

Marden Primary School

Goudhurst Road, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 9JX

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although achievement is improving rapidly in all subjects, over time it has not been good. Attainment in both Key Stages 1 and 2 has historically not risen quickly enough, especially in mathematics.
- Although pupils entitled to support from additional funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are now making good progress, their attainment is still below that of other pupils.
- Teaching has been inconsistent in quality, which affected the rates of progress pupils made within lessons. Teaching is improving, but not enough is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always make full use of the other adults who support learning in lessons in developing pupils' progress.
- Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to write longer pieces of work in all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and leadership team have produced a strong and clear drive for improvement. This has resulted in a marked rise in standards and rapidly improving rates of progress for all groups of pupils.
- Leaders have set challenging targets for both the school and teachers, which are bringing about rapid improvements in all areas.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Behaviour is good and pupils are both polite and courteous to each other and adults. They have a positive attitude to learning and this is helping to drive up standards.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, both in and out of school.
- The governing body knows the school well and effectively both supports and challenges the leadership team.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 14 lessons, and inspectors were joined by the headteacher in five of these observations.
- A number of pupils were heard reading and inspectors observed some pupils during the teaching of reading and of the letters and the sounds they make (phonics).
- Discussions were held with school leaders, four members of the governing body and a group of pupils. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation covering safeguarding, the management of staff performance, records of behaviour and safety, attendance, checks on pupils' attainment and progress, and school improvement planning.
- The inspectors took account of the 33 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Marden Primary School is an average-sized school.
- The school is organised into a Reception and Year 1 class, one Year 1 class, one mixed Years 1 and 2 class, one Year 2 class, three mixed Years 3 and 4 classes and one class for Years 5 and 6.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, as is the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to support from the pupil premium (which provides extra funding to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from other groups, such as in the care of the local authority) is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The headteacher has been in post since April 2013 and the leadership team was restructured at that time, following a period of interim management.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the amount of good and outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - all teachers maintain a brisk pace of learning so there are good and better rates of progress in lessons
 - teachers make full use of the other adults who support learning in their classrooms to help pupils progress further in their learning
 - teachers adapt activities as their lesson progresses, when necessary, to make sure that all pupils understand the work and can achieve at the highest possible levels.
- Raise attainment and achievement further by making sure that:
 - all teachers improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing through providing more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work in different subjects
 - effective strategies are employed to raise the attainment of pupils entitled to the additional pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Historically, attainment and rates of progress in the school have fallen for all groups of pupils. Although attainment is still not yet above national expectations, this trend has been rapidly reversed over the past 12 months and all pupils are now making good, and for some better, progress. Year 6 pupils are on track to exceed national expectations.
- Attainment in writing is not as strong as the other subjects in school, and this is due to teachers not providing enough opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work in all subjects.
- Attainment in mathematics had been falling for several years and is still not above national expectations. However, this situation has improved rapidly over the past months, especially in Key Stage 2. A lesson related to measurement was a good example of how mathematics lessons have changed. Pupils were eagerly involved in exploring the variations between standard and non-standard types of measures. The teacher challenged them throughout with a range of practical tasks, using a wide range of equipment and encouraging them to constantly evaluate their own learning and that of their peers. Pupils stated they really enjoyed this practical approach.
- Children join the school with skills and knowledge which are below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class and this continues through Key Stage 1. As a result, pupils achieve broadly average standards when they move into Key Stage 2.
- Progress in Key Stage 2, however, then tended to slow and pupils have, for several years, left Year 6 with skills and knowledge which were below average in most subjects. This trend is now being rapidly reversed and progress rates in Key Stage 2 have improved markedly; but this situation, as yet, has not had time to show improvements in national test results at the end of Year 6.
- The most-able pupils are currently making much better progress across the school. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in line with their peers in school.
- Pupils eligible for the extra pupil premium funding performed poorly for a number of years. However, these pupils are now progressing rapidly. This has resulted in closing the attainment gap, so it is now a term behind their peers in school in both English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making rapid progress and by the end of Year 6, in both English and mathematics, these pupils are also closing the gap with their peers. The school has also had some variation between the standards of boys and girls in the past, with boys doing better. Girls are now making progress at faster rates than boys.
- Reading is taught well across the whole school and pupils show a clear enjoyment of books. In an outstanding English lesson, pupils were reading a book and then using this as a stimulus to create their own characters and story settings. Pupils' discussions showed pupils had excellent subject knowledge and used a wide and varied vocabulary.
- Pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) effectively to help them read words. In the national screening check the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the required levels was in line with the national average on the first test, and those who took a re-test exceed the national average.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- In the past there was too much teaching that required improvement and this caused results in school to fall, especially in Key Stage 2. Although results are still not above the national average, since the appointment of the new headteacher and his leadership team the quality of teaching has seen marked improvements. Teaching seen during the inspection was good, with some that was outstanding. The local authority has closely monitored teaching over the past year and

confirms the senior leadership team's view that currently teaching is good.

- Teaching in the Reception class is good, with staff having high expectations and a clear understanding of how to help the children improve in all areas of their learning.
- Teaching in Key Stage 1 has generally been better than that in Key Stage 2, but there is now greater consistency across the whole school. However, there has not yet been enough outstanding teaching to help raise standards above national expectations. Teachers do not always adapt activities during lessons when necessary to ensure all pupils understand the work.
- Other adults who support learning in lessons are not always effectively directed by teachers and so are not able to support pupils' learning consistently well. However, where teaching is at its best these adults provide good support to pupils, especially less-able pupils.
- Teachers now carefully check what pupils know and plan their lessons to take account of this information. All adults in lessons monitor pupils' learning, but this information is not always used by teachers to adapt their lessons as pupils progress.
- The teaching of mathematics has been improved considerably over recent months and is now more practically based. For example, in the Reception class, children were observed creating a repeating patterns using a range of materials from paints to shapes. More-able pupils were challenged even further in having to create patterns using a range of both flat and solid shapes.
- Pupils in receipt of additional funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well in highly focused lessons and these have begun to raise achievement rates for these pupils. However, the gap between these pupils and their peers, both in school and nationally, has not yet closed, but is doing so quickly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school generally is good. Pupils say they feel safe and that any issues which do arise are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils state that they can talk to teachers if there are any problems and they feel that teachers keep them safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and especially so on the internet. They enjoy physical activities and know how to stay healthy.
- Pupils understand the various forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, but insist there is no bullying in school.
- During discussions with pupils, and in lessons, they clearly showed they enjoyed their learning and that this has changed since the new leadership team was created. Pupils stated lessons are more enjoyable as they are practical, fun and more interesting. Occasionally, when teaching is not as good as it should be, their concentration lapses and the pace of learning slows.
- Pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of attending school in their high rates of attendance, which have risen considerably.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because, in a relatively short time, they have brought about rapid changes and improvements to the school. Attainment is not yet above the national average, but progress rates are rapidly accelerating and pupils are catching up on lost learning quickly.
- Since his appointment, the headteacher has developed a strong vision and desire for improvement across the whole school. Governors, staff, parents and pupils all share in the desire to improve. The headteacher has created rigorous monitoring and recording systems, which mean the senior leadership has an accurate view of pupils' progress on which to build future improvements and to raise standards. Information gathered has been used to create an effective improvement plan, which clearly shows how leaders intend to improve the school still further in the future. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.
- Following a period of poor teaching, the headteacher and senior leadership team have worked hard to eliminate any teaching that does not come up to standard and make sure that all teaching is now good. The percentage of outstanding teaching is increasing and so standards are rising across the school. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is carried out rigorously by both the senior leadership team and governors, who closely link the outcomes to teachers' pay and progression up the salary scale.
- Subject and key stage leaders make a positive contribution to the school in monitoring their areas of responsibility effectively. For example, improvements in the teaching of mathematics have resulted in a marked turn around in attainment in this subject.
- However, in the past the pupil premium funding was not monitored effectively enough and this led to the pupils not making the progress they should. The headteacher and governors have changed the way in which the funding is spent and checked and this change has led to rapid improvements in pupils' progress. Leaders know they need to make sure checks are continuously made to improve rates of progress even more.
- The subjects that pupils are taught have been changed to meet the needs of all the pupils and in order to make it fun, interesting and relevant to the pupils themselves. In all lessons seen during the inspection, teachers used topics which were related to pupils' lives, and skills were taught in a relevant way. The school provides a wide range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors to develop pupils' learning further, and uses part of the pupil premium funding to make sure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to take part in all aspects of school life.
- The school works effectively with parents and they are positive about the school and the service it provides. Links with other agencies make sure that all pupils' needs are met. The senior leadership team makes excellent use of the local authority, who provides good support, and the partnerships it has with other schools, to monitor and moderate the work it does.
- Sports funding has been used effectively to train teaching assistants who act as sports coaches and, in turn, support the teachers in the development of their skills. This has resulted in a wider range of activities available to pupils and teachers have a much greater understanding of how to teach a wide range of sports.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors monitor the school effectively and provide robust challenge and support to the leadership of the school. They use a wide range of evidence and information to make sure they have an accurate view of the school. They have acted quickly to help raise the standards in school. The governors appointed a highly experienced headteacher and re-structured the leadership team to provide the support and depth of leadership required to bring about rapid changes. They monitor school performance data on pupil progress and relate this to the quality of teaching effectively. In turn, the outcomes are closely linked to systems of performance management and teachers' pay and promotion, as well as making sure the staff are provided with opportunities to improve their teaching skills. Governors understand how the pupil premium and sports funding are used to improve opportunities for all the pupils. They take their role in safeguarding within the school very seriously and have made sure that all

statutory aspects meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118306
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426682

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Scott
Headteacher	Malcolm Goddard
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2011
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Fax number	
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