



The Marston Thorold's Charity Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 120605
Local Authority LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number 291797
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Weston HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Marston, Grantham
Age range of pupils	5–11		Lincolnshire NG32 2HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01400250583
Number on roll (school)	65	Fax number	01400 251597
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Richard Gill
		Headteacher	Mrs Jan Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–11	14–15 November 2006	291797

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small rural school takes pupils from the village of Marston and surrounding villages. It is situated close to the Lincolnshire market town of Grantham. Pupils are mostly from White British backgrounds with none in the early stages of learning English. There are no pupils claiming free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and with statements of special educational need is similar to that in most schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to Reception is generally above national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and parents are pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. It is a welcoming school in which pupils work hard and feel valued by the staff and by each other. Relationships between the staff and pupils are very good. As one parent put it, 'The school provides a warm, caring environment for the children.' Pupils' personal development is good and they are looked after well. Their behaviour is good and they show a high level of care and consideration for others. The older pupils willingly take on responsibilities around the school. Another parent reported 'There is a great community spirit, with children being encouraged to care for one another.' The good curriculum keeps pupils interested. This is well supported by a wide range of after school clubs. These make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning new skills through sporting, music and even gardening activities!

Attainment on entry to Reception is generally above national expectations. Standards are commonly above average in Years 2 and 6, although in this small school they vary each year. In recent years pupils' achievements have been broadly satisfactory. However, newly introduced assessment and tracking strategies, combined with improvements in teaching and better planning to meet the wide range of needs in each class are having a positive impact and pupils now achieve well. Staff make very good use of information about how well pupils are doing to identify those that need extra help and to challenge the more able. However, the lack of individual targets prevents pupils from understanding what they need to do to get even better. Inspection evidence and the most recent results indicate that standards are rising and progress is increasing in most areas, although not all pupils achieve as well as they should in mathematics in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and in Years 3 and 4.

The purposeful and highly motivated headteacher has helped the school to improve considerably over the last two years. All members of staff share the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential. This is reflected in every aspect of school life, but especially in the way that pupils are expected to take responsibility and help each other. There is a good understanding of what still needs to be done, although governors are currently over-reliant on the headteacher for information and do not sufficiently challenge the school or hold it to account. In addition, subject managers have not had the opportunity to check on how well pupils are learning. Parents are very supportive of the school and they make a significant contribution to its success by supporting their children's learning at home.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, by ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Set individual targets to help pupils understand more clearly how well they are doing and what they need to do next to make further progress.
- Enable leaders of subjects to check on teaching to know how well pupils are learning and what is needed to improve provision further.

- Clarify, support and develop the role of governors so that they can do more to hold the school to account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 6. Pupils start school with attainment broadly above average and most exceed the goals set for their age by the start of Year 1. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 in recent years has been slower than expected, given their starting points. Standards achieved by Year 2 pupils in 2006 were above average in reading and writing, and broadly average in mathematics. However, recently introduced strategies to quicken progress throughout the school are having a positive impact so that progress in Reception and Key Stage 1 is now good. Observation of teaching, analysis of data and scrutiny of work shows pupils are making better progress, particularly in mathematics, where gaps in learning are being plugged, although the school recognises that there is still more to be done. There are weaknesses in mathematical understanding particularly in Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2. In 2006, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was exceptionally high and progress was outstanding. Nearly all Year 6 pupils reach the standards expected for their age and a high proportion exceed the expected level. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are well prepared for the future. In all classes, pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their exceptionally good attendance. Very good relationships throughout the school create a happy and supportive school community in which pupils feel valued for what they can offer. One pupil said 'I like coming to school because everyone's kind, helpful and friendly.' Pupils behave well in and around the school and most listen well in class. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good and so they develop a strong sense of responsibility and community. They are very sensitive to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. They lead active lives and know the importance of healthy eating. Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. They play a good part in shaping the school's future by offering ideas about how it can improve and pupils say that they feel much more involved in what is going on in recent years. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Their understanding of their own culture is good. However, their awareness of how different faiths and cultures contribute to society in other ways, such as through music, dance and art, is less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are now ensuring that activities are matched carefully to pupils' different abilities, and there is a higher level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the more able. This is especially important because, in mixed age classes, there is a very wide spread of ability. This close matching of work to individual needs is successfully raising standards. Pupils explain that this good progress is because their learning is interesting and their successes give them further enthusiasm. One pupil said, 'I like it at school because its fun!' Skilled teaching assistants give very good support, especially when they are working with small groups of pupils. Teachers make clear to pupils at the start of lessons what will be learned over the session and review pupils' progress regularly. While teachers set class or group targets, they do not always refer to these in their teaching or marking. In addition, teachers do not yet set individual targets for pupils. Consequently, the pupils are not as clear as they might be about how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve further. In addition, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' presentation, at times accepting poorly formed and untidy writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum means that pupils are interested in their work. It is now well planned to ensure that it mostly meets pupils' aptitudes. However, although statutory requirements are met well, opportunities are not always taken to make learning more thought-provoking, enjoyable and interesting for pupils by linking work between subjects. Modern technology is used well to support pupils' learning. Over the last year, this has helped to raise standards. For example, in the Year 3/4 class, children enjoy using the interactive whiteboard to increase their understanding of fractions. It is also used well to practise reading skills in the Reception, Year 1 and 2 class. The school provides a wide range of additional learning opportunities through clubs, visits and visitors. For example, music specialists work in the school to teach new skills and as a result pupils' self-esteem is boosted and they are proud of their achievements. As one parent said, 'the range of opportunities my child is offered is quite amazing!' Links with the local schools help pupils understand what is on offer beyond their school and raise their aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all its pupils. The school successfully places the personal care of its pupils at the centre of its work. All pupils are treated as part of the 'school family'; members of staff know the pupils well. They work very closely with parents and outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being.

Pupils say that they feel safe and secure and they know what to do if they have a worry. Pupils are supported well when they first start school in the Reception class, enabling them to settle very quickly. Their progress is monitored very carefully in all areas of learning. Similarly, in Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress is now tracked very thoroughly. However, insufficient use is made of information from assessments to set individual targets for pupils to help them to raise their standards. In contrast, pupils with learning difficulties are swiftly identified and they are provided with good additional support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The energetic and enthusiastic headteacher is committed to ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential. Her good leadership is rightly recognised by pupils, staff and parents. She has successfully moulded a motivated and cohesive team. There is a good understanding of what still needs to be done. School self-evaluation is good. Analysis of assessment data has enabled the school to determine where its strengths and weaknesses lie. This information is being used well to bring about improvement. For example, better tracking, assessment and targeting of pupils has led to better teaching and improved progress for pupils. The professional development of staff ties in well with the school's priorities. In this small school, responsibilities are sensibly shared between staff. However, although subject managers are involved in reviewing the school's work, they have not yet had the opportunity to check how well pupils are learning and what is needed for them to improve. The views of pupils and parents are actively sought. They express high levels of satisfaction with the school. A plan for further improvement has been identified. While the priorities are appropriate it is not clear how the programmed activities will impact on teaching and raise standards further. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and have successfully managed the recent building development, which has significantly improved facilities. However, they have rightly identified that they do not do enough to find out things for themselves. This makes it difficult for them to hold the school to account or to take a more active role in planning for school improvement. The school's recent track record of development and the commitment and drive of senior managers mean that there is a good capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

16 November 2006

Dear Children

The Marston Thorold's Charity CE Primary School, School Lane, Marston, NG32 2HQ

Thank you for welcoming me so well to your school. I enjoyed talking to you, watching you learn and looking at your work. I thought you would like to hear what I liked about your school and how it could get even better.

What I liked about your school

- You are friendly and confident, and happy to talk about what you were doing
- You behave well in lessons and enjoy what you do, especially when you are working together or have practical activities to do
- You have some good ideas about how the school can improve
- Your headteacher and other grown-ups working in the school look after you and make sure that everyone behaves well and is happy. This makes sure that you can get on in lessons
- Your teachers and teaching assistants work hard at their teaching and try to get it right for each one of you
- Your parents really like the school and feel you learn well.

What I have asked your school to do to make it even better

- Your teachers should find ways to help you get even better at maths. You can help by working as hard in maths as you do with your reading
- Your teachers need to set each of you some clear targets that will tell you what you need to do to get better
- Your teachers should check what is happening more in other classes and share all the good things they find so that they can learn from each other and get even better
- Your governors need to find out more about the school by looking much more closely at how you are getting on, so they can help the school to be even more successful than it is now.

I feel certain that everyone at the school will continue to work hard to help you learn in the future. You have some challenging targets for 2007. Continue to work hard and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston HMI Her Majesty's Inspector