

# The Marlowe Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	128340
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	381250
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham HMI

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	845
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	180
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger De Haan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carl Wakefield (Interim Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 October 2010
<b>School address</b>	Stirling Way Ramsgate CT12 6NB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 593326
<b>Fax number</b>	01843 591756
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	17–18 November 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 25 lessons, observed 24 different teachers, and extended their overview of teaching and learning through brief observation of a further 17 lessons. They held meetings with the sponsor and a trustee, a representative from the Department for Education, staff and students. They evaluated students' attainment over three years, schemes of work, policies, the academy's self-evaluation and development plan and minutes of governing body meetings. They considered 51 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers, 195 responses to the students' questionnaire and 26 responses from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is the capacity of subject leaders and middle managers to drive further improvement being developed successfully?
- Are weaknesses in core subjects, especially English, being tackled effectively?
- How successfully are students' literacy skills being developed and reinforced across the curriculum?
- Is the sixth form curriculum well-matched to students' needs and aspirations, and is students' progress effectively tracked and supported?
- Are strategies to improve attendance rates having sufficient impact, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form?

## Information about the school

The academy is of average size, with fewer girls than boys. The proportion of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is three times the national average. Predominantly these students have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social developmental needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average and the proportion of students joining or leaving the academy part way through their education is high. Just over one in every 10 students belongs to a minority ethnic group, and about one in every 12 has English as an additional language.

In October 2010, the academy was given a Notice to Improve, with the effectiveness of leaders at all levels, including trustees, and students' levels of attainment, especially in English and mathematics, identified as key concerns. An intervention team - comprised of an Interim Principal, an Associate Principal, an additional Vice Principal and an education executive - is on a one-year secondment to the academy. Advanced Skills Teachers are also being seconded for a year to strengthen provision in English, mathematics and science.

The academy has two specialisms: performing arts; and business and enterprise. It benefits from liaison with the Marlowe Innovation Centre, which is on the same site and offers work-related opportunities for students, including apprenticeships.

**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: how good is the school?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**4**

## Main 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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Two positive strands run through the academy's history: active support for the personal development of all students, especially the most vulnerable; and lively promotion of the performing arts specialism to boost students' self-esteem and to build productive links with the wider community. While there is evidence of slow improvement, attainment by all groups is nonetheless still well below the national average and students' progress is neither rapid nor secure enough to compensate for low attainment on entry. Steps are being taken to raise reading levels across Key Stage 3 but many students currently in Years 10 and 11 have a reading age more than two years below their calendar age, which is a significant barrier to their learning. While the few students who complete their sixth form courses achieve satisfactory results, too many drop out of courses in Year 12 and fail to go on to further education, employment or training. Attendance rates are low, especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, which presents another significant obstacle to students' achievement.

Recognising that attainment and progress targets were not being met, trustees have recently taken steps to strengthen leadership and management in the short term. Since September, members of the seconded intervention team have led a rigorous review of teaching and learning, and of staff roles and responsibilities. Too much teaching fails to support effective learning because expectations are low, lessons lack challenge and marking does not consistently guide students on how to improve. A realistic development plan has been drawn up. Some strategies are already having perceptible impact; for example, the Advanced Skills teachers brought into the English department are enlarging the pockets of good practice and providing the newly-appointed subject leader with the tools she needs to initiate and monitor improvement. Partly through the performing arts specialism and partly through growing involvement with independent and maintained schools and with Christ Church Canterbury University, partnerships are beginning to offer opportunities to students that the academy alone could not provide. However, actions since the previous inspection, including the relatively recent introduction of external support, have had too little impact on developing the skills of leaders and managers at all

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levels. Capacity to improve is inadequate because it is not sufficiently embedded across the academy to drive improvement securely and quickly.

Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are satisfactory. Students in each key stage say they feel safe and are confident that, should any difficulties arise, their concerns would be listened to carefully and effective action taken. Relationships between students and staff and between different groups of students are positive. A Year 9 student clearly spoke for many when he commented: 'We all get looked at together, like a family. It's an open community. If there's a problem, people will back you up.' Students are well informed about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and many participate in sports and activities such as dance. Formal opportunities for the students' voice to be heard are limited but the student council is about to be re-instated.

The combination of poor attendance and low attainment in literacy and numeracy inhibits students' development of workplace skills. Students' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development grows from their clear sense of right and wrong and their response to opportunities for involvement in the arts – again, the performing arts specialism is a key player. Students take pride in the academy's culture of mutual respect and support and have a sound understanding of their local community. Appreciation of their opportunities and responsibilities in multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain is more limited.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise students' attainment and strengthen their progress, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - teachers and students share high expectations
  - teaching consistently provides challenging activities that engage students' interest and maintain their motivation
  - lesson-planning and teaching match the needs of all students and support the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
  - information about students' attainment and progress is rigorously and regularly reviewed so that interventions to tackle underperformance and loss of momentum are prompt and well-directed
  - students are encouraged to show initiative in their learning, to ask challenging questions and present independently explored arguments
  - a range of assessment strategies - such as probing questions in class, students' review of each others' work, and marking that combines praise with precise guidance – enables students to make good progress.
  
- Ensure that trustees and governors drive sustainable academy improvement by:
  - building capacity securely at all levels of leadership and management to improve provision and outcomes in all subjects and for all groups of pupils
  - holding the academy's leaders and managers to account for the impact of their work, setting challenging targets and promoting initiatives to raise

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students’ attainment and accelerate their progress.

- Take further steps to improve attendance rates, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- Ensure that sixth form students are guided onto appropriate courses and that their progress is closely monitored so that underperformance and loss of motivation are responded to quickly and effectively.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The academy is in an area with selective education and its students’ attainment on entry is significantly below average. The proportion gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics, has risen over three years but, at 20%, remains well below government targets. Progress for all groups is slow. In 2011, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities made less progress than their contemporaries. Boys generally achieve less well than girls. There is a significant gap in achievement between those identified as eligible for free school meals and others, especially in English. Observations of teaching and learning, together with scrutiny of students’ work, indicate improvement where the seconded Advanced Skills Teachers have had direct involvement.

Behaviour, except where teaching fails to engage students’ interest, is cheerfully companionable. Physical, cultural and ethnic differences are accepted as a matter of course. Older students willingly take on responsibility for younger ones, for example helping them with their reading. Year 9 students selected as Key Stage 3 leaders wear their badge of office with pride and speak confidently of their role: ‘They’re the people you first go to.’ Contribution to the wider community is largely through the performing arts specialism, but students have also taken part in the Kent Youth Council and worked in the community garden. About 200 students take advantage of opportunities to develop workplace skills, for example through involvement in the on-site Academy Radio. Poor attendance and low attainment in key skills, however, mean that most are not well prepared for the world of work.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Students comment that teaching has improved since the start of the academic year; however, the quality of lesson planning and classroom management is uneven and too much is inadequate. Students become restive when lessons lack pace, variety and challenge, and teachers' response to disruptive behaviour lacks consistency and impact. Too often, lesson-planning focuses on what is to be *done* rather than on what is to be *learnt*, and more-able students are not prompted to show initiative and to be independent and inventive. Marking, too, seldom balances praise with precise guidance on how students can improve. Expectations are not consistently high enough to drive up standards. However, through modelling of good practice, individual coaching and group training sessions, the Advanced Skills Teachers seconded to core departments are beginning to give teachers the confidence to be more creative and challenging. Among the strengths observed were: sound subject knowledge; a productive rapport with students; instances of effective questioning; and confident use of varied resources, including information and communication technology. Particular strengths were seen in performing arts and physical education (PE). In a Year 8 drama lesson, for example, students were helped to work together in a thoughtful and constructive way, exploring the importance of facial expressions in conveying relationships in 'Romeo and Juliet'.

The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements; it provides no religious education and, in Key Stage 4, not all students participate in PE. Low attainment and slow progress by less-able students indicate that the curriculum does not meet their needs successfully. Well considered initiatives are being implemented to strengthen reading, literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3, but their impact is as yet limited. Specialist subjects, principally the performing arts, contribute to students' personal development as well as developing knowledge and skills. Students benefit from opportunities to learn from leading practitioners, for example in workshops run by the Royal Opera House and Royal Ballet Company.

The network of pastoral care has recently been reinforced by the appointment of heads of year to support the heads of each key stage. This is giving key stage heads time to monitor students' progress more closely and to respond quickly to

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underachievement or repeated absence. It is too early to judge the full impact of this development. A conspicuous strength is the Marlowe Academy Achievement Centre (MAAC), which provides a secure and constructive environment for particularly vulnerable students. Its resources are carefully extended through liaison with external agencies.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

While steps were taken following the previous inspection to analyse more thoroughly information about students' learning, it was not well used to set appropriate targets and shape planning. Low expectations and an over-optimistic view of students' progress and attainment contributed to the academy's failure to meet targets and to students' continuing underachievement. Monitoring of teaching has lacked rigour.

Trustees and governors have not held the academy's leaders and managers to account effectively for the impact of their work. Since September, the interim intervention team has led a thorough review of the academy's provision. It has introduced strategies to strengthen management at all levels, to eradicate inadequate teaching and to match the curriculum more productively to students' needs. This is work in progress, with limited impact so far. A strong and sustainable core of substantive leadership and management has yet to be developed.

The diversity represented by groups and individuals is clearly valued by all sectors of the academy. Its pervasive culture of mutual respect and support ensures that discrimination is rare and is always tackled promptly and effectively. However, the disparity in attainment and progress by different groups indicates that equality of opportunity is not yet well embedded.

Procedures to ensure students' safety and well-being are appropriate and complemented by staff training. The extended academy day, with study periods taking the place of homework, has made it difficult for parents and carers to play an active part in their children's learning. A range of partnerships – with independent and maintained schools, with higher education and with local businesses – is providing opportunities for students that the academy itself could not. The performing arts specialism is well managed and productive.

With sustained support from governors and from leaders and managers at all levels,

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the academy has developed as an engagingly cohesive community. Largely through the performing arts, sports-related activities and links with local businesses, students gain first hand knowledge of their neighbourhood and appreciate how they can contribute to it. Curriculum themes extend their awareness of community cohesion on a global scale. Their first-hand experience of multicultural Britain is less well developed.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Sixth form

Given low attainment on entry to the sixth form, achievement is satisfactory for the few who complete two-year courses, but many drop out during Year 12. Students are usually accepted on courses they wish to take; however, low retention figures indicate that they are too often accepted on courses for which they are unsuited. Retention for those who embark on vocational courses is higher than for those taking up AS options, but it is still low. This indicates that the curriculum does not serve most students well, although it provides varied options and is extended through partnership with a local grammar school. Many who drop out of the sixth form do not move on to other education, employment or training. While much of the teaching seen was sound, across the sixth form as a whole there is insufficient drive to succeed. Monitoring of students’ progress and attendance is not rigorous enough to ensure that lesson plans are well pitched and that individuals are given well-targeted and timely support.

Sixth formers make a positive contribution to academy life by taking on responsibility for younger students, for example as prefects and in tutor time. The academy’s performing arts specialism contributes well to their development, as does the independent enterprise scheme for local businesses based on the academy site.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	4
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form	4
Leadership and management of the sixth form	4

## **Views of parents and carers**

Of the very small proportion of parents and carers that responded to the inspection questionnaire, most felt that their children enjoyed the academy and were kept safe. A third expressed concerns about behaviour management and did not believe that their suggestions and concerns were given due consideration. These views were largely supported by inspection evidence.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Marlowe Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the academy.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the academy.

The inspection team received 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 845 pupils registered at the academy.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	39	25	49	2	4	4	8
The school keeps my child safe	18	35	27	53	2	4	3	6
The school informs me about my child’s progress	14	27	29	57	5	10	3	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	25	23	45	9	18	3	6
The teaching is good at this school	6	12	36	71	3	6	4	8
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	9	18	28	55	7	14	5	10
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	10	38	75	2	4	5	10
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	12	28	55	2	4	3	6
The school meets my child’s particular needs	12	24	29	57	5	10	4	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	20	23	45	9	18	8	16
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	10	28	55	8	16	5	10
The school is led and managed effectively	9	18	31	61	2	4	4	8
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	14	27	28	55	4	8	5	10

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

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



21 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate, CT12 6NB**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I and other inspectors visited the academy recently. It was good to know that you feel safe and well supported, although too many of you in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form do not attend regularly enough to make steady progress.

The academy is not currently providing a satisfactory quality of education and requires special measures to ensure that your attainment and progress improve significantly. The changes being introduced by the Interim Principal and his senior team are beginning to have a positive impact but will take time to make a substantial difference. You told us that teaching has improved since September, and we saw instances of good practice, especially in the performing arts and PE. However, in many subjects, teachers' expectations are not high enough to ensure that you are properly challenged. Information about what each of you knows and can do is not always well used when lessons are being planned.

To ensure that the academy provides a better all-round quality of education, we have asked your Interim Principal and the governors to ensure that:

- teachers make good use of information about your attainment and progress to respond quickly when any of you are underachieving and to plan lessons that match your individual abilities and challenge you to aim higher
- in all subjects, attention is paid to developing your literacy and numeracy skills
- you are encouraged to show more initiative, to ask questions and present ideas that you have explored independently
- marking of your work always provides clear guidance on how you can improve
- those of you going into the sixth form are guided towards courses that match your abilities and interests, so that you complete them successfully
- more effective action is taken to improve attendance
- governors set ambitious targets and monitor teaching and learning closely.

Each of you can make a difference by attending regularly and being ambitious.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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