

Marshlands School

Second Avenue, Tillington, Stafford, ST16 1PS

Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is providing very clear direction for the work of the school. She worked tirelessly to make sure that the move into the new building was a smooth process and did not cause undue anxiety to the pupils.
- The headteacher, along with other leaders, has high expectations for all the pupils. Together with the governing body, they have ensured that pupils make at least good progress by regular monitoring of learning and providing effective training for staff.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make a good start to their learning because staff provide a wide range of learning experiences in an attractive, well-resourced classroom.
- The quality of teaching is good, with some that is outstanding, resulting in most pupils making at least expected progress. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are challenged and therefore extend their skills.
- Teachers make good use of signing, symbols for communication and practical resources, such as tablet computers and visual timetables, to enable pupils with autism and more complex needs to access learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and this is seen in their attitudes in lessons and while taking part in activities around the school. Relationships with staff are excellent and the school provides a safe, stimulating environment for learning to take place.
- Members of the governing body have an effective range of skills that they use to challenge leaders and hold the school to account. They manage the budget well, ensuring that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent to their benefit.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils and so their rates of progress slow.
- Guidance to parents on how to support their children's learning in the early years is not as clear as it could be.

Information about this inspection

- The headteacher and other members of the leadership team accompanied the inspectors when they visited classes to observe the quality of learning taking place. Every class was seen twice by both inspectors at different times.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject co-coordinators, members of the student council, the Chair of the Governing Body, vice chair and two parent governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority to gain their views on the school's strengths and areas for development. Inspectors also talked informally to the pupils and heard some pupils read.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school, including pupils' behaviour, and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own self evaluation and development plans, information about pupil progress, planning and monitoring, behaviour incident reports, safeguarding and pupils' attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered 21 responses to Parent View (the on-line questionnaire for parents) two letters sent in by parents and comments from parent governors. Inspectors also took into account 35 completed staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Marshlands is a small school which caters for nursery and primary aged pupils who have been identified as having either moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties.
- A small number of pupils attend the early years class on a part time basis.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- Over a third of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding for pupils looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is above the national average.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Approximately a third of the pupils have an autistic spectrum condition and some pupils have complex needs.
- The school moved to new refurbished premises in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share information clearly with parents about how well their children are doing and their next steps in learning so that they can support their children's learning at home.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that all teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils and so accelerate their rates of progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Together with the governing body, leaders have built successfully on previous good performance. The senior leadership team has recently been strengthened. Staff morale is very high and there is shared commitment to ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed. As one teacher commented ' Marshlands is a lovely place for children to learn, feel safe and have fun and all of the staff work extremely hard to provide this'. There is no discrimination in the school.
- The school's view of its effectiveness is accurate and based on the outcomes of close checks on teaching and learning by senior leaders. These are robustly used to manage the performance of teachers. The objectives set for improving teachers' performance are very closely linked to the national standards for teaching and raising pupils' achievement through good or better teaching.
- Good teaching is linked to salary increase and good support and training is provided to overcome any weaknesses. Newly qualified teachers also receive good support and training to develop their professional skills. The headteacher, supported by the local authority and governors, has successfully tackled issues relating to the underperformance of staff.
- Middle leaders carefully check their areas of responsibility, observe teaching, scrutinise work and teachers' planning. This is bringing about a systematic improvement in the quality of teaching so that there is now an increasing amount that is outstanding. The progress of individual pupils and of different groups within the school is also very closely tracked so that appropriate support can quickly be arranged if a child is at risk of not meeting their targets.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional behaviour and therapeutic support which has led to improved behaviour. It has also been used to provide more technology which has led to an improvement in pupils' use of tablet computers. Its use to provide additional literacy and numeracy support has had a good impact on pupil achievement for this group of pupils, many of whom are now making better progress than their classmates.
- Staff have considered the new National Curriculum and have adapted it well to meet the specific needs of the pupils. They have also reviewed their assessment practices as a result of the removal of National Curriculum levels and are working with staff from other special schools to make sure their assessments are accurate.
- Leaders have made good use of the primary physical education and sport premium to improve pupils' fitness and develop their participation in physical activity. Staff have benefited from working alongside sports coaches and pupils with autism and more complex needs have increased their enjoyment and confidence in sport.
- The introduction of a behaviour support class has led to a significant reduction in the number of incidents of challenging behaviours and all staff are very well supported in implementing effective strategies for managing behaviour throughout the school.
- Pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a relevant, exciting and highly engaging curriculum that promotes understanding of British values and other cultures well. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. In the early years they learn to take turns, share and work together and to make choices so that they develop their understanding of what is right and wrong. Pupils are learning to respect people from different religions, cultures and backgrounds through, for example, their experiences during the recent multi-cultural week. This included African drumming workshops and Indian dancing. Pupils' personal social and health education is supported extremely well so that pupils develop a good understanding of their own and others' needs.
- The local authority has provided excellent support to the school during recent staffing issues and the

relocation to the new building.

- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and are robust and rigorous. Safety checks are undertaken regularly and all staff are trained in identifying pupils at risk of harm.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very skilled and experienced and have recently carried out an audit of their skills so that they can involve themselves individually in supporting aspects of the school's work.
- The governing body is totally committed to the school and its pupils and challenges senior leaders to ensure that the provision is of the highest quality. Governors were very involved in securing the new premises for the school and say that the calm purposeful atmosphere that this now provides has had a significant impact on the behaviour of the pupils.
- Governors have a detailed view of what is going on in school through a regular programme of focused visits where they link up with specific staff. They know that through the programme of assemblies and activities, as well as via the active school council, pupils are being very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Similarly they have a grasp of finances and know exactly how the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport premium have been used and the benefit this has had on pupil outcomes.
- Governors are fully aware of the links between teachers' performance and their pay, and the procedures for improving teaching. Challenging targets for the headteacher are set every year and monitored carefully. Governors have a good understanding of the data around pupil progress so they can challenge the school effectively.
- The governing body is very effective at carrying out all its legal responsibilities, including ensuring that all safeguarding requirements are met.
- Governors have set themselves the target of involving parents more in the life of the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and has improved significantly since September when the school moved into the new accommodation. Pupils told the inspectors they liked the new building because it was peaceful and calm.
- Relationships between all staff and pupils are excellent and are a real strength of the school. Pupils know what is expected of them and clearly understand the school rules. They are very proud when they get a sticker to put on their chart or earn points for good behaviour.
- The recently introduced support base room for children with more challenging and aggressive behaviour is used very effectively and there has been a significant decrease in the number of serious incidents over the last year. When incidents do occur they are dealt with in a very calm and quiet way and do not disrupt the learning of the other pupils.
- Pupils told inspectors that sometimes pupils were unkind to each other and called each other 'names' but that they could go to any adult if they had a problem or were feeling upset.
- Pupils' attendance is below average when compared with all schools nationally. The majority of absences are related to medical issues and the school does everything it can to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- High levels of supervision and engagement in children's learning in the early years ensure that they quickly settle and are increasingly prepared to attempt new things because of the very strong trusting relationships they develop with their teachers and assistants.
- As pupils progress through the school they show kindness and respect for each other. They are courteous

and polite to adults and are confident to go to any member of staff if they feel worried about anything.

- Pupils were able to tell inspectors numerous ways they had been taught to keep themselves safe. These included being made to wear helmets when they were riding bikes, not running when they were at the swimming pool and not talking to strangers if they were using a social networking site. They felt the school helped to keep them safe because there were cameras everywhere and that the police and fire brigade had come into school during safety week to talk to them about what they should do if there was an accident or a fire. Pupils also told the inspectors that there were buttons to press in the classrooms and corridors if there was a fire and that they practised what to do if the alarm went off -which did in fact happen during the inspection. Children left the building very quietly, quickly and safely and waited very sensibly until they were told they could go back into the building.
- Staff carry out risk assessments for activities that take place both in and outside of school. Rigorous procedures check the suitability of staff and visitors to the school to work with children and ensure that staff have all the required welfare, health and safety training, including large numbers who have first aid training. This means pupils are safe to learn.
- Inspectors took into account the responses from Parent View, and complaints received from two parents who did not feel that the school dealt effectively with behaviour and safety. However, scrutiny of all relevant paperwork, incident logs, policies, observations during the inspection and discussions with pupils, staff, governors and a local authority representative, showed that the school dealt very effectively with all incidents and that correct procedures to ensure the safety and well being of pupils were given the highest priority.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils learn effectively and make good progress because teaching over time is good. Pupils' written work, learning seen in lessons and the school's information about pupils' progress confirm that teaching is good with an increasing amount that is outstanding.
- Teaching across the school has steadily improved due to the careful checks carried out by senior leaders and subject co-ordinators. At times the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to do as well as they can.
- Good use of signing, communication symbols and practical resources were seen in the early years and in all lessons across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants used sign language to enable those with poorly developed communication skills to communicate effectively. In all classrooms visual timetables are displayed and pupils with autism, severe learning and communication difficulties benefit greatly from the use of pictures and symbols.
- Teaching assistants make a very significant impact on the quality of learning that takes place. In all lessons seen teachers and teaching assistants maintained excellent relationships with pupils and through encouragement, praise and positive behaviour management all staff ensured that pupils remained focused and engaged in learning.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) across the school is a real strength as teachers' skills in this area are very effective. As a result, pupils' reading skills have rapidly improved. Teachers provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to practise their reading skills and to show that they have understood what they have read. Displays around the school encourage reading with labels in both text and symbols.
- The teaching of literacy has been a focus over the last year and as a result the standard of handwriting across the school has improved. This was evident in pupils' books and in displays in the classroom.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunity to link their learning and apply their skills across subjects. For example while making 'Christingles' pupils talked about what they had learnt in science about light and different seasons and were able to say that there were three months in every season.

- The teaching of mathematics is good. Work is very well matched to individual learning needs and abilities. This was very evident in a mathematics lesson where some pupils were working on adding and subtracting decimals, while others were using a number line to practise addition to 20 and a third group were using real objects to identify which were the largest or smallest.
- Teachers provide pupils with good written and verbal feedback, which allows them to understand how to improve their work. A scrutiny of pupils' books and work around the school showed that progress of all groups of pupils was at least good and for some outstanding.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the early years with skills and understanding well below what is typical. The majority of the children enter with very low language and communication skills. Pupils make good and for some outstanding progress through the early years and Key Stage 1 and 2 as a result of good teaching and well-planned activities.
- Different groups of pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties and physical and complex needs, make equally good progress as their classmates. This is because effective individual support is well planned with other professionals and therapists to promote their learning. This is also seen in the good and sometimes outstanding progress they make towards their individual targets over time.
- The school uses a range of assessment and tracking systems to compare the progress the pupils make to that found nationally. The proportions making and exceeding expected progress are above average and school information, confirmed by the local authority, shows that this has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making at least the same progress as their classmates and occasionally they are doing better in reading, writing and mathematics. This is mainly because of the good support they receive for their learning from skilled teaching assistants and therapists. As a result, there are no gaps between their attainment and other pupils in the school or nationally.
- The most able pupils make good progress throughout the school including in reading, writing and mathematics. They become competent readers who enjoy books, are able to record information and write for different purposes, for example letters, stories and simple book reviews. Some of the current Year 6 pupils will be entered for the statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 in mathematics, reading and writing.
- All pupils make good and some outstanding progress during their time in school. This is because learning is well planned, support is targeted and pupils are keen to learn. Pupils like their teachers and are keen to succeed.

The early years provision

is good

- The achievement of children in the early years is good. All groups of children, including those with severe and complex needs and those with autism and the relatively more able, make good progress in all areas of learning from their very low starting points. They rapidly develop their communication skills through consistent use of signs and symbols by all staff.
- Despite the long-term absence of the early years leader, the well established policies, procedures and practices and additional support given to the class have ensured that the children have continued to make good progress. They develop their personal and social skills effectively and as a result, behaviour is good.
- A good system checks what children can do when they join the early years and identifies their individual

needs. Staff regularly observe children's learning and keep detailed records. All staff plan well together so that each child has an individual programme of work in each area of learning. This helps all children to enjoy their learning and make good progress. For example, children with more complex needs really enjoy the sensory experience of playing with the sand and water while others become extremely focused on using the tablet computer to match letters.

- The quality of teaching over time is good. Children's learning journals show that they engage in a variety of interesting activities covering all areas of learning. However, the written comments do not always help teachers to plan for the next steps in learning and information shared with parents does not always help them to know how to help their child at home.

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

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| Unique reference number | 124518 |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 447964 |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 67 |
| Appropriate authority | The local authority |
| Chair | John Francis |
| Headteacher | Kim Ellis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 May 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01785 356385 |
| Fax number | N/A |
| Email address | Headteacher@marshlands.staffs.sch.uk |

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