

Inspection of a good school: Marshlands School

Second Avenue, Tillington, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 1PS

Inspection dates:

22–23 October 2019

Outcome

Marshlands School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and do well in their learning. Staff have high expectations for pupils. They give them a lot of care and support to enable them to make strong progress. Pupils understand what to do in lessons and in day-to-day routines because staff give them step-by-step instructions and build up their learning. This means that pupils are relaxed in class and work hard. Staff help pupils to make the best use of their talents and abilities.

Wherever pupils go, staff greet them with a smile and a welcome. When anyone gets anxious or needs to communicate urgently, staff are on hand to give calm reassurance. At the end of the school day, pupils often want to stay and do more because they have had such a good day.

Behaviour is good in classrooms, at breaktimes and in corridors. Even though the school is growing in size because it is more popular, it is calm and well managed. Pupils get on well together. Staff do not tolerate bullying.

Teachers give plenty of helpful information to families about how well pupils are doing. Parents and carers value this highly. A typical comment about the school from parents is: 'The school has changed my child's life for the better.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils do well throughout the school. The ambitious curriculum helps pupils to thrive. Leaders have made sure that the curriculum plans are logically sequenced to deepen pupils' knowledge and skills over time. This has helped pupils to develop strong reading, writing, science and mathematics skills. Teachers help pupils to remember what they have learned, and this enables them to make effective progress. Teachers plan learning with a great deal of thought. There are always interesting resources for pupils to use to help to keep them focused on their learning. Pupils find learning fun and enjoyable.

The curriculum gives pupils plenty to think about. Pupils enjoy being challenged. For example, in key stage 2 mathematics, pupils compare the properties of three-dimensional objects. In physical education, they take part in balancing exercises and learn well how to keep themselves stable. In science, pupils often use a rich and wide vocabulary. But pupils learn history and geography in less depth. Learning in history and geography is not as well planned as that in reading, mathematics and science. The teaching of modern foreign languages is still being developed. Pupils have few opportunities to learn a modern foreign language.

Children in the early years do very well. Staff prepare them well for school. Classrooms are lively, interesting places. This helps children and staff communicate well together. Teachers are imaginative in their planning. For example, they help children to count by giving them a wide variety of fruit and vegetables to order and sort. Children learn together well in pairs and in groups and choose appropriate play equipment safely. The broad range of resources in outdoor areas allow children to develop their creative play.

Teachers help pupils to enjoy reading. Pupils make strong progress and learn effective reading skills. For example, when pupils get stuck reading a new or difficult word, they sound out its parts to get it right. Teachers guide pupils through their reading and encourage them to read widely. Teachers give pupils a wide range of fascinating books. Books are relevant to pupils and stretch their imaginations. Pupils talk about reading, recommend books to each other and read confidently.

Pupils follow teachers' instructions, and this helps to keep them safe. At lunchtime, pupils eat together, respect other pupils and are polite and courteous. Pupils are able to let adults know what they need.

The headteacher, leadership team and governing body work well together. Leaders have a high-quality improvement plan for the school which they keep under close review. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and make improvements in a timely manner. Leaders have a wide range of effective links with the wider community. They have excellent relationships with parents. Pupils meet faith leaders and are well guided to understand different cultures. They help pupils understand life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is the top priority for the school. Staff are effectively trained in how to help pupils and how to keep them safe. Staff are especially skilled at helping pupils to make their needs known. Teachers and leaders share information well. This means that help is given to pupils quickly. In personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils learn successfully about keeping themselves safe. For example, pupils learn how to stay safe when using the internet.

The school has excellent links with the local authority. For example, leaders regularly discuss how to improve safeguarding with social workers and local authority officers. Any changes they agree on are implemented with urgency.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is good. It is broad and of high quality. Leaders want to further improve the opportunities pupils have to learn modern foreign languages. They want pupils to experience hearing, seeing and communicating in languages other than English. Leaders should continue to develop their plans to enable pupils to make good progress in modern foreign languages.
- Sometimes, pupils are not sufficiently challenged in history and geography. Leaders need to continue their work to improve curriculum planning in these subjects so that pupils deepen and build on their learning to enable them to make strong progress.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	124518
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10082204
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governors	Ian Raybould
Headteacher	Kim Ellis
Website	www.marshlands.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

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.
- Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Approximately a third of the pupils have an autism spectrum condition and some pupils have complex needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups, usually accompanied by a senior leader.
- An inspector listened to several pupils read and observed phonics teaching in the Reception and key stage 1 classes.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in a range of different subjects to see how well the curriculum was applied. Inspectors focused on reading, mathematics, history, geography and PSHE education.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, who is also one of the designated

safeguarding leads.

- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke to a local authority representative on the telephone.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff to talk about the quality of education.
- An inspector met with the leader of special educational needs to discuss provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Inspectors considered a range of documents and information provided by the school, including the school's website, school policies, curriculum documents, safeguarding information, checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment, special educational needs records and published information about pupils' performance.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses to Parent View. They spoke with several parents informally on the playground at the end of the first day of the inspection. The lead inspector considered written responses from two parents.
- Inspectors considered the wider issues raised by a qualifying complaint raised against the school.

Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Derek Barnes

Ofsted Inspector

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