

Marden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118306
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358307
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Barker

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Walker
Headteacher	Rowena Linn
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons and 11 teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and analysed 52 questionnaires from parents and carers, 55 from pupils and 17 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies, including those related to the safeguarding of pupils, information on pupils' progress, and records of the monitoring of teaching.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of teachers' assessment when planning lessons for all groups of pupils, particularly boys and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own targets and their involvement in assessing their own work.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in evaluating progress and developing and monitoring provision, particularly in mathematics.
- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the extent to which provision matches the needs of children, particularly in calculation and communication, language and literacy.

Information about the school

Marden Primary School is an average-sized school set in a rural farming community. The majority of children live in the village or close by. A small minority of children are from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and only a few children have a statement of special educational needs. The main area of need is moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is within the average range. The school has gained SAFEMark and Activemark status. Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in staffing and a newly restructured leadership team.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Marden Primary School is a good and improving school where pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their countryside environment, especially when they use this for their learning, such as for science investigations. Parents and carers universally comment on and appreciate the 'strong community values' created by the school's caring and supportive ethos. These values were seen in the good conduct of the pupils in lessons and around the school, and in their courtesy to visitors. At break-time, pupils were observed playing exceptionally well together, knowing the equipment rota and taking turns on it. They take responsibility for their own and others' safety, including ensuring that all visitors are wearing their badges. One parent described the school as 'well led, with approachable and supportive teachers'.

Highly effective leadership and management by the headteacher, together with the excellent support of the governing body and the involvement of managers and staff at all levels, have ensured a continuing upward trend in pupils' attainment throughout a challenging period of many staff changes. A thorough programme of self-review and evaluation, closely monitored by the governing body, helps to inform the school's very comprehensive quality improvement plan. However, the school does not always focus systematically on the most significant priorities for improvement identified by this process. The school is in a good position to share the best practice that exists within the school and to involve parents and carers more fully in supporting their children's progress. Good progress has been made in all areas identified for improvement since the last inspection. These features, together with the rising trend in pupils' attainment, mean that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is showing a continuing upward trend over the last three years. Although it remains broadly average overall, attainment for pupils working at the higher levels is now above average. Achievement is good. Good progress overall was observed in lessons and in pupils' books. Pupils know and understand their targets. There were some outstanding examples of pupils assessing their own and others' work, and this is helping to bring about improvement in English in particular, although this good practice is not yet consistent across the school. Teachers make good use of assessment for grouping pupils, but where there is too much whole-class teaching, assessment during lessons is not used to challenge pupils and extend their learning. In lessons, teaching assistants support individuals and groups well. However, too often, teachers do not plan effectively for their full involvement, particularly in whole-class teaching or in developing additional resources and strategies in order to break down tasks for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Assessment is used well by leaders and managers to develop a range of additional provision outside the classroom for individuals and groups with special educational needs

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and/or disabilities. Interventions are made for literacy, numeracy, social, physical, and language and communication skills. Monitoring and assessment show that these pupils make good progress. The successful development of cross-curricular links is providing pupils with a purpose for learning. For instance, the school recently organised some mathematics days where pupils made links between money and calculation which were continued and followed up in mathematics lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress by:
 - ensuring all teachers and support staff have a clear understanding of the aspects of teaching that promote and stimulate good learning
 - developing the skills of class teachers in planning for the full involvement of teaching assistants in lessons
 - systematically assessing children's progress in lessons.
- Improve aspects of the good leadership and management so that:
 - the best practice identified in teaching is shared effectively across all subject areas
 - systematic evaluation is used to identify and focus school priorities to raise achievement further
 - parents and carers fully understand how their children are progressing and how to help their children to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and work well together. They enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with below average skills and make good gains in their learning throughout the school. Attainment is broadly average overall, with some pupils attaining significantly above expected levels in English for the last two years. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils develop good work-related skills and collaborate well with each other in lessons, discussing moral dilemmas and feelings, for instance thinking about who to save on a sinking ship. All groups of pupils, including boys and Traveller children, achieve well. Pupils' progress is particularly good in writing and information and communication technology, where they have many opportunities to research and present their work, including when learning French. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe, for instance in using the roads and on public transport, and this is borne out by the school's SAFEMark status. Although behaviour observed by inspectors was good and sometimes outstanding, pupils expressed concerns about the behaviour of a minority that affects their learning, and sometimes there are incidents in the playground. The school has clear procedures in place to deal with any concerns raised by pupils. Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is excellent and is seen in the high uptake of additional activities offered by the school. The school's achievement of Activemark status reflects its commitment to promoting the benefits of physical activity. Pupils make good choices at lunchtime and know what they need to eat for a balanced diet. They contribute well to school activities and some are play leaders and peer mentors. Pupils also make a good

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contribution to the wider community, for example by helping with designing a local play area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and better in Key Stage 2. Cross-curricular themes and active strategies ensure that boys engage more fully in writing. Pupils work well in pairs and groups, particularly when developing ideas for writing, or in discussion carefully focused by the teacher. In one outstanding lesson, pupils had planned learning together using a range of planning formats, including lists and spider diagrams. The purposeful writing that followed linked with a cross-curricular theme of the Tudors and with writing a report. Not only was this successful in developing their vocabulary, but following the writing, pupils also assessed each other's work, based on the criteria for report writing. Some marking, particularly in English, is outstanding because it gives clear guidance to pupils on what they are doing well and how to make the next steps in their learning. However, this best practice is not consistent across all classes and all subjects.

The good curriculum is enhanced by the development of cross-curricular learning activities which give pupils greater purpose for writing and calculation in mathematics. Homework is set regularly with clear criteria in each class and gives opportunities for parents and carers to support their children, but some parents were unsure about how their support with homework is linked to the progress of their children.

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Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school, in particular the range of provision for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is outstanding. The school has close links with other agencies, such as occupational and speech and language therapists, so support staff are well trained to deliver specific skills programmes, for instance for those with motor coordination difficulties and social and language and communication needs. The school supports families well, including the parents and carers of Traveller children, who attend school well and make good progress. Transition at the start and end of the pupils' time at the school is good, but some pupils were concerned about moving from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Over the past year, the concerted drive of the new leadership team has brought about notable improvements in teaching and learning. Good partnerships with other organisations, including the local authority and a cluster of schools, are having a positive impact, particularly in relation to target setting, assessment, marking and dialogue with pupils linked to their learning. Outstanding practice is developing, especially in relation to writing. The structured assessment used across the school ensures that pupils are clear about their learning targets. The impact of this can be seen in improved writing by boys and higher-attaining pupils. However, the school has yet to build on these improvements by ensuring that existing good practice is shared more widely.

Arrangements for safeguarding are good and the school site is secure. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met, that policies are reviewed regularly and systematically, and that training is up-to-date. Most members of the governing body are trained in safeguarding and a scheduled training programme is in place for all new staff. Community cohesion is good. The school has a developing link with a city school located close to the Olympic village, and pupil visits have already taken place. Pupils have a range of opportunities to collect for charities both globally and nationally, and are aware of the work that these charities undertake. All pupils learn French and visits have been made to France.

All adults in the school share a strong commitment to ensuring that every child has an equal chance to learn and that any barriers to learning are overcome. Discrimination is not tolerated. The school works closely with the families of pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, to ensure they are included, for instance through full participation in after-school activities. Expertise within the school, close monitoring of pupils' progress and effective liaison with external agencies enable all pupils to achieve well, whatever

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their circumstances or difficulties. The school has made good links with parents and carers, and encourages them all to support their children's learning, especially through homework activities, but acknowledges that there is still work to be done in this respect.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The new leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been effective in developing learning across all the learning goals and in linking individual and group activities to rigorous and detailed colour-coded assessment. This contributes greatly to the good outcomes for these children, who make good progress, working at broadly average levels by the time they move on to Key Stage 1. Learning is well planned for individuals, with observations linked to the next steps for learning, across all the early learning goals. Pupils enjoy activities when these are tightly structured by their teachers, for instance when learning the sounds that letters make (phonics), as well as when they are able to choose their learning activities, which they do very confidently. Activities are planned around children's interests, such as a 'monsters' theme. In one session, children were avoiding 'lava' by forming a line and using tiles as stepping stones, which they had to pass back and forth in order to take the next step. This adult-led activity provided opportunities for the development of social skills and cooperation, as well as problem solving and mathematics, and was hugely enjoyed by the children. The children are encouraged to be independent and are good, for example, at changing for physical education and tidying up. However, there are missed opportunities for children to develop their communication, language, literacy, and calculation skills through recording their activities. The children are well cared for, with all safeguarding arrangements in place. There are good partnerships with the local authority, with parents and pre-school settings, and governors are very involved with the process of development. However, some aspects still need embedding,

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for instance the engagement of all parents in their children's learning, and using data more effectively to monitor progress across groups.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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 number of responses to questionnaires was average for a school of this size. All parents and carers who responded agreed that their child enjoys school, that they have a good experience and that it is a safe place for their children. However, a number of concerns were expressed by a few parents and carers, and inspectors discussed all of these with the headteacher. Parents and carers thought that school prepared the children well emotionally and socially for secondary school, but there were some concerns regarding academic progress. Inspectors found during this inspection that academic progress was good and have asked the school to work with parents and carers to ensure they know and understand their children's academic progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marden Primary School 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 232 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	73	14	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	75	12	23	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	44	28	54	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	40	24	46	4	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	56	19	37	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	50	23	44	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	50	26	50	0	0	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)	16	31	21	40	3	6	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	42	22	42	3	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	37	30	58	3	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	44	20	38	3	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	21	40	25	48	3	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	60	21	40	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



14 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marden Primary School, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9JX

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. You told us how much you enjoy working together in lessons and other activities, and about the many activities you do outside on the field and in the playground, and after school, including science investigations.

These are some of the things we liked about your school.

- Your teachers help you to make a good start in Reception by ensuring you have lots of indoor and outdoor activities which help you to learn.
- Adults ensure that you feel safe in school, and that you know how to keep yourselves safe when you are outside the school.
- Your teachers help you with knowing the next steps to improve your work and give you opportunities to write that are linked to the work you are doing.
- You are able to take responsibilities and help in the school, for example by being play leaders and peer mentors as well as members of the school council.
- You enjoy using computers for different activities, such as research and presentation.
- Your views are listened to and have helped with developing the play park in the village.

Here are some things we have asked the staff and governors to improve.

- We have asked teachers and teaching assistants to work together more closely to plan your learning activities.
- We would like your teachers to learn from each other and share the good teaching that already happens in the school.
- We have asked the school to ensure that your parents and carers are clearer about what you need to do to improve so that they can help you with your work.

You can all help by making sure staff help you if you have any problems in lessons or with other pupils.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Barker
Lead inspector

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