

Marus Bridge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106406
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309117
Inspection date	24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kim Grice
Headteacher	Mr D Jones
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Kelvin Grove Marus Bridge Wigan Lancashire WN3 6SP
Telephone number	01942 248129
Fax number	01942 821588

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of girls overall, especially higher attainers in mathematics; the quality of academic guidance and involvement of pupils in their learning; and the impact of the recent restructuring of the senior leadership team on management and standards. The inspector gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, parents' questionnaires and observation of the school at work. Interviews were conducted with senior members of staff, the chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in similar detail.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school situated to the south of the town centre. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school holds several awards, including the Healthy Schools Award, the Sportsmark (Gold) and the Eco-Schools (Silver) Award.

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 where pupils attain above average standards and achieve well. The staff place great store in nurturing the moral and social aspects of their pupils' education and the success of their efforts is richly reflected in the outstanding quality of pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and praise its friendly, caring and hardworking staff. They value especially the contribution it makes to the development of their children's personal and social skills, self-confidence and academic achievement.

Standards are broadly in line with national expectations when pupils begin Year 1. Standards have risen steadily in the last three years in both key stages. This improvement is most pronounced in English, where writing was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Staff have very successfully implemented various strategies to raise pupils' skills at writing. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2007 rose to above average. In Year 6 in 2006 and 2007 they were also above average. This represents good progress for these pupils, especially boys, who achieved very well. The current group of Year 6 pupils is on track to reach similar standards. Girls and boys achieve equally well in all years. Standards in mathematics are slightly lower than in English and the school is redressing this imbalance by grouping pupils by ability in Years 5 and 6 to better meet their needs. Standards in other subjects, for example, art, history and physical education, are also above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they are supported very effectively in their work.

Pupils' exceptional personal development includes their excellent behaviour, great enjoyment of learning and extra-curricular activities, and their very keen understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Expectations of pupils are high, and they rise to the challenge very well. They are very alert to the needs of others, including pupils with physical disabilities, and are always ready to help. Pupils are very friendly, polite and self-disciplined. The older pupils value their wide-ranging responsibilities, which include environmental improvements to the school grounds, and carry them out very well. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are regularly monitored and updated. Strong relationships ensure that pupils are confident in sharing personal problems or concerns about their work with adults. The school liaises effectively with outside agencies to support pupils with identified needs. Pupils' good grasp of basic skills sets them up well for later life. Attendance is average and improving due to the school's continued efforts.

The school sets appropriately demanding targets for pupils. A new system to track pupils' progress enables managers to use targets flexibly to add extra challenge as required. At this mid-point in its development, its impact on pupils' progress is satisfactory, rather than good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships are excellent and teachers harness very effectively pupils' responsiveness and very positive attitudes to their learning. Lessons are well planned to enable pupils to learn systematically and develop their thinking skills. Pupils make very good use of the opportunities they are given to develop their speaking and listening. As a result, lessons move at a brisk pace. The regular feedback and praise pupils receive help them better understand the work and encourage them to try even harder. Written assessment and personal target-setting systems are well established for the older pupils in English. Similar arrangements for mathematics and science are underdeveloped and this reduces the

opportunities pupils have to assess their own learning and so gain a better understanding of their next steps.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very well and it makes a good contribution to their learning, as reflected in the external awards achieved. The curriculum is very effective in developing basic skills, especially oracy. The school successfully implements a thematic approach to teaching a range of subjects in Key Stage 1. This approach has not yet been extended to Key Stage 2. Nonetheless, projects linking subjects, for example, art and design and history through a study of the Second World War, enhance pupils' interest and enjoyment in their learning. The curriculum is enriched by specialist sports coaching, for example, in modern dance techniques, which pupils greatly enjoy.

Leadership and management are good. The complementary skills of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher enable the school to chart a steady course for continuous improvement in pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Good systems for monitoring the performance of the school enable the most senior leaders to acquire an accurate evaluation of most aspects of its work, for example, the quality of teaching and learning, but senior leaders slightly over estimated their evaluation of care, guidance and support to pupils. Staff morale is high and enhanced teamwork and accountability underpin the successful restructuring of the senior leadership team. Actions taken are well focused on areas for development. An increase in the number of teaching assistants and their good deployment support the improved achievement of pupils. The school has taken considerable strides forward since the previous inspection. Governors support the work of the school well and have the capacity to hold the school even more closely to account. The school provides good value for money and is well set for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

On entry to Reception, children's attainment is broadly in line with that typical for their age, but speech and language skills and aspects of social and emotional development are relatively weaker. The Foundation Stage provides a good education for its children. Children make good progress, particularly in literacy, speaking, personal and social skills. Good listening habits are regularly reinforced and children are given frequent opportunities to express their ideas and opinions. When they leave the Reception class, the vast majority are working securely within the early learning goals for their age, but few children reach higher levels. Children are well taught. Information from the satisfactory assessment informs lesson planning and the curriculum provides an appropriate mixture of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Sometimes, the pace of learning at the beginning of sessions is steady rather than brisk and does not fully challenge the higher attaining children. Additional adults provide just the right measure of guidance to enable the children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to extend their learning through practical activities. There are good arrangements to ensure children's welfare and special programmes enable parents to contribute usefully to their children's learning. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure higher-attaining children in Reception are consistently challenged to boost their achievement.
- Involve pupils more effectively in reviewing and assessing their work in mathematics and science to help them learn even better.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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

Inspection of Marus Bridge Primary School, Wigan, WN3 6SP

I am writing to thank you for your help when I visited your school recently and to tell you about my inspection findings. One of the younger pupils told me, 'This school is a very nice place to be for learning.' I think that just about sums up Marus Bridge perfectly.

I judge your school to be good. Your personal development is outstanding. Your school helps you reach good standards not only in English, mathematics and science, but also in art, history and physical education. You make full use of the good opportunities in a range of subjects to develop your talents to the full. I saw good examples of this in the art class and wall displays, not to mention the 'little movers' dance session where the infants gave 100% effort to the class. Indeed, all of you put that level of effort into whatever you do, which helps to explain why you learn well. You are always ready to answer your teacher's questions. You stay alert and take a full part in your lessons. The teachers play their part too, by teaching you well and making your learning interesting. You told me that they look after you well and make sure you are safe in school and that is what I saw too. It also impressed me greatly how well you value and look out for each other. Staff work hard to make things better for you all the time and their efforts (and yours!) have been recognised by the awards which you are justly proud of.

I have asked the headteacher to do two things to make your learning better. Firstly, to make sure those children in Reception, who find learning easier, are given challenging work more often. Secondly, to extend the use of the good methods the older pupils have in English for reviewing and improving their work into mathematics and science.