

SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

MARSH GIBBON FIRST SCHOOL

Marsh Gibbon, Bicester

Acting Headteacher: Louise Metherell

Date of inspection: 14th to 17th January 2002

The school was inspected by three inspectors, led by Grace Marriott. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Marsh Gibbon is a small, voluntary controlled Church of England First School near Bicester. It has 97 pupils on roll with almost equal numbers of boys and girls. Pupils come from the village itself and a fairly wide surrounding area. The children come from reasonably advantaged backgrounds and no families claim free school meals. There are no children from ethnic minorities. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average. Most of these children have moderate learning difficulties and none has a statement of special educational need. In most years groups the children started school with broadly average knowledge, skills and understanding but the current Year 1 class was above average overall. The secondment of the previous head teacher last year to support another school was initially expected to be short term but lasted for over a year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Marsh Gibbon is a successful school. It is providing its pupils with a good education in a lively and supportive atmosphere. The ethos promotes respect for others, very good attitudes towards work, and very good behaviour. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, very good in music, and at least average in all other subjects. The teaching is good overall. The acting head teacher has provided very good leadership and has been very well supported by the staff and governors. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average
- The teaching is good overall
- The pupils have very good attitudes to school: they work and behave very well
- The Foundation Stage (Reception) gives children a good start
- Music makes an outstanding contribution to the life of the school
- The school and parents work very closely together to support children's education

What could be improved

- The outdoor facilities for the Reception Class limit the range of activities which can be planned
- The monitoring of teaching and learning at a senior level needs to be more structured
- The role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring standards and learning needs to be stronger
- The assessment of work in subjects such as history, geography, information and communication technology, religious education, art, design and technology is not yet systematic enough

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. Since then it has continued to improve. The trend in results of the national tests taken in Year 2 has been upwards. There have been major improvements to the buildings with the provision of two new classrooms, which means that the school is able to teach in single age group classes. The facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) are much better and this means that computers are now used much more regularly and effectively in lessons. In relation to the issues raised in the previous report, the amount of investigative work has increased in both mathematics and science. The school

has adopted the national guidelines for subjects and staff are working to ensure that these meet the specific needs of the school. The amount of administrative support has increased, however, the governors are very much aware that they have not been able to provide a separate school office and staff room because the new classrooms were given priority.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 in National Curriculum tests.

**Similar schools means those with a similar proportion of children entitled to free school meals*

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			*similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	A*	B	A	A
writing	A*	A	A*	A*
mathematics	C	A	A	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table shows that compared with schools nationally, and with similar schools, the results in the Year 2 national tests in 2001 were well above average in reading and in the top five per cent of schools nationally in writing. In mathematics, results were well above the national average and above average compared with similar schools. The results have improved since the last inspection, particularly in mathematics. In 2001 both boys and girls did well, but the boys did significantly better than boys did nationally.

The attainment of the children who have been in the Reception Class since September 2001 is above average in all areas of learning and they are achieving well. They are mostly confident speakers, with almost all happily contributing some news during a circle time. They have a wide vocabulary and enjoy discussing issues. Children of all abilities enjoy looking at books and the highest attainers are already reading simple stories accurately. They are also beginning to 'write' at this stage though mostly by writing over the teacher's writing. Most of the children count and use numbers to ten confidently, some beyond. They recognise coins and count money, using simple addition. They also know the names of shapes such as circle, triangle, square and rectangle.

Standards are above average overall in English and science, well above average in mathematics, and all pupils are generally achieving well. The differences between previous test results and the current standards reflect the special educational needs in each class and the differences in attainment on entry. Year 2 for example, has more pupils with special educational needs than other classes. Standards in speaking and listening are well above average in all year groups. Pupils have a wide vocabulary and speak confidently in a variety of situations. They enjoy reading and standards are above average overall and well above average in Year 1 and Year 3. Standards in writing are similar and by Year 4 most writing is grammatically accurate and correctly punctuated. In all year groups pupils have very good skills in mental mathematics. They are quick and accurate, using a variety of methods when working things out in their heads. They are not quite as confident in applying what they know in unfamiliar situations. In science, pupils acquire good practical skills. They ask good questions and can explain what they are doing and why, but their recording of work is not always as good. In music, attainment and achievement are both very good. In RE attainment is above average and pupils achieve well. In other subjects attainment is never less than average and all pupils are achieving at least a satisfactory level.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good, pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well, they are courteous and trustworthy
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent and when given the opportunity pupils show initiative and take responsibility
Attendance	Attendance is well above average and unauthorised absence is very low

The pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour and the excellent quality of relationships are all very important factors in the school's success.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching is good. During the inspection all the teaching seen was satisfactory or better, about half the lessons were good and one in five was very good. There are no major weaknesses and the consistency in the teaching is an important factor in the success of the school. Teachers manage pupils very well and create a good working atmosphere in all classes. They are pleasant, treat pupils with respect and are consistent. They have high expectations for behaviour and attitudes and pupils respond well.

In the Reception Class the teachers plan closely and effectively together. The quality of teaching seen was good overall in each of the areas of learning. The calm approach ensures a very good relationship with the children and each child is able to participate fully and succeed in all activities. These are carefully planned and prepared, with appropriate resources ready and well used. The only relative weakness in teaching is in the use of outdoor activities and this is mainly because of the limited facilities.

In Years 1 to 4 the teaching is also good. In English, teachers provide many opportunities for speaking and listening which encourages pupils to be articulate and extends their vocabulary though whole-class sessions were occasionally rather long, mainly because the pupils wanted to contribute to discussion. As a result pupils had less time to consolidate their learning. The strong emphasis on teaching reading means that pupils read well, for pleasure as well as for information. Literacy skills are being used well in other subjects. In mathematics, the pace of work and the level of challenge in mental mathematics enables pupils to develop a good range of skills, though more practice in applying these in other subjects is needed. Science investigations are well planned and help pupils to develop good practical skills. In teaching ICT teachers are not afraid to experiment and draw on pupils' knowledge and pupils are learn to use graphics, word-processing, data handling and the Internet effectively in several subjects. The teaching of music is outstanding. The specialist teacher uses her own considerable musical skills and enthusiasm to motivate and encourage pupils to work hard and achieve very good standards.

Planning is generally good, but could include more opportunities for pupils to work independently and show initiative. At times there is an over-reliance on worksheets which do not give enough scope for independent written work and the use of the same worksheet or task for all pupils meant that lower-attainers did not always finish. However, teachers have a good understanding of, and plan appropriately for pupils with special educational needs, which means that they can join in fully in lessons. Teaching assistants are well prepared and give very good support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced at all stages in the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and have good access to the curriculum
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This provision for moral and social development is very good and for spiritual and cultural it is good
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good level of care for pupils

The curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum, religious education and the early learning goals for the Foundation Stage, though the provision for outdoor activities in Reception is not as good as other areas of learning. Music is a particular strength. Staff know pupils and their families well and monitoring of

pupils' personal development is based on very good communication between staff and the very good partnership with parents. Though tending to be informal, this works well and essential information is recorded. Pupils' academic work is monitored satisfactorily in English, mathematics and science but there is not yet enough assessment in other subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The acting head teacher has provided very good leadership in a potentially difficult situation. She has been well supported by staff and has maintained the good standard of education
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors deal with their responsibilities well and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school development plan is based on a good audit of the previous year's work and test results.
The strategic use of resources	The school budget is used carefully and effectively to support the school's educational aims

The school development plan is the result of good collaboration between governors and staff. It has sensible priorities which help to promote high standards. However, targets are not always expressed clearly enough in terms of their impact on teaching and learning. The budget is well managed, but the direct involvement of governors in this has been limited. The acting head teacher has successfully taken on considerable extra responsibility in addition to her class teaching commitment, though it has not been feasible for her to undertake the formal monitoring of teaching. Co-ordinators have made a satisfactory start to monitoring work in their subjects and recognise that this needs to be taken further. The school is well staffed with experienced and hardworking teachers and support staff who work together as a strong team. The accommodation has been much improved, though there are still deficiencies, for example the outdoor facilities are inadequate for the Reception Class, and the administrative office is still located in the staff room. Resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress • Behaviour is good • Teaching is good and expectations are high • Staff are approachable if parents have concerns • The school is well led and managed • The school works closely with parents and keeps them well-informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons

The parents were extremely positive about the school and the inspection team shares the parents' confidence. The only criticism related to activities outside lessons. The range is satisfactory though limited, but the school strongly encourages children to become involved in local activities, and many do. At the parents' suggestion, the school has recently expanded its range of visits to extend children's experience.

The contractor appointed by OFSTED for this inspection was e-Qualitas Ltd, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0RE

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**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 23 OF THE EDUCATION (SCHOOLS
INFORMATION) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 1996**

DIOCESE OF OXFORD

MARSH GIBBON C.E. FIRST SCHOOL

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS: MR. DAVID FIELD

HEADTEACHER: MS. LOUISE METHERELL (acting)

DATE OF INSPECTION: W/COMM JANUARY 14TH 2002

SECTION 23 INSPECTOR: FREDA STORRAR

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Preface

This inspection was carried out under Section 23 of the Education (Schools Information) (England) Regulations 1996 to report to the governors on the standards and quality in collective worship and on the opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school. The inspection was carried out under contract to the governing body of the school and was undertaken concurrently with the Section 10 inspection. There was full cooperation between the section 23 inspector and the OFSTED team.

1. Introduction

1.1 Basic Information

Name of school: Marsh Gibbon

Type of school: Controlled

Status: First

Age range: 5 - 9

Number of pupils: 95

Headteacher: Ms. Louise Metherell

School Address: Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon, BICESTER, Oxon OX27 0HJ

Telephone number: 01869 277268

Chair of Governors: Mr. David Field

Incumbent: The Revd. D.A. Hiscock (Team Rector)

Local Education Authority: Buckinghamshire

DfEE number: 904/3012

Date of section 23 Inspection: W/comm. 14th January 2002

Date of last section 23 Inspection: W/comm. 28th April 1997

Section 23 Inspector: Freda Storrar

1.2 Admissions information The school follows the admissions policy of the LEA for Controlled Schools. Children are admitted at the beginning of the term in which they have their fifth birthday.

1.3 Evidence of Church school status

The school makes clear its status as a Church School through displays in the entrance hall and around the school generally. The church connection is clearly stated in the prospectus and all documentation.

1.4 Characteristics of school including pupil background and intake

Following the introduction of a change in the Age of Transfer in Bucks the Governing Body, having consulted the parents, voted to offer to parents the option of their children remaining at Marsh Gibbon for the first two years of Key Stage 2.

With financial help from parents and a guarantee of funding from a local Trust Fund, the school was able to build an extra classroom which replaced a "temporary" building of some 30 years of age. The provision is now of 5 classrooms which allows teaching of pupils in single age classes.

Children come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds with varying pre-school experiences. A significant number live outside the designated area. There is a number of one parent families and although some may be eligible for Free School Meals none takes them up. There is a small number of children with identified Special Educational Needs with 8 on the Register. This is a significant issue for a small school. There is no unauthorised absence.

2. Record of the evidence base of the inspection

2.1 Prior to, and during the course of, the inspection, school policies and documentation were read and analysed including:

Mission Statement
Last Section 23 Report
Equal Opportunities Policy
Collective Worship Policy
Multi-Cultural Policy Statement
Policy for Behaviour, Discipline & Anti-Bullying
Home/School Agreement
Special Needs Policy
Headteacher's Statement
Draft PHSE Policy

2.2 Prior to, and during the course of, the inspection: (e.g. interviews, observations etc)

Interviews took place with the headteacher, staff, children, chairman of governors, the Rector, who is a foundation governor and with a small number of parents. There was observation of the arrival and departure of pupils and also at three registration periods and in some lessons as well as during three acts of worship.

3. Main Findings (also used for summary report for parents)

3.1 Standards and improvements in relation to those found in the last inspection

The school has done a great deal to improve its visual status as a Church School. There is clear evidence in the entrance hall in good displays and also around the school. A large cross on which are mounted brightly coloured fish – each one made by a child hangs against one of the large hall windows creating a beautiful backdrop against the light.

All staff attended the acts of worship which were observed. Pupils are invited to reflect and showed themselves able to express emotions and thoughts clearly and to have the ability to think for themselves.

During the inspection pupil participation in delivery of worship was limited although several children read aloud their wishes from the "Wish Tree" for which each child had written a selfless wish enclosed in a silver leaf. The leaves had then been hung on the branches of the silver tree which is mounted at the front of the hall. I believe, though, that children are beginning to be involved more in the planning and delivery of worship and they certainly respond readily and ably to questions and invitations to comment.

3.2 Implementation of mission statement

The mission statement is clearly the basis on which the philosophy of the governors and staff is based.

3.3 Ethos of school – relationships and behaviour

The school has a warm welcoming atmosphere where every child and adult is valued and accepted. Relationships are excellent and behaviour exemplary. Children are co-operative, courteous and helpful, caring for each other and those around them.

3.4 Collective worship

Collective Worship is carefully planned and delivered with attention always being paid to timing. The theme during inspection week was "The Written Word" and some interesting and stimulating material was used. Children were attentive and still, sang with great enthusiasm and tunefully, and joined in prayers and silent thought as appropriate.

3.5 SMSC

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education are all good.

3.6 Links with the community

Marsh Gibbon School is very much central to the life of the village and is appreciated as such. There is good liaison with a Playgroup which functions in the Village Hall and most of those children who attend move on to the school

The school should be commended for the atmosphere and opportunities it provides for the whole development of pupils.

4. Key issues for action

Building on existing strengths the governing body and headteacher in partnership with the Diocese should:

- Continue to provide opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually
- Bearing in mind the difficulties for a small rural infant school, seek a way of forming a direct link with a multi-cultural school in order to give some first hand experience of relating to different groups
- Find ways to involve pupils further in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship

5. Ethos of the school

The ethos of the school is set through the example and behaviour of all the staff, clergy and governors. A real sense of Christian presence prevails, children feel secure and happy and are settled and comfortable in the school environment.

5. Collective Worship

The quality of collective worship and related evidence

5.1 Collective Worship was of high quality, carefully planned and delivered in a relaxed calm setting. It provides a good calm start to the day and sets the tone for everything that follows. Music is used on entry and exit and the children are aware of what is played and why it has been chosen. A candle is lighted when all are seated and a variety of focuses used suitable to the content.

5.2 Pupils' responses to collective worship

Pupils respond readily and are engaged with the subject matter. They are attentive and well behaved and are able to talk about their experiences, being clear about what they enjoy most and least. Singing was particularly good and enthusiastic; excellent tapes of music to accompany singing have been made by the part-time music teacher and it was hard to tell that the accompaniment was not live piano music.

5.3 Extent to which school policy statement is reflected in practice

The policy statement is clear and practice reflects the statement and the accompanying guidelines.

5.4 Planning and evaluation of collective worship

Some evaluation takes place, perhaps there could be further development of the involvement of pupils in future.

5.5 Whether parents' right to withdraw children is clearly stated in collective worship documentation

Parental right of withdrawal is clearly stated but no pupil is withdrawn currently.

6. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural

6.1 Spiritual matters are addressed in a number of ways and will be developing further. Natural life, poetry, literature and the aesthetics all provided good opportunities for reflection and deep thought. Music was an area which should be given special mention as every opportunity was seized to provoke children's thoughts.

6.2 Moral teaching is excellent. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and understand the reasons behind rules. Behaviour in the playground and before and after school is very good and many instances of care for others were observed both from staff and children.

- 6.3 Social development is also very good. Relationships are excellent and communication open and polite. A happy atmosphere prevails and children are biddable and enthusiastic. Those who transgressed at all were quietly, firmly and effectively dealt with.
- 6.4 Cultural knowledge is good. There are many examples of displays and books about other cultures as well as our own and interesting work e.g. about the Greeks was on display. Pupils knew what they had learnt and although there is little opportunity in Marsh Gibbon to see people who are "different" on a daily basis in Marsh Gibbon, there is an awareness of living in a multi-cultural society and an interest in hearing more.

7. Links with the community

7.1 Quality of links with parents

Links with parents are open and productive. Parents contribute in many ways to the school and a thriving PTA is in operation. Social events are an important part of the calendar in addition to the usual fundraising occasions.

7.2 Quality of links with the Church community

Links with the Church community are close. The Clergy take regular worship in school and in turn the school attends services in the church on special occasions. The children know the clergy and are known by them

7.3 Quality of links with the schools/community at large

There are close links with the local Playgroup and most children transfer to the school. The school contributes to village events and there are close links with the Church which is used as a resource by the school. The school is part of the local small schools group and belongs to the Federation of small schools. Some residents have shared experiences with the pupils e.g. one lady spoke about her experiences as a refugee when a study was being made of the Second World War.

Cakes are baked for the Old Folks Club tea at Harvest time and a display of artefacts as well as music is provided by the children.

Record of inspector's appreciation of support

The inspector would like to place on record her appreciation of the warmth of her welcome and the help and courtesy shown throughout by all the staff, governors, parents and children with whom she had contact and to thank the Section 10 Team for their friendship and co-operation.

Freda Storrar January 2002