this improvement is that your headteacher and teachers have made positive changes to the way that you learn. The governors are doing a particularly good job in helping the school to improve.

You behave and get on very well together. I was impressed to see the healthy snacks that many of you had at break and you certainly take plenty of exercise. All adults take good care of you and you told us that you feel very safe in school. Your learning catalysts have worked hard to help your parents to know how best to help you learn and we were impressed with this. Many of you are good at helping the school to run smoothly by doing jobs.

There are three things that we have suggested need improvement.

Your teachers could do more to tell you what you have already learnt and what you need to learn next. We also think that this would help you to check how well you are doing and share this with your parents.

You need to make better progress in maths and work on learning your number bonds and tables.

Your writing is improving, but you need to practise your spelling and handwriting and try hard to learn to write in a grammatically correct way.

I am sure you will continue working hard so that your teachers can help you to make faster progress.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie

Lead Inspector

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