

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Marshlands School

Second Avenue, Tillington, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 1PS

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

Outcome

Marshlands School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Promoting pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders and staff, supported by parents and carers, work together to develop pupils' independence so they are well prepared for the next steps in their education. The school wants pupils to achieve their very best, and these high expectations are evident in the high-quality of learning that pupils experience. However, leaders are not complacent. They are aware of where further improvements are needed and are working well to address these.

Pupils enjoy school and receive a warm welcome from staff every morning. Pupils are rarely absent. The school works closely with any families whose children find attending school a challenge. In most cases, pupils listen well and work hard in lessons. At breaktimes, they enjoy spending time with their friends and the staff, or simply enjoy the downtime, so they can relax. Positive, caring relationships underpin every aspect of school life. Staff know the pupils really well. As a result, pupils feel safe, and parents feel reassured that their children are cared for.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They appreciate the support that their children receive and how this has a positive impact on their home life.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school uses all available information to identify pupils' academic and social starting points effectively when they join the school. In turn, this determines the most suitable curriculum pathway or pathways for pupils to follow. Ongoing reviews mean that pupils move fluidly between these pathways so that their needs are constantly met.

The school has carefully considered the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn within and across year groups. What pupils learn today builds effectively on what they have learned before and prepares them for what they will learn in the future. As a result, pupils achieve well. Developing pupils' communication and language is the common thread that underpins every aspect of learning across the school. This is supported by the school's total communication approach that is evident in lessons and around the school.

The school recognises the importance of early reading as a crucial life skill, and as a result, it is a priority. The school accurately identifies pupils' starting points, and pupils learn new sounds in a logical order. In addition, the school actively promotes the love of reading in lessons and through the sharing of stories.

Teachers and teaching assistants have secure subject knowledge. They work well as a team to support pupils with their learning. In many instances, staff explain new concepts clearly. They check that pupils understand these and adapt their teaching when required. The careful selection of additional learning resources, such as counters and word mats, supports pupils well. However, in some instances, the choice of activity is not closely matched to the needs of pupils and can either be too easy or too difficult. Also, in some cases, staff give pupils too much help, which hinders pupils' growth as independent learners.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is exceptional and is embedded within every fibre of school life. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of healthy lifestyles and personal safety in line with their level of understanding. The school makes good use of the local area, such as visiting the church. During the inspection, pupils were very excited about their weekly visit to the local swimming pool. Careful consideration has been given to the range of enrichment activities, including sporting events, trips and visitors, which pupils appreciate. 'Being kind' is a common theme that rises to the surface in many conversations with pupils. They talk about being kind to each other, being kind to the planet, opportunities to be a kindness ambassador and much more. The school's focus on kindness is evident in the respectful way that pupils interact with each other and the staff.

Governors support and challenge the school in equal measure. They are constantly deepening their knowledge of the school, including their knowledge of the curriculum. This enables them to support the school in their work to further improve the quality of education that pupils experience.

Staff work together seamlessly as a team. They value the support they get from each other, which helps to reduce their workload and supports the management of pupils' behaviour. Staff appreciate that they can approach leaders with any concerns.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some instances, the curriculum is not delivered effectively. Where this is the case, pupils are not supported well with their learning and they do not achieve as well as they could. This can also sometimes limit their ability to learn with an increasing level of independence. The school should identify and address any areas of inconsistency in curriculum implementation so that learning activities are well matched to pupils' needs, enabling pupils to achieve well.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in December 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	124518
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10343889
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Francis
Headteacher	Kim Prince-Anson
Website	www.marshlands.staffs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Marshlands School is a generic special school that caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes moderate learning difficulties, autism, medical needs, speech, language and communication needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The Marshlands Meadows site is located at Tillington Primary School.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Many pupils journey to and from school in transport organised by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, the head of school, the two assistant headteachers, three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a range of other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with staff.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors considered parents' views through the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text responses received during the inspection. The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation form, school improvement plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the governing body.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nicola Harwood

Ofsted Inspector

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