

Marriotts School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117534
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379436
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	902
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Peary
Headteacher	Patrick Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
School address	Telford Avenue Stevenage SG2 0AN
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Webster

Additional inspector

Kate Scarlet

Additional inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed parts of 37 lessons taught by 37 teachers. They also made 28 shorter visits to lessons. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior staff, groups of students, and two members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at the governing body's policies and minutes, the school improvement plan, assessment information and the latest data on attendance and exclusions. Inspectors reviewed responses to questionnaires from 65 parents and carers, 150 students and 30 staff.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school. The sixth form is part of the Stevenage 14 to 19 consortium of schools. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average. The school does not meet the current government floor standard measures, which set the minimum expectation for attainment and progress.

The school has been a specialist sports college since 2002. It has achieved the Investors in People and International Schools awards.

The school will move into a new building in autumn 2012. During the construction work, social space for students and outdoor facilities for physical education are limited.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and progress in English and mathematics, students' behaviour and teachers' adoption of consistent practice across the school.
- The school has improved the attainment of students overall at Key Stage 4 so that overall it is broadly in line with the national average. In 2011, students made satisfactory progress from their starting points. However, although attainment in English and mathematics is improving, it remains below the national average and students make less progress than expected from Year 7 to Year 11. Literacy skills are weak for many students throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching is improving and some is outstanding. Most is now satisfactory but teachers do not always engage students well or enable them, particularly boys, to close gaps in prior learning.
- In a minority of lessons, weaknesses in students' behaviour affect the learning of others. Some lack concentration or lose interest as the lesson develops. Teachers do not use the agreed behaviour management procedures consistently.
- Senior staff and the governing body have a clear vision for the school. They monitor the school's performance regularly and know its strengths. They identify areas for improvement accurately and act promptly, demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve. Nonetheless, some issues have not been tackled consistently by all staff. As a result, although the school is improving in many areas, some aspects remain inadequate.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- The curriculum is innovative and meets the differing needs of students. The sports specialism is effective in driving improvement across the school and provides good extra-curricular activities and leadership roles for students.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. Students' achievement is broadly average. As a result of the accelerated curriculum, many students now build successfully on qualifications achieved by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve students' progress urgently, especially that of boys, in English and mathematics by:
 - rapidly developing their literacy and numeracy skills as soon as they enter the school
 - supporting and developing literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects, including through the marking of students' work.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that at least 80% is good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - match work closely to students' differing abilities
 - use questions effectively to check students' understanding and develop their thinking
 - make clear exactly how students can improve their work by challenging them to demonstrate that they understand teachers' comments.
- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:
 - ensuring that teaching engages students' interest and motivates them
 - making the expectations of students' behaviour simple and clear
 - ensuring that all teachers use the agreed procedures for managing behaviour consistently.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that action plans are tightly focused and implemented promptly and consistently across the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The proportion of Year 11 students achieving at least five higher GCSE qualifications has improved steadily since the last inspection and was above average in 2011. However, attainment in English and mathematics has improved more slowly and was below the national average in 2011. Current Year 11 students are on track to close the gap to the average. Students make satisfactory progress when all subjects are taken into account and this matches the views of those parents and carers who returned questionnaires. However, achievement is inadequate as progress in English

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and mathematics is below the national expectation and only improved slightly in 2011. The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved and is now similar to that of all students. Boys' progress is markedly weaker than that of girls, although the school's assessment information indicates that the gap is closing. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals made better progress than their peers in 2011.

The achievement of sixth form students is broadly average, and strongest in BTEC courses. Students make satisfactory progress from their starting points and over half go into higher education.

In lessons, the majority of students settle to work promptly and listen carefully to instructions. They work together well in pairs and groups and enjoy practical tasks. In a minority of lessons, students show confidence and discuss ideas actively, making extended oral contributions. However, in other lessons, they lack confidence and tend to provide short answers to teachers' questions. As a result, they often do not develop the ideas and language necessary to inform any writing required later in the lesson. The school recognises that an increasing proportion of students join the school with low reading ages and weak literacy skills. Although this is a priority for action, students' books indicate that these problems persist for too many students as they move through the school. The same is true for numeracy skills, where students' lack of care and untidy presentation of their work contribute to their insecure understanding.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving so that students are now making satisfactory progress overall. Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge and most form good relationships with students, especially in sixth form lessons. In the best lessons, teachers set high expectations for students, challenge them to learn at pace, use interesting activities and probe their understanding with effective questions. They expect students to solve problems and take responsibility for their learning. However, in less effective lessons, teachers do not plan well enough for students' differing abilities, expecting all to complete the same task. Teachers do not always vary questions to check the understanding of students who might be less secure in their learning. They do not routinely emphasise key literacy or numeracy points in other subjects, such as accurate spelling of key words or correct use of calculation skills. As a result, although the majority of teaching is satisfactory, it is not yet good enough to enable students to make the progress necessary for them to reach the national average in English and mathematics from their weak starting points.

Teaching promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. Examples include a history lesson, where students compared original descriptions of Mediaeval medicine with their own experience, and a sixth-form dance lesson with high expectations of individual concentration and group cooperation. The curriculum ensures that students experience a wide range of disciplines, often working with extended concentration on art work or demonstrating confidently to others in

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physical education.

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children were taught well, although some commented on the variation across subjects, and this was endorsed by students in discussions. Teachers use a common approach to planning lessons, mostly set clear objectives and maintain the pace of learning.

The school's policy on marking students' work and feeding back on how to improve is currently used by most teachers. The best marking makes clear to students what they have achieved and what they can improve by challenging them to rewrite part of their work to show they understand how to make it better. They are also asked to correct basic errors which the teacher then checks. In other books, teachers give comments on how to improve but they are not linked specifically to parts of the work. Expectations of the quantity, presentation and quality of students' work vary too much.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour over time is inadequate. Almost half of parents and carers who returned questionnaires did not agree that behaviour was good and felt that their children's learning is at times affected by the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few. Students confirmed this in discussions and questionnaires. The majority of students behave well and treat each other with respect. They respond to staff instructions and settle to their work. As a result, they make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. However, a minority of students fail to settle in lessons. They are often not engaged by the activities provided, which may be too difficult or not challenging enough for them. They too easily lose interest and talk about things other than their work. They do not respond to warnings issued by teachers. Teachers do not always set expectations clearly enough or use the school's agreed procedures consistently. As a result, the learning of other students is hampered because the pace of the lesson slows when the teacher has to recap key points or spend time explaining to those who have not listened carefully enough.

Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires said that their children were safe at school and this was confirmed by most students in discussions. Students acknowledge that there are some incidents of bullying but feel that they know how to identify and report all types of bullying and that issues are usually resolved promptly. Students generally move around the school in a calm manner.

Students' attendance has previously been low. Staff use a range of strategies and these have successfully improved attendance in the last year so that it is now close to the school's target, although it remains below average. This is the result of more immediate identification of absence and concerted action to follow up any patterns for individuals. Effective support for families has reduced the proportion of students who are persistently absent, with a high degree of success in some cases. The school increasingly uses fixed-term penalties where attendance does not improve and this is beginning to show a positive impact.

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Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior staff set a clear vision for the school, rightly focused on improving achievement. Many of the senior team and some middle leaders are relatively new to their roles. They collect substantial information and data about the performance of the school and analyse it thoroughly to identify priorities for improvement. Senior staff analyse teaching carefully and use a wide range of strategies to develop skills, including individual coaching, identifying best practice and clear feedback to teachers after observations. These strategies have improved the performance of teachers of differing abilities. Senior staff and the governing body know the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The governing body challenges senior staff and holds them to account. Concerted action in developing the curriculum and the sixth form, and raising achievement and attendance, demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. However, in other areas, practice is not consistent across the school. Action plans are not always precise enough and sometimes the timescale they cover is too extended.

The curriculum is satisfactory because it is broad and flexible, and meets the needs of a wide range of students. The different programmes which start in Year 9 allow students to choose courses which interest them and which are at an appropriate level. This has contributed to the improvement in attainment overall and is beginning to have an effect on sixth-form results as well, as students carry AS level qualifications with them from Year 11. The sixth-form curriculum is broad and offers a good range of subjects at different levels, aided by membership of the 14 to 19 consortium. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The varied programme of enrichment activities, promoted by the sports specialism and International School status, extends students' experience and broadens their understanding of different cultures and communities. Students take leadership roles and often perform in school and across the community.

The school is inclusive and works hard to welcome new arrivals. Students are treated as individuals and receive effective support if they experience difficulties socially or with learning. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Students from different backgrounds mix readily. The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved and the school's assessment information indicates that the gap in progress between boys and girls is closing. The governing body ensures that the requirements for keeping students safe are met.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Marriotts School, Stevenage, SG2 0AN

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you in lessons, meetings and at breaks. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. Your views helped us find out about the school.

The school has some strengths but, overall, we found that it requires a notice to improve because you do not make enough progress in English and mathematics, even though in 2011 the attainment of Year 11 students improved. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. The inappropriate behaviour of a minority of students disrupts learning in some lessons and this is not acceptable.

Teaching is improving but too much is satisfactory rather than good. You learn well when teachers have high expectations of you and challenge you with tasks at the right level. The different pathways allow you to choose courses which interest you and you often take qualifications early. Your attendance is improving. You told us you feel safe and you generally respect each other and mix well. Senior staff set a clear direction for the school. We have asked the school to make improvements by:

- improving attainment and progress in English and mathematics, and in literacy and numeracy across the school
- ensuring that most teaching is good, including the effectiveness of teachers' marking and feedback to you
- improving your behaviour and attitudes to learning by making expectations clearer for you and ensuring teachers use the behaviour policy consistently
- ensuring that teachers act promptly to implement agreed changes and apply policies consistently.

You can all help by making sure that you behave sensibly in lessons and concentrate on your work so that you do not disrupt your own learning and that of other students.

We enjoyed our visit to your college and wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

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