

# Marden Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118306
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	312878
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Logan

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	261
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Les Etheridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rowena Linn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Goudhurst Road Marden Tonbridge TN12 9JX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 831393
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 832058

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized school draws its pupils from the village of Marden and the surrounding rural area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. No pupils learn English as an additional language. A small number of pupils are from Gypsy/Roma families. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, though around the national average, has increased in recent years. None has a statement of special educational need at present. The school has gained the Healthy School and Active Mark awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Marden Primary is a good school. The headteacher, staff and governors work together successfully to create a school that is valued by pupils and parents. As a parent typically commented, 'My children absolutely love the school.' Since the last inspection, Foundation Stage provision has been transformed. Children now make a good start to school in Reception. Good induction procedures, careful planning and good teaching ensure that children achieve well. By the end of the Reception Year, most reach the expected goals for their age, and some exceed them. As a result, children now enter Year 1 with much higher standards than previously. The school has secured effective teaching in Years 1 and 2 to ensure that this initial momentum is sustained and that current broadly average standards at Year 2 are raised further. The recent focus on writing has been effective in Years 1 and 2, with good evidence of rising standards, which are now above average. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average, but are not higher because pupils are not sufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels in mathematics, and pupils do not have concise individual targets to raise overall standards further. While there has been underperformance in the past, good teaching in Years 3 to 6 is now improving pupils' progress and helping them to achieve well, particularly in writing, where current work and school assessments show that standards have risen. While academic guidance is good overall, marking does not always help pupils know how to improve. In the past, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have not made the progress expected of them. These pupils are now achieving at a good rate because the school has reorganised its provision and provided effective support to improve their progress. Pupils have good skills in information and communication technology (ICT), although they do not have sufficient opportunity to use these skills to support their learning in other subjects. Pupils' learning is supported well by outstanding pastoral arrangements, which particularly support vulnerable pupils very well. The school engages very successfully with the families of Gypsy/Roma pupils, sustaining high levels of attendance. All pupils behave well and have a warm, enthusiastic response to what the school has to offer. They understand well the importance of eating healthily and of regular exercise, and make an outstanding contribution to the school and village communities. The good curriculum, with its many extra activities, successfully enriches pupils' experiences. Good leadership and management are the driving force behind recent improvements. The leadership team is cohesive and effective, with a clear view of areas that need improvement. Occasionally, data are not analysed with sufficient rigour to identify trends in performance more promptly so that the pace of change is increased. There is a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff and to the sharing of good practice through school cluster activities.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills around the expected level for their age. They are cared for well and benefit from a well planned and imaginative curriculum, which provides a variety of stimulating experiences to broaden their understanding. Relationships are a strength and ensure that children make good gains in their personal development. With rigorous assessment and planning, and effective teaching, children make good progress. Children are now further advanced when they enter Year 1 than they were in the recent past. They make particularly good progress in their personal and social development and in their language skills. However, their attainment in creative development and in performing calculations is not as strong. The redeveloped outdoor area has contributed significantly to children's increased independence

and better personal development. Children show good attitudes, have the confidence to initiate activities and sustain concentration for an extended time.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Plan tasks that are closely matched to pupils' learning needs, particularly the more able, in order to raise standards further, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils' individual targets are concise and that marking provides clear guidance so that pupils always know how they can improve their work.
- Analyse and evaluate data on pupils' performance more rigorously so that the leadership team more rapidly identifies and responds to emerging trends.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Significantly improved provision means that children now make much faster progress in Reception. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and although standards are broadly average, they are rising in writing, where they are above average. While not as consistent, achievement in Years 3 to 6 is improving steadily and is good overall, although standards remain broadly average by the end of Year 6. As better prepared pupils come through, the school is well placed to raise standards further, as is already being seen in the improved standards in writing. Targets for Year 6 pupils in 2007 were significantly exceeded in English, although there was a slight shortfall in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making improved, often good, progress because support is increasingly effective. Gypsy/Roma pupils make steady progress because they are settled and attend frequently. A small number make particularly good progress because of the quality of support they receive.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are well behaved and have positive attitudes to work. They feel that they are respected and listened to and are friendly and cooperative. Pupils feel safe and are confident that there is always an adult to support them. Attendance is good, reflecting pupils' strong enjoyment of school. Almost all Gypsy/Roma pupils have attendance levels considerably higher than commonly found, reflecting the school's positive engagement with these families. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, their awareness of cultural diversity in contemporary Britain is limited. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community through many posts of responsibility. They evaluate their work, act as 'buddies' for other pupils who are new or insecure and initiate and run clubs. The school council is highly effective; their work with the Parish Council has been instrumental in achieving the construction of a school crossing. Pupils have increasingly good basic skills and personal attributes that will contribute effectively to their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Relationships are good. This leads to a trusting response from pupils who are therefore keen to work hard. Teachers create a calm

working environment, using the behaviour management system consistently, so that learning is rarely disturbed. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and are effective in supporting the learning of individuals and small groups, as well as providing cover for teachers. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to engage pupils, and regular group discussions get pupils to think about their learning and develop speaking and listening skills. Marking is used well to comment on the effectiveness of pupils' learning, though it does not consistently indicate how they can improve their work. At times, teachers do not match work accurately to pupils' abilities or allow the more able pupils to get to work sufficiently quickly once they have understood the focus of a task.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The lower school curriculum now ensures that there is a consistent approach to teaching and learning from Reception to the end of Year 2. It meets current needs well, encompassing a strong focus on writing skills, an area of recent underperformance. The school recognises the need to develop mathematics so that standards are raised further. At present, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their ICT skills in other subjects. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties is sharply focused on what they need to learn to improve and there is excellent provision for small group support. This is now helping them to make better progress. Gifted or talented pupils are supported well through planning, curriculum enrichment or cluster school activities. Support for pupils' personal, social and health education is good, as seen in their good attitudes. Provision for extra-curricular and enrichment activities is good, offering extensive opportunities in music and sport. Residential visits significantly enhance their personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Academic guidance is good, enabling pupils to make good progress. Vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a Gypsy/Roma heritage have access to a good deal of support that is closely matched to their individual needs. Older pupils confidently evaluate the quality of their work. Pupils have improvement targets in literacy and numeracy and have a fair knowledge of these. However, targets are often not concise enough, making progress difficult to evaluate. Often, the marking of work is not directly linked to targets. This means that pupils do not always receive sufficient guidance as to their next steps in learning. Pastoral care is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Adults promote pupils' health, safety and welfare rigorously. The school has very effective links with external agencies, so ensuring effective provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The success of the school is largely due to the leadership of the headteacher, who is supported effectively by the senior leadership team. There are good and accurate systems for evaluating the school's effectiveness, involving governors and staff at all levels. However, data are not always understood or analysed sufficiently to support improvements and raise standards. Governors provide good levels of challenge and support and have good systems in place to

judge how well the school is doing. The role of subject leaders is developing well, though some are only just beginning to impact on standards in their subjects. The school sets increasingly challenging targets and uses these effectively to reduce gaps in attainment. The school has made good progress in recent years and is well placed to continue on its upward path.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

- 17 February 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Marden Primary School, Marden TN12 9JX Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You are very interested in meeting visitors and it was a pleasure to talk to you. We could see that you are really proud of your school and that you appreciate what it provides. You care for each other very well. Like you, we felt that Marden Primary is a good school. The main things that we found are these.
- You behave well in lessons and work hard.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start.
- The teaching is good. You mostly make good progress, although sometimes you could get to work more quickly and make better use of your time.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for really well. You understand how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- The curriculum is good; you particularly enjoy the extra-curricular activities.
- Those in charge of the school make sure it runs very smoothly at present and know what to do to improve it still further. We are asking the school to make these changes so that you do even better.
- Help you to do even better, especially in mathematics, by using information about how well you are learning to give you all tasks that make you have to think hard, especially those of you who find work quite easy.
- Make sure that your targets are clear and that teachers' marking is closely linked to your targets so that you know how you can improve your work.
- School leaders need to look very closely at the information they collect about how well you are learning so they can take quick action if they find that things are not working so well. You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future. Yours sincerely George Logan Lead inspector

17 February 2008



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**Inspection of Marden Primary School, Marden TN12 9JX**

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Yours sincerely

George Logan  
Lead inspector