

Marland Special School

Peters Marland, Torrington, Devon, EX38 8QQ

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The overall leadership, management and governance of the school require improvement as record keeping of physical interventions on students is not clear enough.
- Students' behaviour and safety require improvement. Although students' attitudes to learning are largely positive, there are too many incidents of physical interventions and restraints, albeit they are reducing.
- The data are not accurate enough to track improvements in students' behaviour and safety.
- The school does not meet all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is adequate. The accommodation requires improvement to provide students with more storage and study space, and bathroom areas require better maintenance.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has made good improvements in the progress that students make and in the range of qualifications they achieve.
- The strong focus on improving students' numeracy and literacy skills has paid dividends. Most students enjoy reading a range of books and they become more confident in applying mathematical knowledge to everyday situations.
- Students enjoy the wide range of vocational courses, which boosts their self-confidence.
- The school provides a good tailored learning programme to meet the needs of each student very effectively.
- Leaders, managers and governors have successfully improved both the quality and consistency of teaching, particularly at the Marland site, where at the time of the last inspection it was weaker. The school is improving well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 12 lessons, all of which were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, students, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Social care inspectors observed evening activities and spoke to staff and students, over the course of three days.
- There were insufficient parent responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but the school's own survey of parents was considered.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's information on students' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional Inspector

Janice Hawtin

Social Care Inspector

Sharon Escott

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Marland School is a dual site residential special school. The Marland site is for boys and is termly residential. The Springfield Court site in Barnstaple is mixed, although at the time of the inspection there were only boys, and is day provision.
- The school is part of a trust with other special schools in the local authority.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils, in this case those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is above average. Last year, three pupils received the Year 7 catch-up funding, and currently two pupils are in receipt of this additional funding.
- The school uses 'Community Action' for some off-site activities, where students attend outdoor education and healthy cooking sessions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding and raise students' achievement, by:
 - making sure all students are fully involved in lessons as much as possible by being on task
 - extend existing best practice of writing learning objectives in a student-friendly manner, so the students are clear as to what they are expected to achieve in lessons
 - improve the marking of students' work, so that the students know how to improve.
- Improve the recording of physical restraints and interventions, so that it is clear what follow up has been given to both staff and students, and strengthen monitoring to improve practice and reduce the frequency of such events.
- The leader, managers and governors must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.
 - Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of physical restraint. Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person (including the child who is being restrained). (NMS 12.4)
 - A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (use of physical restraint). The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)
 - The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
- Improve the residential accommodation to provide bedrooms with sufficient space for study, suitable storage and ensure bathroom facilities are checked on a regular basis.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' achievement has improved and is now consistently good across both sites of the school. The majority of students make at least expected progress and some make outstanding progress, particularly as they settle into school and become more confident.
- Current Year 10 and Year 11 students are on track to achieve well. A few have undertaken early entry examinations in English and mathematics and gained qualifications, but intend to re-sit to improve their grades. The school adopts this policy for some students to give them the chance to succeed and build their confidence.
- Many students have improved their attainment. Over the last year, in particular, they have gained a greater range of qualifications and achieved higher grades, especially in mathematics and English. For example, more-able students gained higher GCSE grades in a range of subjects such as art, history, English and mathematics.
- The school provides a tailored programme which meets the needs of individual students well and builds on their interests. For example, one student was enthused by his work experience placement where he could work on motorbikes. Students achieve well in vocational courses and gain nationally recognised awards in areas such as construction and land-based activities.
- There has been a strong drive to improve students' numeracy and literacy skills. This is evident in many classes where students are encouraged to understand how to use adjectives and adverbs in writing. There is a new word each day for students to spell and use in their work. Students learn how to apply mathematical concepts in a range of different situations, such as a social enterprise café.
- Students are well prepared for life after school and nearly all go on to some form of further education or training at local colleges.
- Students who receive additional funding through the pupil premium grant or the Year 7 catch-up funding achieve well. They make up lost ground and some achieve better than their counterparts.
- Students in the main are keen to learn. In a science lesson they concentrated well and conducted experiments sensibly to find out the difference between elements and compounds, through heating iron filings and sulphur to make iron sulphide.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well to give students the right amount of help to succeed; although, on occasions, some students could be coaxed more quickly to move on to another piece of work when they have finished their current task.
- Primary-aged pupils have increased their range of physical activities, such as cycling through the use of additional funding to purchase bicycles, encouraging more energetic and healthier activities.

The quality of teaching

is good

- There have been good improvements in teaching, so that now it is consistently good across both sites of the school.
- Staff are very effective in establishing a strong and positive rapport with students and this encourages them to tackle learning with more confidence and interest. In an outstanding lesson, students discussed sensibly the pros and cons of corporal punishment for children, and in a mathematics lesson, students were given every encouragement and confidence to work out probability and offer their answers publicly.
- Numeracy and literacy are given a high priority across all subjects and teachers often make clear links to these in a variety of subjects, resulting in improved progress.
- The level of work set for students in lessons is good. When teaching is outstanding, precise

planning by teachers ensures that students know clearly what they are expected to learn in a lesson and this accelerates their learning. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school.

- Teachers use questioning well to test and extend students' thinking. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher probed students' understanding of their knowledge of properties of triangles and quadrilateral shapes, so that by the end of the lesson the students had a good grasp of the concepts.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and know how to make lessons interesting for students. The use of a three-dimensional printer, in an information and communication technology lesson, enthused students' imagination and students were keen to make designs and test out the printer.
- Classes, through the use of attractive displays of students' work, are warm and positive learning areas. They help to give students a sense of pride and boost their self-esteem.
- Students' work is marked regularly, but written comments do not always tell students clearly enough what they need to do next in order to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- There are a high number of physical restraints or interventions. Some physical restraints are implemented when students do not comply with requests, rather than when there is risk to people or property. A parent commented through the school-based survey that, 'The restraint during bad behaviour makes my son's behaviour worse.' The school has seen a reduction in these levels over the last three years but, overall, levels are still high.
- Over the past year the school has experienced a significant increase in admissions of much older students and this has destabilised some behaviour of other pupils for a short period of time.
- Incidents tend to occur at changeover times, rather than in lessons. Once settled, students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive and the students work well and contribute to the good progress they make.
- The residential provision helps those students who have the most complex social, emotional and behavioural needs to be better prepared for learning, by providing a stable and structured environment. Students enjoy their experience of boarding and take full advantage of the exceptional and vast range of activities on offer. This broadens their skills and develops confidence and self-esteem, contributing to physical, social and emotional well-being. One boarder said, 'It's great here, the staff are great and I've got friends I spend time with. I get on with everyone.'
- All areas are supervised well and behaviour at break times and lunchtimes is mostly good, as there are plenty of activities on offer for students to enjoy.
- Students say they feel safe and express positive views about the school. They stated that the levels of bullying are low and that staff are quick to address any concerns.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly, through outdoor education activities, giving students the opportunity to appreciate nature and develop team working. The behaviour and safety of students attending off-site activities are good; the activities build on their interests and provide motivating experiences for them.
- The school council gives students a positive opportunity to make suggestions for improvements, such as the range of leisure activities and how their independent living skills can be extended.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The recording of physical interventions and restraints is too variable, both across and within the two school sites. Details, for example, about behaviour towards staff, before or during an

incident, and how students and staff have been debriefed are inconsistently completed. Staff have received the required training to ensure that students are kept safe during such incidents.

- The school's overall information shows a declining number of incidents over the last three years, but they are not reducing rapidly enough. Some aspects of the data lack accuracy, sometimes due to incidents being wrongly recorded, and this makes it more difficult to track, with confidence, how many restraints have taken place.
- The leadership and management of the residential provision are adequate, but some national minimum standards are not met.
- Senior leaders and managers have worked tirelessly to improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the two sites and they have been successful in achieving this. This has resulted in improved progress and achievement of students. They have created a positive culture where students can develop well and have higher aspirations.
- The school uses an off-site provider to deliver vocational and work experience learning for students. They are checked for suitability and safeguarding, as well as ensuring that students improve their personal development and apply their skills in a practical environment.
- The range of subjects and experiences offered to students is highly personalised and flexible. The school has made sure that when students are taking part in non-academic subjects that they can catch up, particularly in English and mathematics. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and primary sport funding have been targeted well, and clear measures have been developed to show how students have benefited from extra help and resources to enable them to improve their progress.
- Middle leaders have clear oversight of their areas of responsibility. These developing roles have been one of the ingredients for improved teaching and learning.
- Students are provided with independent careers and education advice and are successful in maintaining their placements in college when they leave.
- The performance of teachers is closely checked. The link between pay and the quality of teaching is good. Checking of teaching is regular. Weaker teaching has been addressed and ongoing training is good to keep teachers' knowledge up to date.
- The local authority has enabled the school to find external sources of help and advice and is appropriately involved in helping the school to improve. The school makes good use of external support and advice to provide greater rigour and challenge. Lessons have been jointly observed with a range of experienced professionals to ensure the school has an accurate view of teaching and learning across the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body keeps itself well informed about the school, through comprehensive reports from the headteacher and a schedule of visits which focus on aspects such as the residential provision and how numeracy and literacy are promoted throughout the school. Regular visits provide governors with firsthand knowledge of how good the school is and where improvements can be made. However, governors have not picked up on the inconsistency of recording of physical interventions. They have a good understanding of assessment information showing improvements in students' achievements, because this information is presented in a simple and understandable format. They have ensured that the link between teachers' salary progression and pay is appropriate and that additional funding has had the intended impact upon students' academic and personal development. They have received training in safeguarding, safer recruitment and financial management.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are good
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils' safety	is inadequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is adequate

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is adequate, but with elements of significant strengths in the care provided. Staff have very high expectations and aspirations for students, which have a positive impact on their progress and outcomes achieved. Young people communicate that they feel safe and secure at this school. They have established positive relationships with each other and care staff. Students confirm bullying is not a feature of their experience; this is due to staffing levels and staff vigilance.
- Although there has been a reduction in significant incidents, records relating to restraints and sanctions are not being consistently and comprehensively maintained. New recommendations reflect these deficiencies. Behaviour management practices result in a high number of restraints. Analysis of physical interventions involves the collection of statistics, rather than reflective practice. Consequently, opportunities to improve behaviour management and avoid the use of restraint are limited.
- Attention to health needs is exceptional. Young people benefit from attention to physical and mental health needs through planning and regular review. The school commissions and funds additional professional health care support for students where needed. Immunisations and routine health checks are up to date. Arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are robust.
- Staff confirm that training opportunities are good. Most care staff have achieved the relevant National Vocational Qualifications. Staff are in regular dialogue with managers and formal supervision takes place at the required intervals. Staff say they feel supported by senior leaders.
- Despite the efforts of the headteacher, the environment continues to be in need of major refurbishment. Some bedrooms are not big enough to accommodate the furniture needed for private study or to store clothes effectively. The building is dated and difficult to maintain to an acceptable standard and some bathroom and toilet areas are in need of better maintenance.

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>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131552
Social care unique reference number	SCO22231
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	426715

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

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	10–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Number of boarders on roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Faith Butler
Headteacher	Keith Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 February 2012
Telephone number	01805601324
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