



Marland School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131552
LEA Devon
Inspection number 282225
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Charles Hackett AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Peters Marland
School category	Community		Nr Torrington
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Devon EX38 8QQ
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01805 601324
Number on roll	32	Fax number	01805 601298
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Linda Rogers
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Keith Bennett

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	Inspection number 282225
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

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 one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Marland is a residential special school for secondary aged pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils come from all over the county of Devon and a few are from neighbouring local education authorities. A few pupils join the school in Year 7 but the majority start school later in their school careers following a breakdown in their placement in a mainstream or special school. Currently there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language and all pupils are of British origin. There are five pupils who are presently in the care of the local authority.

After two terms with an acting headteacher, the current headteacher took up his post in April 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marland is an effective school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The care and welfare of pupils is excellent and this, together with excellent standards of care and good boarding provision, helps pupils settle into school quickly. This results in, often for the first time in their lives, pupils liking school and being keen to participate in lessons and organised activities. Their very good rates of attendance testify to this. Because of all these factors pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Strengths include work to improve the teaching of GCSE courses, the emphasis put on improving pupils' basic skills in English, the college courses older pupils attend and the wide range of evening activities much appreciated by pupils. The quality of teaching is, though, inconsistent mainly because not all teachers plan their lessons taking account of the different levels of ability in each class and the marking of pupils' work is often not helpful. Weaknesses in the curriculum include limited chances for pupils to study music and a modern foreign language.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development, including improvements in their behaviour. Most now behave well in and out of class and relate well to adults. Pupils themselves, though, feel they could improve their behaviour further and have concerns about 'name calling'. Staff recognise this and are striving to address these concerns but as yet are not fully effective at doing so, partly because the system to record pupils' behaviour is not used consistently by all staff.

The school has clearly improved since the appointment of the new headteacher. He is committed to very high standards and together with his senior colleagues and the governors has made many positive changes to aspects of the school's work. However, there are weaknesses in the systems to track pupils' progress over their time in the school. The school's view that currently it is effective matches that of the inspector and as a result the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The residential provision in the school is good. The latest report by the Care Standards Inspectorate earlier this year confirmed the high standards and highlighted a few areas where standards exceed the required expectations. A key strength is the very high quality relationships that staff have with pupils. This is very evident at meal times. Pupils chat very amicably to each other and staff and clearly enjoy these social occasions; the attention given by staff to include all boys and encourage their interests is impressive. As a result pupils feel accepted within the school community and safe and secure. They benefit greatly from the structure of each evening and thoroughly enjoy the many and varied activities on offer. Resources are good and they give pupils the chance to take part in lots of activities, such as playing pool or computer games, watch television or simply 'chill out' sitting with their friends. The expectations of how

pupils will behave and respond to each other are the same as during the school day and this reflects the very good leadership and management of the boarding provision. However, there are limited links between residential staff and teachers. In addition there is no homework policy or other established ways that pupils can continue or extend their studies in the evenings.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish systems to check and record pupils' progress and use the information gained from this in planning lessons and setting priorities for school improvements.
- Ensure that all staff use the school system for recording pupils' behaviour and continue their efforts to tackle pupils' concerns about 'name calling'.
- Improve the marking of pupils' work to ensure that it provides better guidance to pupils on how well they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- Implement plans to widen the curriculum for music and a modern foreign language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall pupils make good progress in their learning and because of this almost all leave school having passed one or more GCSEs. Given that before they arrived at the school pupils were making little progress academically their achievements are now good. For example, last year they passed more GCSEs than in previous years and more than the average for similar schools in the country. Pupils have also been successful in passing lower level examinations in a good range of subjects and gaining additional certificates in social and vocational courses. These good rates of progress apply to all pupils, irrespective of their learning difficulties or whether they are in the care of the local authority. A scrutiny of the individual records of pupils gives evidence that pupils are improving in their acquisition of basic skills. This is particularly so in English, where the emphasis put on reading and writing is reflected in improved reading ages and better writing skills. Their good progress is also shown by their successes in reaching the individual termly targets in most subjects and the challenging targets set by the school for pupils to achieve success in GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils make significant progress in their personal development as a result of joining the school. They quickly realise they are safe and will be treated with respect by staff and soon become confident to mix with each other and staff. Their behaviour and attitudes improve greatly; exclusions are very rarely needed, although pupils themselves are still concerned at elements of bullying, 'name calling' in particular. In class when the lessons are interesting pupils stay on task well, however there are a few occasions when pupils are reluctant to work, usually when they are not interested in the lesson. Out of class pupils are relaxed and very sociable with each other and adults. This increase in their levels of maturity serves them well in managing the

challenge of attending college courses and, for many, in taking up a college place when they leave. All of these factors make positive contributions to their economic well-being and their understanding of being part of a community.

Pupils clearly enjoy being at the school and their good attendance is a reflection of this. The frequent opportunities to take part in sport, coupled with excellent catering arrangements and drinking water being freely available ensure that they are developing healthy lifestyles.

Pupils develop a good awareness of spiritual aspects through the religions education programmes and the many opportunities to celebrate their achievements and reflect on world issues. Their cultural opportunities are satisfactory, although pupils have little understanding of living in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

All teachers have good relationships with pupils and strive to make classrooms effective places for pupils to learn. For example, teachers have successfully taught GCSE courses, which have resulted in most pupils achieving well and passing the examinations. English lessons are taught well, with a good emphasis put on pupils developing their reading skills through the teaching of phonics. However, insufficient attention is being given by other teachers to ensure that pupils are developing their literacy skills as they study other subjects. Computers are used very well in the teaching of many subjects and the new interactive whiteboards are also now beginning to be effective teaching aids.

However, although pupils have achieved well, senior staff have identified weaknesses in teaching and the inspector agrees with these. It is because of these that the overall quality of teaching is judged to be satisfactory despite pupils' achievements being good. Weaknesses include:

- The quality of lesson planning ranges from being very good to inadequate. The best take account of the ability of each pupil in the class and show how the lesson will seek to improve what they know or can do already. Other plans fail to do this and thus it is not clear what pupils are expected to learn.
- The majority of teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, but there are a few teachers who find this difficult and are less effective.
- The quality of displays varies from the excellent examples of pupils' artwork in mounted frames to classrooms where no pupils' work is on show.
- Teaching assistants know and relate to pupils well but are not sufficiently involved in planning and assessing their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

When asked what they like best in the school pupils are quick to say 'the activities'. These are well planned by the residential staff and contribute greatly to pupils' good

personal development. The activities take place each evening and include sporting options, as well as choices such as cooking, computers and visits off site.

The taught curriculum during the school day has been effective in enabling pupils to cover a good range of subjects but difficulties in recruiting specialist staff are currently reducing the programmes on offer in music and a modern foreign language. In addition there are limitations in the design and technology programme but this has been identified by the headteacher and is in the process of being addressed. Opportunities to follow a few vocational courses at college are good and this year they are being well supported by a work related programme, which includes opportunities for work experience placements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many of the arrangements to look after and safeguard pupils are excellent. Aspects such as formal child protection procedures, medical support, including first aid and administering medication, are very well organised and staff are very well trained in these aspects. They also have expert knowledge and training in dealing with situations to ensure that a pupil is safe when he needs to be physically held. Individual guidance given to pupils is very supportive. For example, pupils are given very good guidance in preparing to leave school, the links with the Connexions service playing an important part in this.

The very positive relationships staff have with pupils mean that lots of informal support is provided to pupils on how to behave appropriately. To assist this there is a very good computerised system for staff to record pupils' responses during school time and in the evenings. However, this system is not being used consistently by all staff and as a result it is not giving an accurate picture of pupils' behaviour. In addition there is, also, inconsistency in how staff address incidents. For example, despite very clear evidence that staff are determined to eradicate 'name calling' there are occasions where pupils are not supported effectively when this occurs. The individual support pupils receive is further reduced by weaknesses in the marking of pupils' work. A scrutiny of a few of their books shows that their work is not always marked and they often lack comments to help pupils understand how well they have done or what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is determined that the school will be very effective and has been successful in ensuring that other staff share his commitment to achieve high standards. As a consequence of these high aspirations the school has gone through a considerable period of change recently, which is bringing about significant improvements to the quality of education being provided and has ensured that almost all statutory requirements are now being met. Providing fuller programmes in music, a modern

foreign language and design and technology will complete the work needed to achieve this.

The headteacher's ability to analyse and evaluate what is happening in the school has brought increased rigour to school improvement and meant that the school is now being managed in a very professional manner. For example, although still at an early stage, the detailed checking on the quality of teaching is proving effective at identifying areas for improvement.

Other members of the leadership team are now fully involved in decision making and this is reflected in the fluent manner all aspects of the school day are managed. However, the quality of subject leadership varies as not all staff with subject responsibilities show they fully understand what is needed to lead and manage their subjects effectively.

Current systems to track pupils' progress are fragmented and do not allow senior staff to have a clear picture of pupils' progress. This in turn means they lack accurate information, which they could use to decide on priorities for improvements that may enable pupils to achieve even better than they do now. Senior staff have recognised this and have plans for improvements.

Governors are very supportive of the school and have recognised that previous systems to monitor its effectiveness relied too much on information from the former headteacher. They now have specific areas to monitor, and are beginning to carry out their roles effectively.

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.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making Mrs Kara HMI and myself so welcome in your school. We both enjoyed meeting you and hearing about the many things you do. I especially enjoyed chatting to you out of lessons about how much you like your school.

We have written a report about what we think about your school and sent a copy to the school. This report says that we think your school is good and that staff work hard to do their best for you.

The most important comments we have made are;

- You are making good progress in your learning and when pupils are in Year 11 they do well in examinations.
- Since being at the school your behaviour, attitudes and attendance have improved a lot.
- All staff care and support you well.
- The boarding arrangements, especially the activities are well organised.
- Your headteacher and the other senior staff are working very hard to make your school even better.

To make your school even better we think, and your headteacher agrees with us. there are a few things that should happen;

- All teachers should plan the lessons to take account of the differences you all have in what you know and can do and make sure they mark your work regularly.
- The school needs to have better systems to know how well you are doing and therefore be able to take action to improve the things you are not so good at.
- Despite lots of effort from staff to prevent bullying more should be done to deal with this, especially stopping 'name calling'.
- Provide you with more opportunities to study music and learn a foreign language.

Once again thank you for being so helpful and polite to us.