

Marham Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120900
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327387
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Joy Richardson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	129
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Holmes
Headteacher	Mrs Michaela Webb
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cedar Road Upper Marham King's Lynn Norfolk PE33 9LT
Telephone number	01760 337217
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils live on the Marham airbase, where the school is situated, but some come from the nearby village of Marham and elsewhere in the surrounding area. Pupils frequently leave or join the school during the year because of airforce postings. Many children start school with skills that are less well developed than usual. Almost all the pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities is around the national average. In 2007, the school changed from a first school to an infant school. When pupils leave the school at the age of seven, most transfer to the junior school in Marham village. The school gained a Healthy School award in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is rapidly improving, as the school itself believes. Since the previous inspection in 2005, the school's leadership has stabilised. With the appointment of a permanent headteacher in the past year, the school is now looking forward confidently to the future. Much is being done to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to raise standards, and the school has a good capacity to improve further. Parents are highly satisfied with the school's leadership and the impact it is having, and the school enjoys a growing reputation for the quality of its education.

Pupils make satisfactory progress, although the standards they reach by the time they leave are below the national average, most notably in writing. Few pupils reach a high level in reading, writing or mathematics. The school has been looking closely at why this is the case and recognises that assessment has often been inaccurate. Teachers are now working hard to make assessment more precise and, as a result, are developing a clearer view of what could and should be expected of pupils; sights are being set higher. Already, writing is starting to improve because pupils are being encouraged to write more, and all pupils now have daily practice in using letters and sounds to spell words.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and pupils benefit from working in small groups with an adult. Work is well planned so that all the staff know the intended outcomes and share these with pupils. However, activities do not always build on pupils' experience or sufficiently extend their understanding.

Pupils are gaining independence and a sense of responsibility for their work. They feel secure because they know the routines and they behave well in response to consistent expectations. The staff listen to pupils' views and act on what they find out. Older pupils believe their contributions matter, for example as members of the school council. Pupils know what they need to do to be healthy and greatly enjoy their daily fruit snacks. An interesting range of after school clubs adds much to pupils' learning.

The school takes good care of pupils, including those who have disabilities or who find learning difficult. It smoothes the path for pupils when they join or leave the school, for example by sending a personal letter of welcome to newcomers. Parents comment on the way that the headteacher and staff 'go that extra step' to keep them informed and to deal with any concerns.

The headteacher has quickly identified what the school does well and how it could do better. She is harnessing the efforts of the whole staff team in moving the school forward and setting challenging targets to raise standards. The school community now has a sense of common purpose in working to provide pupils with the best possible education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in relation to their starting point on entry. Almost all the children reach the goals set for this age in creative development and at least two thirds do so in most of the other areas of learning. However, less than a third reach all the goals in communication, language and literacy because of weaknesses in writing. Following improvements in the accuracy of assessment more is now being done to help children practise writing letters and words. Elsewhere, children become absorbed in role play, for example in the 'seaside shop', and use a range of materials and tools in printing,

cutting, sticking and making models. They enjoy choosing their own activities in the classrooms and in the outdoor areas. Activities are planned around broad themes, but are not always designed to practise specific skills or to challenge children by building on their prior learning. Children are keen to show their good manners in saying 'excuse me', 'please' and 'thank you' and they take pride in being helpful and tidying up after themselves. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well, supporting children effectively in small groups and closely observing their progress. Staff are very alert to the needs of individuals and they work closely with parents to ensure that these are met.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use information from assessment to challenge all pupils, including the most able.
- Develop pupils' writing skills throughout the school and set clear targets for progress.
- Relate topics to pupils' experience and ensure that tasks and activities build on their prior learning and extend their understanding.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, although standards at the end of Year 2 are below the national average with few pupils attaining the higher levels. The percentage reaching the level expected at this age is broadly average in reading, but it is below average in mathematics and writing. Boys do less well than girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including a number with statements of special educational need, make satisfactory progress in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are growing in awareness of the world around them, and learning to appreciate the important part they play within the school community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Behaviour has improved in response to greater clarity over expectations, rewards and sanctions, and is now good. Pupils behave well in classes, around the school and in the playground. They delight in winning stickers and certificates and are keen to avoid their name appearing in 'the book' in which poor behaviour is noted. They are encouraged to take pride in themselves and increasingly do so. Their views are listened to, and this in turn is helping pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy serving on the school council. They look out for others in the playground who may need help. The school promotes healthy living. Pupils respond well, for example, by drinking water, enjoying fruit snacks and eating healthy school meals. Pupils know about keeping safe. They are developing satisfactory skills to prepare them for later life. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and sometimes good. Work is carefully planned, and teachers and teaching assistants work together well to guide and assess pupils' learning. Staff now carry out termly assessments to track pupils' progress and most set challenging targets. Classes are managed well and positive behaviour is consistently reinforced. In some lessons, pupils are encouraged to think about what they already know and what they would like to find out and this helps to engage their interest. In others, however, there is not enough focus on the learning required and the appropriate type and pace of activity, so that the completion of a task such as filling in a worksheet can become an end in itself. The organisation of groups often allows pupils with similar needs to learn productively together, for example when pupils work on sounds for spelling. However, work is not always closely enough matched to pupils' prior attainment to ensure suitable challenge, particularly for the most able. The school is working to develop pupils as independent learners, but this is not yet a characteristic of all teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and staff are developing topics to enliven learning and extend links between subjects. A well-equipped computer suite has recently been opened. Pupils are greatly enjoying the new opportunities this affords, as seen in the creation of animated presentations about hedgehogs by pupils in Year 2. The curriculum is much enriched by a good variety of popular clubs run by staff. These currently include sewing, sports, Spanish, computers, art and design, and a reporters' club where pupils prepare a school newspaper. A programme of visits has been instigated, linked to the curriculum, and the school makes good use of resources on the airbase, for example, to support a topic on transport. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are helped to take part in the whole curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff are aware of pupils' individual needs and robust arrangements are in place for child protection and the safeguarding of pupils. The school takes particular care to help those who leave or join the school at short notice because of airforce postings. Pupils are welcomed and helped to make friends, and staff are alert to any unsettled behaviour. New arrangements for assessment aid continuity by charting pupils' progress more clearly, however long or short their time in school.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are accepted and included and other pupils are helped to understand their needs. For example, all pupils learn signing as an aid to communication and practise this with great enthusiasm in assembly. The school works in close partnership with parents. It provides good information for parents through termly progress reports and meetings with staff, and is developing the use of personal targets to guide and inform learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership is setting a clear direction for the school with a strong focus on raising standards and its impact is already evident in a number of areas. For example, daily sessions in small groups are building strong foundations for reading and spelling, and there are signs that standards are beginning to rise. The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate and staff and governors have been fully involved in planning for improvement. Parents have been consulted and are kept informed, for example, of the steps being taken to raise standards in writing and to help boys do as well as girls. The headteacher leads by example in her teaching and in her role as special educational needs coordinator. The quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress is now closely monitored. The roles of the senior leadership team and curriculum leaders have been developed so that an energetic commitment to improving the school is widely shared. Teachers and support staff are strongly encouraged to develop their skills further and are keen to do so. The school runs smoothly and gives satisfactory value for money. The governing body supports the school well and is extending its knowledge and oversight of the school's performance. In promoting community cohesion, the school is developing a good partnership with other schools, liaising closely with the airbase community and beginning to extend its links with the local village.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which 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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

1 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Marham Infant School, Upper Marham, PE33 9LT

Thank you for telling me about your school when I visited you. I enjoyed meeting you and seeing your work.

I think that you are learning well about the sounds of letters and how they make words. This is helping you with your reading and writing. You do some exciting work, and Year 2 must be very proud of their computer presentations about hedgehogs.

I am glad that you behave well so that everyone can get on with their work. It is good to know that you win lots of stickers, and that there are very few names for Mrs Webb to write in 'the book'.

Lots of new children come to your school, and you are good at helping them to settle in. Year 2 pupils on the school council are doing a good job in making sure that everyone is happy at playtime. You know a lot about keeping healthy too. You are lucky to have so many clubs. I wonder what the reporters will be writing about next.

Mrs Webb and all the staff want you to do as well as possible, and we have been talking about ways to help you learn even better. The staff will be checking to see if you could learn faster and showing you how to improve your work. We agree that you could do better still in writing, if you keep practising from the start. Some of the activities you do could be made more interesting to help you learn more and understand better.

I hope that you will go on enjoying school and doing your very best.

Thank you again for welcoming me to your school.

Joy Richardson

Lead inspector