



# Marsh School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110234  
**Local Authority** Buckinghamshire  
**Inspection number** 288608  
**Inspection dates** 25–26 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Charalambos Loizou

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	Abbey Barn Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		High Wycombe
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7		HP11 1RW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 522756
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	157	<b>Fax number</b>	01494 522756
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr G Galbraith
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs R Morrisson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a small school serving an area of social and economic disadvantage. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and a small number are in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above that of most schools. The school has a Nursery for three- and four-year-olds who are all part-time. The school was led by an acting headteacher for one year prior to this inspection. The current headteacher has only been in post from the 1 January 2007.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Marsh School is a satisfactory school with some good features. Pupils are well behaved, form strong friendships and enjoy school. The new headteacher has made a good start and, as one parent commented, 'Is like a breath of fresh air'. She has galvanised the staff following a year of uncertainty without a substantive headteacher. The staff are a dedicated team, committed to the all round development of the pupils. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has made an accurate and realistic assessment of the school's effectiveness. Assessments prior to her appointment were too generous and over-estimated the quality of education provided due to changes of leadership and outdated information.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average by the end of Year 2. The Foundation Stage provides a good education, enabling the youngest children in the school to do well. They make good progress towards their learning goals and their early reading, writing and mathematics skills develop well. These early foundations are not being built upon consistently enough in the rest of the school at the same pace. In Years 1 and 2 teaching is satisfactory, with some that is good. Although pupils' progress accelerates, there is still scope for improvement in Years 1 and 2. In particular, pupils' writing develops at a slower rate because they are not getting enough opportunities to write at length independently. Teachers are not using assessment accurately or consistently enough, so the tasks they set in lessons are not always matched to the pupils' needs and abilities. Consequently, the rate of pupils' progress is uneven. This particularly affects more able pupils as national assessments show that too few attain higher levels, particularly in writing. The staff provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities who, like those in the early stages of learning English, make good progress as a result.

Pupils are well cared for. They feel safe, secure and free from harassment or harm. They learn to respect the views of others and to care for those less fortunate than themselves through charitable fund-raising. They make satisfactory progress in learning about living a healthy lifestyle through physical activity.

There has been satisfactory progress since the school's last inspection, particularly in improving some aspects of teaching, raising standards and attendance levels. However, some weaknesses remain, particularly in relation to the achievement of the more able pupils. There have been good improvements to the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT). The school provides good opportunities for the pupils to work in the local community and their good personal development prepares them for the next stage of their education. The clear leadership shown by the headteacher has raised morale and brought the school back on an even keel so the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further. Governors provide satisfactory support and are increasingly involved in systematic monitoring. However, they have not always received accurate information about pupils' progress to enable them to hold the school to account for its performance and standards. Staff and governors have earned the respect of parents who think highly of the school, one parent rightly summing up the views of many, 'Marsh School is a very happy and caring environment'.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve reading, writing and mathematics standards and accelerate the progress of more able pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the way teachers use assessments to help them plan tasks that better match the needs and abilities of the pupils.
- Build on the good start made in the Foundation Stage and provide more opportunities for pupils to write more extensively across subjects and topics.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and achievement is satisfactory. Most children in the Foundation Stage start school with well below average attainment, particularly in language and communication. The children are provided with stimulating learning experiences and, although standards are below average by the time they start Year 1, they have made good progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points by the end of Year 2. Although reading, writing and mathematics standards are broadly average by then, some pupils, particularly those of higher ability, do not reach their targets and could do better. Results from national assessments over the last few years have fluctuated, reflecting inconsistencies in assessment and target setting in Years 1 and 2. Writing standards are comparatively weaker than those for reading and mathematics because too few pupils achieve higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those in the early stages of learning English, make good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Good attendance rates reflect the pupils' enthusiasm for school and learning. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, gain confidence and contribute readily in lessons. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respond well to opportunities to reflect upon moral issues in assemblies and class discussions. Pupils relate well to their teachers and positive attitudes are evident in their readiness to support one another. They behave well and are polite and considerate. Pupils understand how to keep safe. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating, although the content of their lunch boxes does not always reflect this. Pupils take opportunities to contribute to their community, for example, when singing carols to local elderly people and through charitable fund-raising. Pupils are steadily developing the academic and personal skills that will equip them for their future lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is consistently good teaching in the Foundation Stage because the staff regularly check how well the children are doing to ensure they reach their learning targets. There is some good teaching in Years 1 and 2, but the inaccurate use of assessment means that teachers do not always provide tasks that are challenging to pupils of all abilities. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities to reinforce learning with extended writing tasks. Good lessons, more typically seen in Year 2, have time limited tasks, focused questioning and a brisk pace. Pupils in Year 2 made good progress problem solving in a mathematics lesson. The tasks linked closely to the key objectives of the lesson and encouraged the pupils to probe further and explain their methods of calculation. However, in some lessons, class discussions are too laboured and do not extend pupils' thinking sufficiently. Tasks are not always challenging enough so pupils' progress slows, especially when the work provided does not build on what pupils already know and can do.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage where the planning includes a good balance of activities led by teachers and tasks that are chosen by children. Resources are used particularly well to stimulate role-play. This helps to develop children's speaking and listening skills and prepares them well for later learning. In Years 1 and 2, ICT is being used increasingly well to enhance learning in other subjects. However, curriculum plans do not identify sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in all subjects. Themed weeks, including a healthy eating week, and visits to museums and other places of interest provide satisfactory enrichment. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties but the activities provided for the more able do not always provide sufficient challenge. Although pupils are given opportunities to make decisions, practical activities and problem solving in some lessons are underdeveloped.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and ensure pupils are valued. As one pupil said, 'The school cares about us because we're special'. Good, trusting relationships ensure that pupils feel very safe. The school has good links with parents and with a range of agencies to promote the pupils' welfare. Very effective child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place. Behaviour is very well managed and expectations are made clear to all pupils. Academic assessment is not always rigorous enough to provide teachers with the information they need to plan work for different groups of pupils or to set appropriately challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and

disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants. Pupils at an early stage of learning English receive good support.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In a short time the headteacher has developed a sense of shared responsibility and teamwork amongst the staff. Key staff were instrumental in maintaining standards during a difficult period last year without a substantive headteacher. The headteacher has accurately evaluated the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school. These assessments have helped to focus on key priorities in the next school improvement plan. Governors are supportive and involved in the work of the school, but up to now their monitoring has not been robust enough to fully hold the school to account. Both staff and governors recognise that there is still more to do to improve assessment and target setting. They survey parents' and pupils' views and have been particularly successful in maintaining the good personal development and welfare of the pupils. The vast majority of parents think well of the school because they feel they are playing a part in the education of their children, for example, through the good work being done by the Parents as First Teachers Group (PAFT).

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school. You were all very friendly and helpful.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

There are good things about your school and these are what pleased us most:

- you are well behaved and try hard in lessons
- your teachers take good care of you and you learn to help each other
- you enjoy school and the youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes are doing well with their reading, writing and number work
- your parents are very pleased with the school and like to help in school
- the staff work hard to make sure you are all safe and happy.

I have asked your teachers to:

- help all pupils in Year 1 and in Year 2 to do even better with their reading, writing and mathematics work
- keep checking how well you are doing so that you get work in lessons that is not too easy or too hard, but just right for all of you
- give you more chances to practise your writing.

I wish you all the very best.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector