

Marling School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115752
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	357813
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	874
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Gilbert
Headteacher	Dr Stuart Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2007
School address	Cainscross Road Stroud, Gloucestershire Stroud GL5 4HE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 29 lessons and 28 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, staff and the School Improvement Partner. There were no meetings with parents. Inspectors viewed the school's work and looked at school improvement plans, policies, monitoring and self-evaluation records and the minutes of the governing body's meetings. Inspectors analysed 280 responses from parents and carers to the questionnaire and took into account the views of 126 students and 25 staff who responded to their respective questionnaires.

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

- The impact and quality of partnership working, particularly in the sixth form.
- The achievement and attainment of different groups of students to see whether outcomes are good.
- The progress made by the school to address the points for improvement identified by the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Marling is a medium-sized school. It gained specialist engineering college status in 2007. Sixth form provision is provided in partnership with a neighbouring girls' grammar school and it also accepts students into the sixth form from other schools and works within the Stroud Post-16 Consortium. The majority of students come from Stroud and surrounding villages. Very few students are known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is very small. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very small.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Marling has sustained high attainment over several years. At the time of the last inspection, students' learning and progress were no more than satisfactory, but the very sound monitoring and tracking procedures introduced since then have helped to improve students' progress which is now good. Students develop into confident and articulate young people as a result of the many and varied opportunities provided within the curriculum. There are no major differences between the progress made by different groups of students at the school, although the more able are not stretched fully enough. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the very few from minority ethnic groups, do as well as their peers. Students' behaviour is exemplary. Instances of bullying and racism are remarkably few; students are clear that neither is tolerated and confident that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Relationships between the different groups of students are harmonious. The vast majority of students feel safe and are happy at the school. They enjoy learning and respond enthusiastically to the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Most parents are justifiably very positive about the school and many wrote glowing endorsements of the education it provides. ♦ The school provides a broad and challenging curriculum which enables students to learn and develop as people, assisted by good care, guidance and support. Teaching is predominantly good, but teachers do not always use assessment information well to quicken the pace of learning in all subjects.

The new headteacher has succeeded in communicating a clear and unequivocal vision for the continued improvement of the school and he enjoys the support of a committed leadership team in making this happen. The headteacher has made excellent use of detailed data about the performance of the school to inform self-evaluation, planning for improvement and the setting of challenging targets. Governors are now well informed about the performance of the school and carry out their duties satisfactorily. Middle leaders have a good understanding of the strategic priorities and daily routines are effective and carried out efficiently. The school has made particularly effective use of its specialist status to improve the quality of its provision in science and mathematics and raise attainment in these subjects. It has made excellent use of local engineering and business links to ensure that students' work-related skills are outstanding. Good account is taken of the views of students and parents when making decisions about changes and improvements to the school.

Leaders and managers know that while progress in the sixth form for many students is good, there remains too much variation in students' achievement between subjects which means progress remains satisfactory overall. Partnership working at sixth form level with the nearby girls' school is improving following a period in recent years when difficulties hindered the school's capacity to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in the sixth

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form with sufficient rigour. Sixth form provision and outcomes are good. A high proportion of students gain entry to their first-choice university. Crucially, the sixth form partnership has recently been strengthened through a completely revised management structure which is resulting in much more coherent and effective leadership than before. The two schools have now established clear protocols for partnership working and improved links between them are now developing rapidly. While far greater levels of accountability than before have now been secured, leaders and managers know that it is now time to monitor more closely the quality of teaching across the partnership. The school provides good value for money and now demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the effectiveness of the sixth form is improved further by:
 - rapidly strengthening procedures to monitor the quality of provision, particularly teaching and learning, across the partnership
 - reducing the variability in achievement between subjects.
- Ensure all teachers use assessment information consistently well across the school to increase the pace of students; learning and progress, especially of the more able.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment on entry is well above the national average and attainment is high by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average in the sixth form. At least 97% of students attained five or more, higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics in each of the last three years, and almost all subjects recorded a significantly higher than average proportion of A* and A grades than the national average. All groups of students, including those few with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress although opportunities are missed in some lessons to stretch the more able. The school has accurately predicted the grades students attain in recent years and predictions for 2011 show that students in the current Year 11 are making better progress than their counterparts last year. This good progress was also seen in the vast majority of lessons observed by inspectors.

Their good achievement enables students to enjoy their experiences at school. Students have very positive views of their school. Their behaviour and attendance are both excellent. High numbers are involved in extra-curricular activities that make a significant contribution to their social and cultural development. The school places an equally strong emphasis on students' spiritual and moral development, to good effect. A large proportion of students are involved in charitable works, particularly in the sixth form, giving significant amounts of their time in community service. Sixth form students are frequently involved in coaching and mentoring students from lower age groups. Students readily adopt safe practices. Their high levels of attainment, along with the excellent opportunities they have for work experience, mean they are prepared extremely well for the future.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

In the majority of lessons there is a range of interesting activities and purposeful questioning to challenge students and extend their thinking. Such lessons have a brisk pace, which encourages excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. Even here, though, the more able are not always stretched fully. Assessment information is not used consistently well across the school to plan teaching at an appropriate level so that the pace of learning is sometimes slower than it could be. This is particularly the case in the few less successful lessons. Students comment correctly that the marking of their work is inconsistent and not always helpful in telling them how to improve.

The curriculum is well designed to ensure students are provided with a high level of academic challenge. There is a good range of subjects available at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the curriculum is enhanced by courses provided through the partnership with the girls' school. The curriculum is augmented by a good range of activities that capture the interest of students, including work experience, and a number of excellent links with local engineering and business firms. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities that makes a significant contribution to students' enjoyment of the school and their achievement.

Support for the few students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is both sensitive and effective. Health and safety procedures are carried out regularly and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are met. Policies to ensure

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equal opportunities are in place. Students are given good support when they enter the school in Year 7, when they progress into the sixth form and when they subsequently move on to future education and employment. The school sets challenging targets and the tracking of students' progress has improved since the last inspection. Parents are kept informed of students' progress and are involved promptly if there is any underachievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has been through a period of turbulence since the last inspection and the senior leadership team has undergone some changes. The new headteacher has introduced a number of initiatives that build on and strengthen those of the previous acting headteacher and the focus on improving teaching and learning has helped students to make better progress. With the arrival of the new headteacher, many good initiatives that had been introduced by the acting headteacher have been strengthened and the focus on improving teaching and learning has helped students to make better progress. Middle managers play a vital and effective role in helping to ensure new procedures make a positive impact on students' learning and achievement. The school's self-evaluation processes are effective and lead to accurate judgements. Senior leaders monitor the work of the school carefully and are committed to improving school effectiveness. Departmental reviews, led by senior staff, involve work sampling, staff interviews and lesson observations, and are effective in identifying further areas for improvement. The governing body has been restructured and provides a satisfactory balance of support and challenge for the school. It has successfully addressed the point for improvement left by the previous inspection and the school now successfully promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. The school promotes community cohesion well. The school has used its specialist status very effectively to improve links with local firms, strengthen the school's curriculum provision and raise attainment.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Sixth form provision through the partnership is good. A very high proportion of Marling students stay on from the main school, but others join from different schools. Students in Year 13 are making better progress than their counterparts last year. However, while students make good progress in lessons as a result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching, their progress over time and across subjects remains satisfactory. This is linked to variations in achievement between subjects. However, strengthened partnership arrangements are now beginning to accelerate progress overall and address inconsistencies in student performance between subjects. Students' personal development is good. This is reflected in their mature attitudes to learning and what they need to do to be successful. The students feel both a part of the school, to which they continue to make a significant contribution, as well as having distinct identities as sixth-formers. There is a good range of subjects available and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Across the partnership leaders and managers demonstrate a clear understanding of what can be done to improve teaching, improve the tracking of students' learning, and reduce current inconsistencies in performance between subjects.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers were very positive about the work of the school. A small minority considered that the school did not do enough to help them support their children's learning. A similarly small minority thought that the school did not take sufficient account of their suggestions. Inspectors discussed these aspects with the headteacher and judged that arrangements have strengthened for keeping parents and carers well informed about all school and student matters, but the headteacher agreed that more will be done to help parents and carers support their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marling School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspection team received 280 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 847 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	39	151	54	10	4	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	94	34	171	61	8	3	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	107	38	146	52	17	6	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	97	35	155	55	16	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	77	28	170	61	9	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	21	141	50	62	22	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	16	180	64	32	11	4	1
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)	78	28	153	55	19	7	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	31	158	56	25	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	84	30	149	53	22	8	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	20	152	54	30	11	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	60	21	161	58	20	7	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	37	145	52	17	6	2	1

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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 school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Marling School, Stroud GL5 4HE

Thank you for talking to me and my colleagues and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We spoke to you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by your parents/carers and spoke to some of your teachers. Here is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

Marling is a good school. It is very popular with you and your parents. You achieve well, attain high results and make good progress. Outcomes in the sixth form are good. This is the result of the challenging curriculum with which you are provided. ♦Your attendance is excellent. ♦You enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and these make a significant contribution to your personal development. ♦Key members of staff have a good knowledge of your needs and ensure that those of you who need extra support get it.

The new headteacher and the staff at the school know what needs to be done to make things even better. ♦You are taught well, but some of you rightly think that some lessons could be more challenging. We have asked the headteacher and staff to ensure that all of you are challenged appropriately in all lessons. ♦The sixth form partnership is good, but we have asked the headteacher to make sure that the school tracks your progress more tightly and that current variations in performance between subjects are reduced. Many of you already make an important contribution to the school and I am sure you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making Marling an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm

Her Majesty's Inspector

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