

Marland School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131552
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	328610
Inspection date	20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Jim Palmer

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Rogers
Headteacher	Keith Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2005
School address	Peters Marland Torrington EX38 8QQ
Telephone number	01805 601324
Fax number	01805 601298

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector, working alongside two social care inspectors responsible for making judgements on the quality of the boarding provision.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with students, staff and governors, school documentation and assessment information. This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum and their impact on students' achievement, the use of assessment data in setting challenging targets for students and the effectiveness of leadership and management in enabling the school to move forward. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small residential school for students with statements of special educational need for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). In the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the complexity of students' special needs including autistic spectrum disorders, Tourette's syndrome and those with mental health issues. Students come from all over the county of Devon. There are currently six students in the care of the local authority. The school is a termly residential facility used by all students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

A considerable amount has been achieved since the last inspection through the drive and commitment of the principal and as a result, Marland successfully fulfils its role as an effective SEBD school. The standard of care provided within the boarding provision is good and many of the recommendations from the last social care inspection have been met. Effective leadership and management have ensured a strong staff team that are keen to move the school forward and take on new initiatives. As a result, the school is well placed to continue to make good progress. The principal's very clear vision and high expectations for staff and students have ensured that the pace of development has been good.

The principal has, together with his management team, brought about improvements in a number of areas of the school and these are having a positive impact on preparing students for life when they leave school. The biggest change has been in the curriculum which, through developments over the last year, is now effective. It now offers students a wide range of opportunities to experience college and work placements and gain nationally recognised qualifications. This has improved older students' attitudes to school and supported them in preparing for life when they leave. As a result, the majority of students who left last year are either attending college or have gained employment. The school is starting to offer a more varied curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9. It is based on topics and incorporates a range of subjects, although this is still at an early stage of development.

Behaviour last year was a considerable cause for concern but the changes to the curriculum have enabled students to participate in a more relevant and wider range of activities. This, in turn, has provided students with the skills to interact and behave more appropriately. As a result, exclusions and incidents have dropped considerably and are continuing to do so. Behaviour is now good and students make good progress in their personal development. Students say that although there is bullying in school, it is dealt with quickly and well by staff. Students speak positively about school. The sensible, mature approach of students, particularly those who have attended the school from Year 7, is very evident. They clearly enjoy practical activities such as art, and design and technology and comment on how much they like physical education. A strength of senior staff is their involvement of students in the life of the school, and great efforts have been made to ensure that students are consulted. The school council is a force to be reckoned with and one which, students acknowledge, has brought about considerable change. This is evident, for example, in the way meals have improved through students being asked what they would like to see on the menu. Students are very keen to point out what is healthy and what is not and are looking to see further improvements in school meals through a better variety of food being offered.

Most students start school with standards well below average. Most make good progress and achievements are good. Whilst many are gaining GCSE and entry level qualifications, the increased range of accreditation, including the introduction of vocational qualifications such as NVQs, is appropriate and provides good opportunities for students' progress to be recognised. Students make faster progress in mathematics and science than they do in English. The school has recognised the need to focus more on improving students' literacy skills and is providing more opportunities for students to improve their skills through extra lessons. However, in many subjects, opportunities are missed to promote new vocabulary and enable students to write at length.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection, and is now good. A key strength is the good subject knowledge of staff and the effective way this is used to explain things to students. Staff know students well and manage their behaviour effectively, knowing when to intervene and when to give students space to sort themselves out. The planning of lessons is consistent and most teachers are effective in ensuring that students know what skills and knowledge they will gain by the end of the lesson.

Overall, the care, guidance and support for students is good and systems for safeguarding are effective. The care and welfare of students are given a high priority and students comment that they feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they have concerns. Behaviour management strategies have been strengthened and students have a good understanding of the rewards system and about how well they are doing. The good links with other agencies are used well to ensure students' health and well-being are supported effectively. The school is, however, rightly looking to develop these further, particularly in the light of the changing needs of the students. The support and guidance for students' academic progress is satisfactory and developing. Marking has improved since the previous inspection and there is good practice in sharing with students what they need to do to improve. This, however, is not always consistent, and the targets set to support students are sometimes too broad and many students, although aware of their behaviour targets, do not know their subject targets.

The chair of governors plays an important role in the school and is very committed to the staff and students. Not all governors, however, have an effective overview of how the school operates. The involvement of a member of the local community on the governing body is positive and the school has a number of initiatives to develop closer links with the community. Development planning is detailed and reflects the very good understanding of staff about the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, planning does not have clear and measurable success criteria. This makes it difficult for senior staff and governors to measure effectively the school's success in addressing areas for development. The school has developed systems for gathering and analysing data. However, these are fairly new and although the school has set itself challenging targets for achievement, these have not always been based on an effective analysis of data. This has resulted in targets that have at times not always been achievable.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of boarding provision is good. The school is well managed by the principal, who provides clear leadership and direction to all staff. He monitors provision well. Governors, however, do not fulfil their role in carrying out regular monitoring visits. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully completed seven of the nine recommendations made at the last inspection. One recommendation regarding the frequency of staff supervision is repeated and a further recommendation regarding the record of both the use of physical restraint and sanctions is partially met.

The school has achieved a healthy schools award. Menus are planned by the catering team, following consultation with students. Most students are positive about the meals provided; some said that they would welcome a wider variety of choice. Meals are well managed and are pleasant social occasions. There is a wide range of leisure and social activities both on site and in the local community. The school promotes individual support to students through the use of key workers, a personal learning manager and individual counselling. Staff demonstrate awareness of the needs and preferences of each student. Students say that they feel that staff take their concerns seriously. Students say that their views are taken into consideration and

are valued. Several students gave examples of improvements that have been agreed by the student council. The council holds its own budget, and school council meeting minutes are prominently displayed and students are aware of issues discussed and agreements reached. The school seeks the views and opinions of both students and parents through the use of surveys. Relationships between students and staff are strong; staff provide guidance and structure, while demonstrating sensitivity and awareness of students' needs. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The school has good policies and procedures in place to promote safeguarding. Staff receive training in safeguarding and demonstrate a good awareness of how to refer safeguarding concerns. There are systems in place to reduce the risk of bullying, and students say staff respond appropriately to reduce bullying. The school successfully promotes mutual respect. Students present challenging behaviours and these are well managed on an individualised basis. The behaviour support room, in which students can work on their own with one staff member, is now pleasantly decorated and furnished, which is a positive improvement. The school supports and promotes contact arrangements between students and their families. Students are able to use the telephone privately.

The safety of students is promoted by comprehensive risk assessments. There are sufficient care staff to provide consistency of care. Staff recruitment processes are robust; however, some gaps in employment history were found. Staff supervision has not taken place at least once each half term.

All notifications of significant events are now being made to Ofsted. Records of physical intervention and complaints are well recorded and monitored. Sanctions records, however, are not held in a bound book. Staff are aware of how to respond if a student is absent without authority. Students' health needs are well identified and recorded. The school has strong links with local health professionals. There have been improvements to the administration of controlled drugs records, which now ensure student confidentiality, and all medicines are administered by trained staff.

Students' needs are well assessed and recorded. They are regularly reviewed by the school and local authority. Student files are detailed and now hold placement plans describing how the objectives are to be met. The school has appointed a personalised learning manager. He liaises closely with the Connexions personal advisor. The postholder has a dedicated budget; this is a major positive development introduced since the last inspection. Three students have gained employment, following involvement with this project. Older students are also assisted in the transition to adulthood, by living in an independence unit with limited staff supervision. Liaison between the teaching and care staff is good. There is a weekly meeting between the two groups to share information. There are joint training opportunities and the staff group work effectively together.

The residential accommodation has been refurbished and shows a significant improvement. However, the ability to create a homely environment is restricted by the limitations of the building. Maintenance and cleanliness of the building is good. There are sufficient shower rooms and toilets and the design of the new shower facilities improves personal privacy. The school prospectus and students' guide accurately describe the service. The staff training programme is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities in all subject areas to enable students to extend their literacy skills.
- Refine the systems for analysing students' achievements so that this information can be used more effectively in setting students' and whole-school targets for achievement.
- Ensure governors are more involved in monitoring all aspects of the school and have a better understanding of what goes on in order to provide effective support and challenge to senior managers.
- The school must ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standards currently not met, as detailed below: -Ensure that a record of all sanctions is kept in a bound and numbered book, which contains all the elements described in National Minimum Standards. (NMS 10.9) -Ensure that all staff receive supervision once each half term. (NMS 30.2) -Ensure that members of the governing body undertake monitoring visits once each half term. (NMS 33.2)

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
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?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Marland School, Torrington EX38 8QQ

Thank you for making me so welcome during the inspection. I enjoyed the opportunity to talk to you during the day and see you in lessons. You were right in being so positive in your comments about your school. This is because the school is providing you with a good education. As a result, you are making good progress in your learning and achieving well.

- Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:
- You are enjoying the new curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and making the most of the opportunities to go to college and take part in work experience.
- You are very involved in bringing about change in the school and the school council is very good at making your views heard.
- Teachers know a lot about the subjects they teach and are good at explaining things to you.
- You have a good understanding of staying healthy and keeping fit and are very positive about lessons such as PE, art, and design and technology.
- The school is good at making sure you are well looked after and systems to keep you safe are good.
- The school is well led and managed and senior staff are keen to make it even better.

In order to make the school even better I have asked staff to:

- provide you with more opportunities in all subjects to improve your literacy skills
- make better use of the information they have about your achievements to set more effective targets for you and for the whole school so that you can achieve even more
- ensure governors are more involved in the school and have a better understanding of what goes on in school.

I wish you well for the future and hope you continue to play an active role in the school.

Best wishes

Yours faithfully

Sarah Mascall Lead inspector