



# Little Marlow CofE School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110466  
**Local Authority** Buckinghamshire  
**Inspection number** 288681  
**Inspection date** 14 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Nicola Davies

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>	School Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Little Marlow
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-7		Marlow SL7 3SA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01628 473316
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	49	<b>Fax number</b>	01628 473316
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Philip Emmett
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Harding
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 February 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Little Marlow is a small village infant school. Pupils come from the village of Little Marlow and the surrounding areas, mostly from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. There are two classes in the school. One is for reception aged children and some Year 1 pupils. The other is for pupils in Years 1 and 2.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This improving school gives a satisfactory standard of education. Parents praise the warmth of the headteacher and the school's 'family atmosphere' which they rightly feel helps their children to develop into 'confident, happy and enthusiastic' learners. Good care, guidance and support along with the good relationships between parents, pupils and teachers combine to create a caring ethos where 'children come first'. The impact of this can be seen in the good personal development and well being of the school's pupils. They enjoy 'being good' and develop confident but thoughtful attitudes to learning and to others which prepare them well for the next phase of their education.

Although there are fluctuations between different cohorts of pupils, children generally enter Reception with more developed skills than those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and most reach or exceed the nationally expected early learning goals. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been rising steadily since 2003 and are consistently above average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall and almost all pupils make the progress expected of them. The school has accurately identified that targets for more able pupils could be more challenging and opportunities are sometimes missed in lessons to stretch and challenge these pupils to ensure they make the best possible progress. This is one reason why teaching is judged as satisfactory overall, even though much of the teaching at the school is good.

The impact of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher combines her class teaching role with the leadership of this small school. With the support of governors and the local authority, she has developed clear procedures to monitor the school's work and has accurately identified its strengths and weaknesses. However, a significant amount of staff changes, particularly in the teaching of younger pupils, has made progress in a number of areas uneven. Ensuring consistency in both teaching and the assessment of pupils' progress is an aspect which the school has rightly identified as needing further improvement. Improvement has, however, been more consistent in other areas. For example, a successful focus on improving the teaching of writing means pupils now benefit from exciting opportunities to develop their writing skills across different areas of the curriculum. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the standards that older pupils attain. Similarly, the rich curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to learn and makes the most of the school's facilities and setting. Such successes, combined with the clear identification of areas for further development, confirm the school's satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of more able pupils by ensuring that teaching and targets are consistently challenging.
- Ensure greater consistency in the assessment of younger children and involve pupils in helping judge their own progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Although standards dipped in 2003, since that time they have been rising steadily and are consistently above average. In the 2006 national tests, standards were exceptionally high in reading and well above average in mathematics. A successful focus on writing contributed to the exceptionally high standards that pupils attained. However, standards in the current Year 2 are not expected to be as high, partly because of inconsistencies in pupils' progress when they were younger. Achievement overall is satisfactory.

Whilst all pupils make at least satisfactory progress, and some make good progress, the school has identified that this is too variable. For example, over time, not all more able pupils have consistently reached the highest level in national tests. Similarly, not all pupils have made consistent progress across different year groups. As a result, the school has strengthened its tracking of pupils' progress. This is ensuring that there is a greater consistency in the setting of more challenging targets, although there is more work to be done on the assessment of the youngest children. There are no significant differences between the rates of progress made by girls and boys, or pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They enjoy school a good deal. Attendance is good particularly as the school has worked successfully to reduce the number of holidays taken during term time. Although pupils recognise that some children are 'a bit naughty' on occasions, they fully understand the school's effective system for maintaining good behaviour and, as a result, feel safe and secure. They show a good understanding of right and wrong and particularly enjoy opportunities they have for helping others. Indeed, some pupils feel that the opportunities they have for helping the teachers, other pupils and the local community are some of things they enjoy most about school. For example, the school's 'Talk Team', is currently making signs to ensure that no-one drops litter outside their school. Pupils are also proud that they are able to help others further afield, for example, by raising funds for charity.

Pupils show a good awareness of how to keep safe and healthy. Eating fruit at playtimes, doing a lot of exercise and listening carefully to the teachers are just some of the activities that they know keep them safe and healthy. The above average standards which pupils reach in their basic skills along with their confidence and clear sense of right and wrong prepare them to do well in their next school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory overall which results in the satisfactory progress pupils make over time. Good relationships between staff and pupils help girls and boys tackle their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers use a range of different approaches and activities to interest pupils and to meet the different ages, needs and abilities in their classes. This includes an increasingly good use of computers and computer technology although this is not yet consistent across the school. Additional programmes for pupils who find aspects of English and mathematics more difficult have been effective and support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Despite these strengths, the impact of teaching is satisfactory overall as staff changes have made consistency in assessment and challenge, particularly of younger children, problematic. This means that, on occasions, opportunities are missed to challenge more able pupils sufficiently.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's good curriculum is interesting and varied and meets the needs of pupils well. English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are well planned and useful links are made between these subjects. One successful recent project involved pupils observing, counting, researching, drawing and writing about the many birds which visit the school. This caught pupils' imagination and enthusiasm leading to very high quality work. Similarly, during the inspection, older pupils really enjoyed writing 'What am I?' animal riddles and then finding out more about these animals on the internet. Such opportunities encourage their reading, writing and ICT skills well. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn in their year groups as well as in their mixed age classes. The curriculum for reception age children blends adult and child led activities well, although the school has plans to improve the opportunities that children have to learn outdoors.

The school makes good use of partnerships to overcome some of the difficulties associated with its size. For example, during the winter months, physical education takes place at another local school and links with the local church and other organisations provide a good range of extra visits, visitors and activities which pupils enjoy and learn from.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support to all its pupils and involves parents well in their learning. It charts pupils' progress very regularly, though there are inconsistencies in the use of this information. Teachers set accurate targets for pupils' 'next steps' which are shared well with parents. Pupils are aware of these targets

and are becoming involved in assessing their progress towards them, although this is still at the early stages.

The school works well with a range of specialists to meet the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. This results in the sound progress which these pupils make in their learning, and good progress in their personal and social development. Parents of such pupils particularly value the support and advice that the school provides. Procedures to protect pupils are robust and regularly reviewed.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher, governors and staff share a commitment to 'putting children first' and, as a result, provide them with good opportunities to learn about themselves and others. The headteacher sets clear direction. She regularly monitors the quality of teaching and learning which has led to improvements, such as the improved teaching of writing and the better progress that pupils have made as a result. However, staff have not had opportunities to observe and gain from the good practice which exists in the school. Similarly, the high turnover of staff has led to some inconsistencies in the way that the youngest children are assessed. Overall the impact of leadership and management is satisfactory, as is the effectiveness of self-evaluation. Although many governors are relatively new to their roles, they bring a range of experience and provide a useful challenge to the school, helping it to identify accurately its strengths and weaknesses.

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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	3
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	2
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	3

### 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	2
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	2

### 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>	2
<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	2
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**

It was lovely to spend some time with you at your school recently. Before you arrived for school I enjoyed watching all the different birds which visit your bird table. So I was very interested in all the things you had found out and written about the birds and I learnt a lot. Thank you.

You and your parents told me how much you like your school and I could see why. I judged that the school was satisfactory, which means that there are some good things but also some things which could be better. Some of the things you helped me find out were:

- you like coming to school a lot and enjoy your lessons
- you enjoy helping the teachers, the school and all your friends
- everyone takes good care of you so the school is like a big family
- you do a lot of interesting things which help you to learn.

Your teachers have been concentrating hard on making sure you all really enjoy writing and they have done a good job with that. Because there have been a number of different teachers, it has been difficult for the school to know whether they have got it 'just right' and that your work is always hard enough for you. They are working on this which is a good idea. I have asked them to ask you what you think too, a bit like how your 'Talk Team' comes up with ideas to help your headteacher. Your 'Talk Team' has good ideas and I am sure you will all have lots of interesting things to tell your teachers about how well you feel you have done in your work.

With best wishes for the rest of the year, and I hope the grass soon dries up enough for you to play on it.

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector