

Marshland St James Primary and Nursery School

School Road, Marshland St James, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 8EY

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching over time is inconsistent across different classes and subjects. Where practice is weak, pupils do not make sufficient progress.
- Learning in some subjects, such as history, geography and science, is not as well planned as it is in English and mathematics. Pupils do the same work regardless of their ability. As a result, pupils' progress is too variable.
- Some teachers do not explain tasks well, which means that pupils do not fully understand what they have to do, and their progress is slow.
- Pupils' attainment in the 2017 key stage 1 and 2 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics was below national averages.
- Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently to enable them to achieve a greater depth in their learning. As a result, the proportion of pupils working above expected standards does not compare well with that of other pupils nationally.
- Some teachers have low expectations for the pupils and as a result their progress is slow. This is particularly evident in Years 5 and 6.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher challenges and supports teachers to improve standards. Where teaching is weak, she has put support in place for individual teachers. The headteacher has high expectations for all staff.
- Governance is effective. Governors hold the headteacher to account well for the efficient use of resources and the quality of education.
- Pupils behave well and their attitudes to learning are good. They have a secure understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their various starting points because of the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good across classes and subjects by:
 - equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to plan learning that enables the most able pupils to achieve the standards of which they are capable
 - setting high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers give clear explanations when introducing new tasks
 - making sure that what pupils are taught in foundation subjects is matched closely to what they already know and can do.
- Raise attainment in reading and mathematics so that more pupils reach expected standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has made her high expectations for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment clear. Where practice needs to improve, the headteacher and trust provide the correct balance of challenge and support. This is leading to improved outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- In the light of the disappointing results in the national tests in 2017, leaders have changed the way in which reading, writing and mathematics are taught. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment of current pupils is rapidly improving and is now close to that of other pupils nationally.
- Middle leaders manage their subjects effectively and ensure that teachers are supported well. They monitor pupils' work and carry out lesson observations to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Where teaching needs to improve, leaders work closely with teachers to provide examples of good practice, and help with planning lessons. The quality of teaching is getting better as a result.
- The headteacher is accurate in her evaluation of teaching and learning and she identifies strengths and weaknesses precisely during lesson observations. Her self-evaluation of the school's performance is also exact. She ensures that all teachers are given opportunities for continuous professional development.
- Pupils can talk about their writing more confidently and teachers are using concrete, real-life ideas more effectively in mathematics. Work in pupils' books shows that this is having a positive impact and current pupils are making much-improved progress.
- School leaders have ensured that the curriculum is well thought out and well matched to the needs of pupils. Pupils are creative in their learning and leaders have ensured that there are plenty of opportunities to make cross-curricular links between subjects.
- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. They have helped pupils and their families to improve attendance, created learning packages for the most able pupils and supported pupils with their emotional needs so that they are ready to learn. As a result, disadvantaged pupils typically make good progress.
- Leaders have skilfully used the PE and sport premium to raise standards for pupils, and improve teachers' skills and knowledge in teaching a range of sports. The number of pupils who take part in extra-curricular clubs has increased as a result.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stages of their education and for life in modern Britain, through assemblies, class discussions and work in religious education.
- Most parents and carers are positive about the school and they appreciate the care that their children are given. One parent said: 'It is a very welcoming school, very informative, I never worry for my daughter as I know she is safe. Marshland St James encourages all children and rewards them every step of the way.' This was typical of sentiments expressed by many parents.
- The trust supports leaders well. Trust staff have recently worked with the English and mathematics leaders to introduce new approaches to how these subjects are taught.

Current school information and the work in pupils' books show that pupils are now making good progress and their attainment is much closer to national averages.

- Most staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey are happy with the way in which the school is led. They feel valued and supported. They think that behaviour is good and that pupils are safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strengthened through celebration of other religions, visits out of school, sports events, collective worship in assemblies and visitors coming into school. Leaders understand the importance of this aspect of the curriculum and actively promote it.
- Leaders have worked with considerable success to improve attendance. They have used a mixture of rewards and sanctions to encourage good attendance. Attendance for all groups of pupils has rapidly improved over the last three years and is now just below the national average.

Governance of the school

- Governors and the trust board make a significant contribution to the vision and ambitions of the school. They are clear about the current priorities and challenges and support the headteacher well to bring about necessary improvements.
- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use this information well to hold the headteacher to account for the standard of education and care that the school provides.
- Governors ensure that the headteacher makes best use of the extra money given for disadvantaged pupils and that this is leading to improved progress for these pupils.
- The trust supports the headteacher well. Trustees share the accountability for pupils' outcomes. Directors from the trust visit on a termly basis and carry out rigorous and detailed monitoring of the teaching, learning and leadership. They ensure that actions that are put in place are monitored at the next visit to evaluate their impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors help to create a strong culture for keeping children safe.
- Leaders have worked effectively to change the culture of safeguarding. Marshland St James is a safe place for pupils in which they are well cared for by adults. All staff are vigilant, well trained and understand the importance of their roles in keeping children safe.
- Governors ensure that appropriate checks are made on all staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Details of these checks are kept in an orderly manner.
- The headteacher keeps accurate records of any concerns that teachers may have about children in and out of school. The headteacher is quick to seek extra help from other agencies, such as social services, when a pupil or their family needs it. The headteacher is diligent in ensuring that these outside agencies deal with concerns satisfactorily and in a timely manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- While improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment still varies widely between classes and between subjects. Where teaching over time is good, learning is well planned and closely matched to the needs of all pupils, resulting in their good progress. When teaching is not good, pupils' progress is much slower.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Years 1 and 2 has improved this academic year because of effective action by leaders. Leaders' support in the planning and teaching of mathematics has meant that work in pupils' books has improved over time. Pupils are now making more rapid progress.
- Teachers' expectation of what pupils can achieve is too inconsistent across classes. Where teachers plan sequences of learning that stretch the most able pupils, they rise to the challenge and make rapid progress. However, where teachers' expectations are low, pupils make insufficient progress.
- Teachers build good relationships with their pupils based on trust and mutual respect. As a result of this trust, pupils are willing to take risks and make mistakes. This allows them to reinforce their learning and deepen their understanding.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils who need additional help. These adults make good use of extra equipment and resources to improve learning. They are particularly effective in the early years, where their questioning helps children overcome misconceptions and deepens their understanding.
- Some teachers do not follow the school's agreed assessment policy carefully enough to pinpoint when pupils have misunderstood and to ensure that they make good progress.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are encouraged to edit and improve their writing. This has resulted in more sophisticated punctuation, use of more powerful vocabulary and improved sentence structure.
- Evidence from work in pupils' books demonstrates that teachers do not plan and implement learning consistently well across the wider curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils take pride in their work and they want to improve their presentation and understanding. Pupils look after their books and keep displays around school neat and tidy.
- Pupils respond well in class and are keen to contribute to class discussions. They clearly want to do their best in lessons and they are confident learners.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in school, at home and online, and they know what to do if they have any concerns. The older pupils are aware of the dangers when playing online games and they understand why some games need to have an age limit.

- Pupils understand what it means to belong to modern Britain and they show tolerance and empathy to their friends and people from other ethnic groups. Pupils value their link with a school in Leicestershire with a different ethnic make-up.
- Pupils are very proud of the of the school council for changing the class names and developing the house system. They were able to explain the democratic voting system used to pick the members for the school council.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well mannered and polite. Their movement and behaviour around school are calm and sensible. They show good table manners at lunchtime and make it a pleasant social occasion.
- Bullying is very rare, and pupils can define different types of bullying. Pupils say that they have no hesitation in telling an adult if they need help. They say that adults in school deal with incidents of poor behaviour effectively.
- Pupils play well together, and they can sort out minor fallouts themselves without the need for adult intervention. They are good at taking turns and sharing equipment.
- Leaders have created a caring environment in which pupils play a very important role. Older pupils will often support the younger ones during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Pupils understand the importance of good attendance and they appreciate how poor attendance can affect their learning. For all groups of pupils, attendance is showing an improving pattern over the last three years.
- Pupils enjoy representing the school in sports fixtures and other events. They are very proud of the recent successes that they have had in football, rugby, tennis and cross country.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 2 and Year 6 pupils' attainment in key stage 1 and key stage 2 national curriculum tests was well below national averages in 2017.
- In 2017, the most able pupils did not make sufficient progress in English and mathematics and therefore they did not reach the higher standards of which they were capable.
- Leaders have implemented carefully targeted interventions in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils who have gaps in their learning. As a result of these interventions, most pupils' current attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. More most-able pupils currently in the school are attaining at a higher level than in the past. However, they are still not challenged consistently to make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in foundation subjects are too inconsistent because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies between classes. Children in early years make good progress in the wider curriculum and pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in history, because work is well matched to the needs and understanding of the pupils.

- Work in pupils' books shows inconsistency in their progress and attainment across the different classes. In Years 3 and 4, pupils are making good progress in mathematics. They have deepened their knowledge by developing their problem-solving and reasoning. In Years 5 and 6, this progress is not as rapid.
- In Years 5 and 6, most pupils are typically making good progress in their writing. Pupils enjoyed their recent diary writing about life on the Titanic and some were able to talk very confidently about what they would need to include in their writing to achieve greater depth. However, while a small number of pupils are beginning to write at greater depth, leaders recognise the need to ensure that more most-able pupils do so.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities typically make good progress because teachers match the work to their needs. Where support is needed, teaching assistants use extra resources and effective questioning to deepen learning. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their various starting points.
- Pupils do well in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In the last three years their achievements have compared favourably with those of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils read well and most have a love of reading. Lower-ability pupils confidently use their knowledge of phonics and visual clues to sound out words. They have a good understanding of the meaning of the story. Teachers ensure that pupils' books are well matched to their abilities.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join Reception with varying levels of skills and capabilities. Most make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The early years environment is stimulating and exciting for the children because of the vibrant displays and range of equipment available. Activities are well thought out to allow pupils to learn independently. Adults make learning fun and children respond well to any challenges set.
- The proportion of children who have achieved a good level of development has been better than the national figures for the last three years but the proportion of children who exceed nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics varies largely between cohorts.
- Phonics is taught effectively, and children are given opportunities to use their knowledge in the independent activities set up by the teacher. Children are encouraged to use their understanding of phonics to attempt to write and spell unfamiliar words. One child, for example, was asked to write 'spider', which she wrote as 'spighder'. The teacher offered praise, explaining that even though the spelling was incorrect, the child had made excellent use of her knowledge of phonics.
- The early years leader is passionate about driving up standards and she ensures that teaching assistants are deployed well to support and challenge children with their learning.

- Children really enjoy writing and they are given lots of opportunities to write in books, on the floor in the outdoor area and on the whiteboard. As a result, they make good progress, moving from basic mark-making in September to full sentences with simple punctuation now.
- Children are confident and happy due to the excellent care and guidance they get from staff. They behave well and their conduct towards each other shows empathy and tolerance.
- All adults in early years rightly place great emphasis on keeping children safe, and discussions with parents show that they value this aspect of their child's education.
- Children in Nursery are well prepared for the move to Reception. The teacher skilfully increases the level of challenge and expectations for independence as they move towards the end of their year in Nursery. By the time pupils start in Reception they are able to concentrate for increased periods of time and they are familiar with adults' high expectations of them.
- Adults use questioning well to deepen children's understanding. One child had drawn a symmetrical butterfly and had matched the colours on each side. The teacher praised the painting and the symmetrical colours but challenged the child to make it better, which they did by changing the size of one of the wings.

School details

Unique reference number	142057
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10046631

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

Type of school	Nursery and primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Sahra van der Velde
Headteacher	Sarah Durrant
Telephone number	01945 430378
Website	www.marshlandprimary.norfolk.sch.uk
Email address	head@marshlandprimary.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- There has been a high rate of staff turnover in the last two years.
- The school is small compared to other schools.
- There is a high number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and a high proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There is a higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- There are significantly more boys on roll than there are girls.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress.
- The school is sponsored by the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in every class and was joined by the headteacher and trust director for some of these observations.
- The responses of 15 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account.
- The inspector looked through a range of books across most year groups and in all subjects.
- The inspector met with governors, parents and members of the trust.
- The inspector looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of governing body and trust meetings. He considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils, observed them at playtimes and lunchtimes and listened to them read their books.
- Responses from two pupils and eight staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaires were considered.

Inspection team

Nick Templeton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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