

Marnel Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116017
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326309
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Caroline Griffiths
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Baron
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2006
School address	Shetland Road Popley Basingstoke RG24 9PT
Telephone number	01256 328670
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Marnel is an over-subscribed junior school of average size. Most pupils come from the immediate locality, although an increasing number live further afield. The large majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that found in most schools. Most of these pupils find learning challenging or have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school is currently being extended to enable it to expand to three forms of entry from the current two. The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the beginning of the autumn term is much higher than the national average. The school has gained a number of awards including the Healthy School and Artsmark Gold awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marnel Junior is a good school. It has some outstanding features and is on an upward trend. There have been considerable improvements since the previous inspection which have led to pupils making consistently good progress in all year groups and, in Year 6, they make outstanding progress. Parents are unanimous in their support of the school and expressed their delight in selecting the school for their children. These are summarised by the parent who wrote, 'The school has a stimulating and vibrant atmosphere in which my child has flourished. As a parent I want nothing but the best for my son and I have not been disappointed'.

The continuing outstanding leadership of the headteacher is the key factor in the school's improvement. She is much admired by pupils, parents and staff and is determined to ensure that Marnel pupils are provided with the best. She is supported well by a very effective senior leadership team. They work in close partnership with the staff, all of whom share a deep commitment to senior leaders' vision for the school. Because all adults are given an opportunity to contribute to the school's success and improvement, teamwork is excellent and staff morale is high.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. This is because the care, guidance and support provided for them are excellent. There is an overwhelmingly supportive atmosphere which effectively encourages pupils to develop their excellent personal skills. This ensures that the school provides a very happy and harmonious community. In consequence, pupils are growing into confident, secure, independent and friendly young people who thoroughly enjoy school and learning. Their behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around the school. They delight in taking on responsibility and they get on extremely well together. Teachers treat the pupils with care and consideration while making clear their high expectations of both behaviour and work. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community both in the school and beyond. This enhances the school's outstanding contribution to community cohesion. There are very positive links with other schools locally as well as abroad in Germany and Uganda.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are consistently in line with the national average and this marks good achievement in relation to the below-average attainment of pupils when they join the school. Data show that progress in English and science was outstanding in the 2008 tests, although that for mathematics was satisfactory. The school is keenly aware of the need to boost the progress pupils make in mathematics to match that of other subjects. In 2008, for example, overall results were drawn down because the proportion of pupils who gained the higher Level 5 in mathematics (which is one level higher than expected for Year 6 pupils) was below the national average. However, current Year 6 pupils are achieving outstandingly well and are on course to attain standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science.

The quality of teaching is good and this impacts positively on pupils' academic and personal development. Classrooms are orderly and calm places in which relationships are positive. Activities are presented in an interesting way, capturing pupils' imagination and, because teachers' assessments of pupils' work are good, this enables them to ensure that work is matched well to pupils' learning needs. However, there is some variation in teaching and, on occasion, the pace in learning drops because teachers spend too long providing explanations.

Pupils' love of learning and school is greatly enhanced by an excellent curriculum. The school has successfully embarked on a reorganisation of the curriculum which is now made relevant

and interesting. Imaginative and creative links between subjects make learning exciting and meaningful.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the current plans to boost achievement in mathematics.
- In order to lift the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding, iron out the small variations in the quality of lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good in all year groups, standards in national tests are average and the trend is upwards. Challenging targets are consistently met and current Year 6 pupils' attainment is above average because the teaching is consistently strong and effective there. The recent focus on strengthening pupils' writing is paying dividends. Previously, standards in reading were much higher than in writing, though this is not now the case. This is because a careful analysis of pupils' writing skills revealed the need to strengthen aspects of the writing curriculum. This has now been adapted by ensuring that purpose is given to writing, particularly in the project work undertaken. Furthermore, the emphasis on improving spelling and punctuation has paid dividends and pupils' writing is now much more fluent and creative. In addition, the school has carried out a detailed analysis of weaknesses in the mathematics curriculum that have led to lower standards. This has resulted in improvements in the teaching and learning of counting, fractions and decimals and applying and using mathematics. In consequence, current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain equally well in mathematics as in science and English. Pupils who find learning hard and those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties do well because their needs are quickly identified and the curriculum is tailored very well to meet their individual needs. These pupils make good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding because the school gives a very high priority to emotional well-being. Attendance is above that of similar schools. Pupils are very confident, polite and thoughtful. They particularly enjoy project work and showing their parents what they have learned at the end of each topic. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of staying safe and their excellent understanding of and commitment to healthy lifestyles contributed to the school's Healthy School award. They play and work very sensibly together and all feel extremely safe. They contribute exceptionally well to their school and local and wider communities by raising money for a school in South Africa and a local hospice, acting as school ambassadors, and serving on the school council or as Junior community wardens. They enjoy taking part in local music festivals and helping with lots of tasks around the school. The excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is enhanced by visits, visitors, and the exceptional curriculum. Assemblies provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to reflect and share ideas. The promotion of the arts makes a particularly strong contribution to the pupils' cultural understanding. Pupils are highly respectful of difference and diversity. One pupil said, 'We are all different, if we weren't life wouldn't be nearly as good'. Due to good achievement, outstanding attitudes and behaviour, pupils are well prepared for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There have been considerable improvements in pupils' learning since the previous inspection. Most of the teaching is now at least of good quality and some is outstanding. The strengths lie securely in the highly positive relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. In addition, teachers ensure that learning is personalised for the pupils, and lessons are invariably purposeful in meeting objectives. Because there are six teachers in each of the four classes in the lower and upper school, teachers have many opportunities to plan work together. This results in work that is matched very closely to the needs of individuals and can be based on the high-quality assessments of previous work. In addition, it is rare that the school needs to employ supply teachers and this means that the pupils are all known well by their teachers. A very good range of strategies is used to ensure that all pupils are involved. In particular, staff are adept at making sure that pupils work in pairs and small groups and this encourages them to support each other well. However, occasionally teachers' explanations are too long, and this slows the pace of pupils' progress as their concentration falters.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because all the required areas are successfully covered in focused lessons and exceptionally imaginative and engaging projects. Projects are relevant, interesting and extremely well planned. They are generally open-ended and very practical, providing challenge for the more able pupils and relevant activities for those who find lessons more challenging or difficult. All pupils use and develop their initiative, skills, knowledge and understanding exceptionally well in these projects, each of which culminates in a celebration or presentation to parents and members of the community. Information and communication technology (ICT) is exceptionally well integrated into project work and this results in pupils being highly competent with ICT as well as being dextrous in making use of it to enhance their learning. Pupils have particularly enjoyed projects on 'the zoo' at the end of which they brought their pets to school to create their own zoo for a day, and the 'Great Exhibition' which culminated in transforming part of the school into the Victorian Great Exhibition. The provision for the arts is exceptionally strong and contributes well to pupils' achievement. This is recognised in the school gaining the gold Artsmark award. Over one third of pupils play an orchestral instrument and the school band is of high quality. Dance plays an important role in the life of the school and this too provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to show their talents. The curriculum is enriched well through residential trips, visits out, visitors and a wide range of pre-school, lunchtime and after school clubs. These are popular and well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All pupils are cared, for, guided and supported extremely well. Systems to safeguard their health and safety are well organised and robust. The school gives a very high priority to pupils' emotional well-being. All pupils, including those who find learning hard or have emotional and behavioural difficulties, are supported well by caring, attentive teachers and teaching assistants. All the staff, including the headteacher, know pupils and families very well, valuing and sharing their experiences and challenges. Partnerships with parents are excellent and are pivotal to the

school's success. These are boosted by the 'family liaison worker', who holds weekly drop-in sessions and classes for all that are much appreciated by pupils as well as contributing to their health and well-being and the overall community cohesion. Teachers successfully guide pupils' learning and progress. This is underpinned by the rigorous and close tracking of pupils' progress. In addition, teachers ensure that lesson objectives are clear and success criteria for each lesson are identified. Marking is thorough and praises pupils' efforts, indicating how they could improve. These factors lead to individual targets that help the pupils take the next steps required in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's leadership continues to be outstanding and she has moulded the staff team exceptionally well. In consequence, achievement has been boosted since the previous inspection to the current good and, in Year 6, outstanding levels. These improvements, linked with the excellent leadership and the organisation of the school that now includes two assistant headteachers and a deputy headteacher leading teams of staff, demonstrate an outstanding capacity for further improvement. There is an unerring focus on improvement which is firmly based on the belief that pupils thrive when they are helped to feel confident and secure. Leadership has effectively focused on strengthening provision using the comprehensive and highly accurate evaluation of pupils' progress and teaching and learning. This leads to a consistent approach across the school, strongly supporting achievement and pupils' positive attitudes. The two teams of teachers are fully involved and promote an exciting curriculum leading to good achievement. They are highly innovative in their practice, for example in the way in which pupils are grouped for all subjects. In addition, they are particularly adept at involving all pupils, whatever their background, in the life of the school. This also includes parents so that they feel welcomed and this forms a firm basis for an excellent contribution to community cohesion. This is further enhanced by close links with many local community groups both within Popley and across Basingstoke.

The governors are fully involved in the school and have well-established and secure systems that enable them to provide an excellent mix of support and challenge to staff.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marnel Junior School, Basingstoke, RG24 9PT

I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school. Thank you for helping us so well and making us welcome. We really enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. We particularly enjoyed watching you and your parents enjoy the lower school 'Crystal Maze' celebrations and the excellent work that you produced. We can see why you enjoy school so much because yours is a good school and it is getting even better.

These are the things that are best about your school.

- You enjoy school and you all get on very well together. Your behaviour is excellent and you help and support each other really well.
- You make good progress in your learning and want to do your best. Well done for this!
- The staff take excellent care of you and make sure that you are safe and very well looked after.
- Your teachers do a good job. Teaching is good and you thoroughly enjoy learning.
- You are lucky to have such well-planned activities to do. We were pleased to hear how many of you enjoy arts activities, including playing instruments.
- Your headteacher is doing an excellent job. She is supported really well by all the other adults in the school and the governors.

We have asked the school to continue to do two things:

- make sure that you do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science
- ensure that all lessons are as good as the best.

You can help by making sure you work as hard as possible to meet your targets.

Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector