

Marlbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116684
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	312366
Inspection dates	16 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	434
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Erwin
Headteacher	Tracey Kneale
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 June 2005
School address	Green Croft Redhill Hereford Herefordshire HR2 7NT
Telephone number	01432 266643
Fax number	01432 272179

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	16 March 2009
Inspection number	312366

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- Progress in developing basic skills across the school, especially in writing.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school and the way in which pastoral support and curriculum enrichment enhance learning.
- The impact of leaders at all levels on school improvement.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve attendance.

Evidence was gathered from observations of pupils at work and play, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of documentation and an analysis of parents' views. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Pupils come to this large urban primary school from the surrounding estates. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and two Reception classes. Extended provision for children from the school is provided through a breakfast club and the 'Marlbrook Kids Club'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school touches the lives of its pupils, their parents and the local community in an exceptionally positive way. Inspirational leadership from the headteacher has transformed the school into one where pupils flourish both socially and academically. The school is particularly successful at helping pupils to develop a love of learning and an understanding that anything is possible if you work hard.

The school is supported superbly by parents who are almost unanimously delighted with the school's work. Two parents accurately captured the essence of the school when they commented that 'I am often overwhelmed when I walk into school by the efforts of the staff to nurture and encourage all of the children' and 'The headteacher deserves a medal for her commitment to the children, staff and school.'

Pupils' achievement is outstanding because they are taught extremely well and are given excellent support if they are struggling with their work or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They benefit from a rich curriculum that makes excellent use of the superb outdoor work areas. Pupils continue to make very fast progress in the rest of the school and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006 and 2007 placed the school in the top 1% of all schools for progress from the end of Year 2, reflecting the dramatic rise in standards over the last five years. Standards are set to go up further as improved attainment lower down the school starts to filter through; for example, for the first time ever, standards at the end of Year 2 were above average overall in 2008. Pupils make excellent progress in developing basic skills, although standards are not as good in writing as they are in reading. Leaders are taking the right steps to tackle this, and they know that opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in different subjects are still not consistently strong enough across the whole school. In contrast, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is very good and is embedded across the curriculum. Pupils benefit from very good ICT resources and confident teaching.

Nearly all teaching is good and much of it is outstanding. Teachers' infectious enthusiasm is greatly appreciated by pupils who find 'learning fun'. Teachers are very successful at meeting the differing needs of pupils and they manage behaviour extremely well. Teachers make very sharp use of assessment data to check that all pupils are doing well enough and to identify where additional support may be needed. Teaching assistants give excellent support to pupils, especially to those who need extra help. Pupils are very clear about how to improve their work because teachers add helpful written comments to work and they set clear goals for improvement. On the very few occasions when teaching is less than good, it is because pupils are not fully engaged and the pace of learning is too slow. Throughout the school, relationships between classmates and adults are superb, with everyone helping each other when needed. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons because pupils are well behaved and they try their best. The excellent efforts of learning mentors and projects such as 'Cool Cats' have helped to improve rates of attendance to satisfactory levels, although some parents still choose to take their children on holiday during term time.

Members of staff provide very high quality pastoral care and support to the pupils and ensure that their personal development is excellent. Behaviour for the majority of pupils is very good. The few pupils who find it hard to behave well or who are having problems at home or at school are given a high level of support from skilled staff. Consequently, pupils learn to become very responsible citizens. They greatly enjoy school with comments such as 'every day is fun' and 'the teachers look after us really well' typically summing up their views. Pupils especially like the extremely wide range of activities provided outside lessons that enrich the outstanding curriculum. Members of staff work extraordinarily hard to provide pupils with a breadth of experiences that prepare them very well for the next stage of their education and eventually for later life. Pupils talk with great confidence about how to avoid dangers they may face as they get older and they usually, but not always, eat healthily when in school. They participate enthusiastically in the diverse range of physical activities that are provided by the school. These include imaginative options such as horse riding and massage.

Well-managed provision for children before and after school extends the work of the school very successfully. The very well attended breakfast club gives pupils a good start to the day and has helped to improve attendance. Pupils who attend the 'Marlbrook Kids Club' are very well cared for and are able to take part in a good range of fun activities.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is excellent. At the heart of its work is a focus on teaching pupils from different backgrounds to get on together. This is achieved with outstanding success. Pupils make a very positive contribution to the community. They take a very active part in local events. The school council gives pupils a good voice and contributes well to school development. For example, it has recently surveyed other pupils to find out how playtimes could be improved. The school reaches out extremely effectively to parents and is at the hub of the local community. Through their work with parents and local groups, leaders have been extremely successful at breaking down the barriers between home and school. This has been a very important factor in school improvement. Family learning activities are very well attended and are greatly appreciated by parents and carers. Pupils have a very strong awareness of their place in the wider world and they are given many opportunities to learn about the world beyond Marlbrook.

The school is so successful and has improved so much because leaders at all levels have created an ethos in which all pupils are valued and respected. Teamwork amongst leaders and governors is incredibly strong and they complement each other's skills extremely well. All have contributed enormously to school improvement because none will accept second best for the pupils. Together, they have driven the school forward by rigorously examining what is going well and what needs improving and by then ensuring that the right things are done to tackle weaknesses. The sense of partnership across the whole school community is very strong and the school works very closely with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being.

This is a school that is not prepared to rest on its laurels. Leaders have set very challenging targets for the next stage of school development and they are very well placed to realise these aspirations.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

'My child's development in every area has been a delight to see.' This comment from a parent is typical of the very positive view that parents have of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children achieve extremely well in both the Nursery and Reception classes because teaching and the quality of care and welfare support are outstanding. Children start school with skills that are much lower than those found typically, especially in language and literacy and social development. They make excellent progress from these very low starting points and standards rise to just below average levels by the start of Year 1. Children do especially well in personal, social and emotional development because of the high expectations of all adults. Adults expect children to do their best at all times and there is a purposeful buzz in lessons as children go happily about their work. Reading skills also improve particularly quickly because all children read individually to an adult each day. There is an excellent curriculum that makes learning exciting and purposeful. Adults make extremely good use of the outdoor areas to support work in all of the areas of learning. Leadership of provision is excellent. Children's progress in the Nursery and Reception classes is carefully checked so that additional support can be given where it is needed. Members of staff work together very closely and continue to strive to improve provision, even though it is already exemplary in the way that it meets children's differing needs. For example, they are planning to develop a 'forest school' so that the use of the outdoor areas can be strengthened even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the use of writing skills in the different areas of the curriculum so that the gap between standards in reading and writing is reduced.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', 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
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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.

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	2
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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

17 March 2009



Dear Children

Inspection of Marlbrook Primary School, Hereford HR2 7NT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly and we enjoyed talking to you. We agree with you that your school is excellent, and that staff do a lot to help you.

Some of the things we found out about your school.

- You are supported very well and excellent teaching helps you to learn new things very quickly throughout the school.
- Younger children get a super start in the Nursery and Reception classes, where you work together well and settle quickly. The outdoor areas are brilliant for letting you try out new things.
- You really enjoy school because adults make learning exciting by planning many fun activities both in and out of lessons. The bike maintenance class looked very interesting.
- Nearly all of you behave very well and take responsibility very sensibly. We are very pleased that you take such good care of the school building.
- The school council does a good job of representing your views.
- Your teachers and other adults are very kind and caring and they give you high quality support when you are struggling with your work.
- The school is very well led and managed and all the adults are working very hard to make the school even better.
- Almost all of your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Give you more opportunities to practise and improve your writing skills when working in different subjects so that you do as well in writing as you do in reading.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. You can help your teachers by continuing always to do your best and we wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr M Capper
Lead inspector