

Marshland High School

School Road, West Walton, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 7HA

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, governors and the trust have ensured that, over time, they have raised aspirations for pupils. As a result, almost all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and routinely use assessment to support their planning and help pupils to improve their work. Most pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The trust provides effective support for the school. Support and challenge have been effective in securing improvement and in ensuring that leaders focus on the right priorities.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made progress that was in line with that made by other pupils nationally.
- Leaders provide a curriculum that supports pupils' academic and personal development well. It strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well prepared for life after school and for life in modern Britain.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and improving. Pupils are polite and friendly to one another. They feel safe and well cared for in the school.
- Pupils confidently apply their mathematical skills in a range of subjects. A minority of teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities that help pupils to use and develop their writing and communication skills in subjects other than English.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They check that their actions are making a difference. However, leaders' improvement plans do not always link closely to their evaluations of actions taken.
- Historically, fixed-term and permanent exclusions have been too high. There has been a significant reduction this year. However, leaders acknowledge that exclusions are still too frequent for a small core of pupils.
- Despite continued and focused efforts by leaders, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains above average, including for some disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- A small minority of teachers' expectations of pupils are too low, particularly for those who have SEN and lower-attaining boys. They do not match activities to pupils' abilities. As a result, the progress of these groups is variable, and pupils can lose focus on their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that self-evaluation is consistently self-critical and linked closely to all aspects of improvement planning, including for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities and lower-attaining boys
 - consistently plan learning activities that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities to accelerate rates of progress and ensure that all pupils focus on their learning
 - routinely provide opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills in reading, writing and communication.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that persistent absence is at least in line with that for all pupils nationally
 - improving the behaviour of a small core of pupils, including some who have SEN or are disadvantaged, to reduce further the incidents that lead to fixed-term exclusions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school became an academy, leaders, governors and the trust have ensured that there has been a culture of raising aspirations for pupils. This has resulted in increasing numbers of pupils moving on to higher levels of study when they leave school. Almost all pupils in the school have positive attitudes to learning and want to do the best that they can.
- Although there have been changes in senior leadership that have taken place this year, leaders have maintained their focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Middle leaders are energetic and enthusiastic. They understand how they contribute to the school achieving its priorities and are increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. They are very appreciative of the support from the trust, which is helping them to grow and develop in their roles.
- Leaders have used the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively and have refined their approach further this year. They have accurately identified the barriers to learning for this group of pupils and have put in place actions that have successfully raised pupils' aspirations and achievement. Leaders use funds to support pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy, provide basic equipment and improve attendance. Funds are also used to enable pupils to participate in educational visits, such as a geography trip to Iceland.
- Leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. They use this information to provide support and training that focuses on individual teachers' development needs. Teachers are positive about the support that they receive and the impact that this has on improving their practice.
- A carefully constructed curriculum supports pupils' personal and academic development well. Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects. Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are woven through the curriculum. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of diversity in British society and a respect for different cultures, values and beliefs. They are also able to discuss and reflect sensibly and sensitively on ethical and moral issues.
- Leaders have considered how they can best support pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in other subjects and develop these further through activities provided in form periods.
- There is a coordinated programme in place to promote reading, which is successfully encouraging pupils to read more widely. Leaders use additional funding to provide a programme to support those pupils who did not achieve the standards expected for their age at the end of key stage 2. This is supporting these pupils to make progress and catch up with their classmates. However, leaders have identified that some teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in reading, writing and communication.

- There have been recent changes to the leadership of SEN. New leaders are evaluating which aspects of provision need to be improved further. However, they have not yet used their findings to construct a strategic improvement plan for this area of the school's work.
- Leaders and trust staff regularly check on the quality of education provided. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They recognise, for example, that a minority of teachers' expectations of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and lower-attaining boys are not high enough. However, leaders do not use all aspects of self-evaluation to plan precisely for improvement.
- Leaders have rightly identified that rates of absence and exclusions have been too high. There has been a focus on improving the attendance of pupils who have had high rates of absence. While this has had some success with individual pupils, persistent absence remains higher than average. Actions to reduce exclusions have been more successful, though leaders have identified a small core of pupils who require further support to improve their behaviour.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and governors are committed and passionate about pupils achieving the best possible outcomes. They have successfully established a culture where aspirations are high. Both pupils and teachers have responded to this challenge and progress is accelerating as a result.
- The West Norfolk Academy Trust provides an appropriate balance of challenge and support to the school. The trust has ensured that changes in senior leadership have not resulted in a loss of focus on improvement priorities. In September 2017, the trust placed an experienced interim headteacher and deputy headteacher in the school to maintain the momentum of improvement.
- The trust has ensured that leaders have had support to ensure that their judgements regarding the quality of teaching in the school are more accurate. Work with other schools in the trust has supported leaders in developing assessments and plans for teaching the revised GCSE examination courses. Senior and middle leaders are positive about the support provided. Teachers feel that the school is well led and managed and are proud to work at the school.
- Members of the local governing body have provided an increasing level of challenge to school leaders. They regularly check on the work of the school. As a result, governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children and young people meets requirements. Leaders maintain suitably detailed records relating to safeguarding. Inspectors initially found some minor administrative issues with safeguarding documentation. The headteacher and designated lead for safeguarding took immediate and decisive action to correct these errors.

- The designated leader for safeguarding and wider safeguarding team understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. They act promptly when they receive concerns to ensure that pupils and their families receive the help that they need. Leaders make referrals to external agencies, such as social services, in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Staff receive regular and appropriate training, including on the 'Prevent' duty, which focuses on preventing pupils becoming vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe and are clear as to how and when they should pass on concerns.
- Pupils report that they feel safe and well cared for in school. They learn how to stay safe, both online and in the wider world, through a coordinated programme of assemblies, the form tutor programme and skills for life lessons.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teaching is effective and builds upon pupils' positive attitudes to learning to help them develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Positive relationships ensure that pupils support and encourage one another to learn. As a result, pupils make good progress in a range of subjects.
- Work with other schools in the trust has supported teachers in developing schemes of learning for the new GCSE examinations. There are also common assessment procedures across the trust and opportunities for teachers to moderate their assessments to ensure that these are as accurate as possible. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They typically make good use of assessment information to plan activities and sequences of learning that are suitably challenging for pupils and help them to make progress. Inspectors saw examples of teaching providing high levels of challenge to the most able pupils in a number of subjects, including science, German, mathematics, English and geography.
- Almost all teachers consistently use the school's policy on assessment and feedback to provide pupils with guidance on how to improve. In English and mathematics, this is particularly effective, and pupils receive precise guidance that helps them improve the quality of their work and deepen their understanding.
- Most teachers know the specific needs of individual pupils well. They use this information to provide pupils with any additional help that they need. The school's learning mentors provide effective support for individual pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. This helps disadvantaged pupils, and some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, to make progress that is at least in line with other pupils who have similar starting points.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to apply their learning from mathematics confidently in other subjects, including geography and science. A commercial scheme is used to develop and assess pupils' reading and is having some success in developing pupils' fluency and comprehension. While most teachers support pupils in developing their literacy skills, a small number do not give pupils enough opportunities to use and develop their reading and writing skills.

- Leaders have mapped opportunities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum and teachers use these well. For example, in science, a teacher asked Year 9 pupils to consider the ethics of using stem cells from embryos for research and treatment. In history, Year 8 pupils put themselves in the position of a citizen in Germany during the Second World War and reflected on how different groups in society would have felt.
- A minority of teachers' expectations of pupils are too low, particularly of those who have SEN and/or disabilities and boys who join the school with levels of attainment below those expected for their age. As a result, with these teachers, these groups do not make progress at the same rate as others in the school.
- In the minority of cases where teaching is less effective, teachers do not ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' needs and do not make best use of the time available. This results in pupils not making the progress of which they are capable because tasks are too easy, too hard or do not grab their interest. This leads to pupils losing focus on their learning and, on rare occasions, not behaving to their usually high standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils and the large majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View feel that pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are well cared for. One parent commented, 'This is a friendly school where every child is treated as an individual and encouraged in ways best suited to them.' Many pupils spoke about teachers being available and willing to help. They are confident that teachers will act upon any concerns that they raise.
- Pupils are respectful to one another and to adults. On the few occasions where racist, homophobic or derogatory language is used, leaders deal with this effectively. Pupils learn about bullying in its different forms. They understand the harm it can cause and say that bullying incidents are rare. Almost all said that when bullying does occur teachers deal with it well.
- Leaders are increasingly successful at raising pupils' aspirations. Pupils say that they receive useful information to help them choose their option subjects. They also receive useful guidance about careers and future education, training or employment. An increasing number of pupils are progressing to higher levels of study when they leave school.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests through a variety of extra-curricular activities, clubs and trips. These include overseas sports tours and geography trips.
- Leaders seek pupils' views when making decisions and pupils feel that their views are listened to. Pupils can develop leadership roles as form captains and anti-bullying ambassadors. The well-planned culture and beliefs and life skills lessons, supplemented

by the assembly programme, promote pupils' understanding of British values and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Children looked after are supported academically and socially. As a result, most have levels of attendance that are in line with, or better than, those for all pupils in the school. Leaders listen to pupils' views on what will work best to support their personal and academic development when updating pupils' personal education plans.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically conduct themselves well in lessons and in less structured periods, such as breaktimes and lunchtime. Pupils are polite, friendly and proud of their school.
- Almost all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. They arrive to lessons on time, properly equipped and ready to learn.
- Pupils report that behaviour is usually good. They say that occasionally, where teachers do not plan activities that are appropriately challenging or build upon pupils' interests, pupils can lose focus on their learning. This reflects what inspectors saw during the inspection.
- The large majority of staff agree that behaviour is good and feel well supported in managing behaviour. Changes to the behaviour management system and the way teachers respond to incidents have reduced the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Leaders have identified that there is still work to do to improve the behaviour of a small core of pupils who receive repeated exclusions from school.
- Leaders, governors and the trust have made reducing absence and persistent absence a key priority. They have taken the opportunity to celebrate high and improving attendance and have tightened procedures to monitor absence. Leaders have also worked successfully with some pupils and their families to improve attendance where this has previously been very low. This has had some success in improving overall attendance this academic year. A number of pupils with long-term medical conditions have had a negative impact on persistent absence figures. However, despite these efforts, leaders acknowledge that persistent absence remains too high, including for some vulnerable pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In almost all year groups, pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are lower than those expected for their age. In 2017, pupils' attainment was in line with that of pupils nationally. Consequently, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4 was above or in line with that of pupils nationally in a range of subjects, whatever their starting points. Pupils with low prior attainment made significantly better progress than similar pupils nationally in English.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 made progress that was in line with that of other pupils nationally in a range of subjects, with the exception of science. Their progress compared favourably with that of pupils from similar backgrounds nationally. Observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that most disadvantaged

pupils are continuing to make good progress. This is because leaders target funds to meet the needs of individual pupils.

- Progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was not as strong overall in 2017 as it was for all pupils, though there were notable successes for individual pupils. The school's assessment information and inspectors' observations of learning indicate that, while progress for these pupils is increasing, it is not consistently in line with that of other pupils in the school with similar starting points.
- Inspectors' observations of learning and scrutiny of current pupils' work indicate that most current pupils are making good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. This is because most teachers make good use of the information available to plan sequences of learning for pupils that are well matched to their abilities.
- The progress of a minority of pupils, including some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and lower-attaining boys is not consistently good. This is because some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and they do not provide activities that provide appropriate support and challenge for pupils.
- Those pupils who did not attain the standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are making progress through the programme of support provided by the school. However, their progress in literacy is not as strong as it could be, because teachers in subjects other than English do not consistently provide opportunities for them to practise their reading and writing skills.

School details

Unique reference number	142396
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10052621

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	726
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the Trust	Roger Livesey
Chair of the local governing body	Steve Cozens
Chief Executive Officer	Andrew Johnson
Headteacher	Craig Jansen
Telephone number	01945584146
Website	www.marshlandhigh.co.uk
Email address	mailto: office@marshlandhigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The West Norfolk Academies Trust has sponsored Marshland High School since November 2015. The chief executive officer of the trust acts as the executive headteacher of the school. The trust oversees the work of the school and some powers are delegated to a local governing body, which helps to monitor the work of the school, particularly in relation to the standard of education provided.
- The trust provides support for teaching, learning and assessment and for leadership in the school through the trust executive and collaboration with other schools in the trust. The trust also uses external consultants and links with other academy trusts and schools to support and evaluate the school's improvement.
- There have been significant changes in senior leadership over the past 12 months. The current headteacher was appointed at the beginning of May 2018. The trust placed an interim headteacher in the school from September 2017, following the previous headteacher securing a post in another school. The trust also seconded a deputy headteacher to the school who subsequently took on the role permanently.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN support is lower than the national average. However, the proportion who have a statement of SEN or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for the progress that pupils make at the end of key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' learning in a range of subjects and year groups, including a revision session for Year 11 pupils who were taking their GCSE examinations at the time of the inspection. A number of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work, heard a group of key stage 3 pupils read and observed form periods and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and representatives from the trust and the local governing body. Inspectors considered the 47 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and held formal and informal discussions with teachers to gain their views on the work of the school. Inspectors also looked at a range of school documentation and records, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Formal meetings were held with groups of pupils from each key stage. Inspectors also spoke to pupils in lessons and at informal times, such as lunchtime, to gather their views on the school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors analysed the 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and considered the 40 free-text responses that parents submitted.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Duncan Cooper	Ofsted Inspector
Vivien Corrie-Wing	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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