

The Marlowe Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	128340
Local Authority	
Inspection number	360117
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	David Scott

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	905
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger De Haan
Headteacher	Ian Johnson (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2008
School address	Stirling Way Ramsgate CT12 6NB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 41 part lessons, observing 40 teachers, and had meetings with three trustees, staff and groups of students. They observed the academy's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies. They analysed questionnaires from 60 parents and carers, 146 from students and 38 from staff. The academy's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Are students' learning and progress in lessons good enough to raise their attainment at Key Stage 4?
- Are the academy's leaders taking the necessary actions to sustain improvements in the quality of provision for students in the sixth form?
- Has the academy put in place effective strategies to improve the behaviour, safety and attendance of pupils?
- How well does the academy provide for more able students and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?

Information about the school

The Marlowe Academy is similar in size to most secondary schools. One in ten students, an average proportion, speaks English as an additional language. The largest group of students are of White British heritage. In the main academy, the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just over twice the national average. In the sixth form, almost three quarters are in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance. The proportion of students who join the academy at other than the usual times is much higher than that found nationally. Almost half of all students, a proportion that is much higher than that found nationally, have special educational needs and/ or disabilities. These are mainly moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. The academy has specialist performing arts and business enterprise status and, since the previous inspection, it has gained the prestigious Food for Life Partnership Award.

The Marlowe Innovation Centre was built on the academy site, with the support of the sponsor, and opened in 2008. The centre hosts just over 25 local businesses, and provides work-related opportunities for students as does the radio station, Academy FM.

In September 2007, the trustees invited the current principal to support the leadership of a neighbouring academy that was without a principal while simultaneously continuing his role at The Marlowe. Since September 2010, the principal resumed fully his responsibilities at The Marlowe.

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

3

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 significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The academy is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' attainment and progress.

The Marlowe Academy faces exceptionally challenging circumstances exacerbated by high levels of student mobility and illness of senior staff that has led to restructuring. Both have had a significant impact on students' attainment. Over the last three years, the attainment of students in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in English and mathematics has been low. Performance in vocational subjects has been closer to the national average. Progress and learning in lessons are beginning to improve, as is students' enjoyment of learning. There has not been time for recent initiatives to be reflected in significant rises in students' attainment in English and mathematics and, as a result, students' achievement is still inadequate. Students who join the academy at unexpected times are well supported, and make progress that is broadly similar to their peers.

The main reason for students' slow progress is that the quality of teaching and learning are too variable. Some good teaching and learning were seen, for example, in art and the performing arts. In these specialist areas, students make satisfactory progress and attain average standards. Too often, however, work in lessons does not adequately match students' needs and interests. Teachers do not consistently engage students as active participants in lessons or use questions that challenge their thinking. This sometimes causes students to lose concentration and their behaviour deteriorates. While steps have been taken to improve teaching across the academy, these have not had the desired impact to accelerate all students' learning. Teachers are not routinely taking opportunities to promote students' literacy and numeracy skills in their subjects. Students are not regularly involved in a review of their targets to make them aware of how to improve.

The work to create a welcoming and cohesive community has been highly effective. Students are happy and safe; they generally behave appropriately, respect the views of others and have a good understanding of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle. Leaders and managers make a strong contribution to supporting the regeneration of the local area. Effective pastoral support and guidance, especially for the students and their families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, make an increasingly positive contribution to the academy's improving relationships with parents and carers in the local community.

Monitoring information is used regularly and with increasing accuracy to identify what the academy does well and to plan for improvement. Criteria against which to judge the impact of any changes are not always measurable. Some leaders are new in post and

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have not yet received appropriate training and support to develop their skills to drive improvement. The board of trustees meets its statutory responsibilities and supports the academy's work soundly, but has not systematically sought the views of stakeholders. Since the last inspection, the academy has begun to raise attainment in mathematics. It has also reduced exclusions and improved attendance significantly. These actions demonstrate that it has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress and learning in lessons to raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that all teaching provides challenging activities that match the needs of all students and support the development of their literacy and numeracy skills
 - asking more probing questions in lessons which give students opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully especially for more-able students
 - ensuring that lessons are active to engage students and accelerate progress
 - reviewing targets more systematically with students so that they clearly understand how to improve their work.
 - Sharpen the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including trustees in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly and new developments are evaluated against measurable criteria
 - intensifying the programme for spreading good practice in assessment throughout the academy, by coaching and mentoring
 - extending the capacity of leaders at all levels to manage their areas of responsibility effectively, especially in English
 - ensuring that the board of trustees seeks the views of stakeholders more systematically.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Although standards in Year 11 are rising, students' attainment is still too low. This is partly because many students have not had the benefit of being in the academy from Year 7 through to Year 11. Others have experienced inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, which have impeded their progress. From low starting points when they enter the academy, students make inadequate progress mainly because progress in English and mathematics is too slow. Their increasingly positive behaviour in lessons and growing desire to improve are beginning to contribute effectively to students' learning. Relationships are positive between students and adults. Students make sound progress in some subjects, particularly where their behaviour supports learning in lessons. Such improvement was very evident in a Year 11 performing arts lesson where students improvised their own dance based on the style of music played. This led to a lively discussion, with students giving feedback on each other's performance. As a result, they made good progress.

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Changes to the curriculum and more systematic monitoring of the work of departments are gradually eliminating unevenness in subject performance. For example, students' performance in mathematics and science has improved, but a sustained record of improvement has not been achieved in English. The academy has identified weaknesses in students' reading, speaking and listening, and has recently introduced a reading recovery programme. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because of effective support and one-to-one tuition.

Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory overall, and the cultural aspect is a strength. The academy has worked hard with students, parents and carers to emphasise the importance of good attendance, which has improved markedly over the last year. The number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly.

Students are very positive about the changing and improving ethos in the academy. They say they feel safe and enjoy their education. Through the work associated with national awards, students have a good understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, participating enthusiastically in sporting and physical pursuits.

Students make a positive contribution to the academy and community. Many are keen to take on responsibilities, regularly assisting in the smooth running of the academy, and older students are trained as peer mentors to support younger ones. The academy's performing arts and business enterprise status has enabled students to work well with each other and improve their confidence and self-esteem, so that the majority are on track to meet their challenging targets in these areas. Nevertheless, levels of attainment in English and mathematics remain low so that students are not adequately prepared for the world of work.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Teaching is too variable in quality. In the best lessons, there is a range of interesting activities that excite and motivate students. In such lessons, assessment is used well to identify the next steps in students' learning. Where teaching is inadequate, teachers' explanations are over long, reducing the opportunity for students to think for themselves and to develop and explain their ideas, particularly the most-able. When this happens, students lose interest and the pace of learning slows. In some satisfactory lessons, the work is appropriate, but the pace is slow and students engage in idle conversation when work is complete. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of their own subjects, but their understanding of how the subject might be used to develop students' basic skills is underdeveloped. Although there are pockets of good practice in assessment, particularly in vocational courses, marking and teachers' explanations do not always indicate clearly how students can improve their work.

The curriculum has recently been re-organised and is increasingly effective at meeting the needs and interests of all students, as illustrated, in the increased range of vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11. Students experience a good range of activities. Guest speakers, musical productions, dance extravaganzas and clubs ranging from boxing to African drumming enhance the curriculum. This, together with visits to the Lake District and Azincourt, a residential centre in France, provides opportunities for students to broaden their personal and academic skills.

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The academy is proud of its increasingly good care, guidance and support. Students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable benefit greatly from good links with external agencies. Staff can point to real successes in helping students to overcome difficult histories and stressful episodes in their lives. The inclusion team provides a wide range of support to enable students' with previously challenging behaviour to play a full part in academy life and is increasingly successful at engaging hard-to-reach families. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'Since joining The Marlowe, my son has become happy confident and less anxious.' Although students' progress is regularly tracked, analysis is not always sufficiently robust to improve the progress of all.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal's commitment and determination to improve the academy are impressive. As one parent commented, 'The principal is always approachable and accessible'. He has a clear vision for the academy and is passionately committed to serving the local community and improving the life chances of all students. These intentions have been shared effectively with all staff, who embrace them wholeheartedly. Strategies for tackling weaker teaching have been implemented, most recently in English, and there is a clear ambition to ensure that all lessons are good and that all students achieve well. Consequently, teaching is improving and learning and progress are beginning to accelerate. A number of leaders are newly appointed to the academy or are new to their responsibilities. Although improvements are beginning to emerge, it is still too early to assess their full impact.

Self-evaluation is constructive. Senior staff have an accurate view of the strengths and shortcomings in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, leaders and managers across the academy are insufficiently focused on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning in order to accelerate progress and raise attainment.

The academy has a strong commitment to ensuring that every student has an equal chance to learn. It works hard to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of students, for example by narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' performance. Students with previously challenging behaviour or poor records of attendance have been enabled to enjoy their learning again.

The board of trustees is supportive and fulfils its statutory duties. The level of challenge it provides has had an impact on some areas of the school's work; for example, in the areas of buildings, personnel and financial management, and the recent introduction of the standards committee. The board of trustees is increasingly effective at holding the academy to account with regard to students' performance in examinations. The academy

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has good procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet all government guidelines and include high quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of students. While the academy's finances are managed effectively, because students' achievement requires improvement, the academy does not provide adequate value for money. The academy is a cohesive society which has a detailed understanding of its own community. However, it is at an early stage of raising students' understanding of a broader national and international context.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

Attainment is low but beginning to rise. Checks on the progress of current Year 12 and 13 students indicate that the majority are on track to meet their challenging targets, so that achievement is satisfactory. Students are particularly successful in the academy's performing arts and business and enterprise vocational courses.

The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory and offers an appropriate range of academic and vocational courses that meet the needs of current students well. For example, students in a child care lesson learnt about the importance of good communication when assessing the progress children make in nursery education. As a result of curriculum adjustments and a more appropriate offer, half of Year 11 students elected to proceed to the sixth form. This represents an increase in retention rates compared with the previous year. The increasing popularity of the sixth form has been brought about by improvements in teaching and the academy's improving reputation in the local community. Nevertheless, the range of academic pathways into training and employment is too narrow to meet the increasingly sophisticated aspirations of students as the sixth form grows. Teaching is satisfactory overall and most students complete their courses. For those who proceed to further education the academy offers a generous bursary to support students' for the

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duration of their studies. Under sound leadership, the care and support of the students are satisfactory and improving, and as a result, students' personal development is sound. Attendance has improved significantly and demonstrates how much all students enjoy belonging to the academy community. Punctuality to lessons, however, is more variable.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A very low proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. The academy enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of these. Almost all respondents were very positive about the academy and felt that it keeps students safe and helps them to prepare for the future. A few parents and carers raised concerns, including support provided for their children's learning, the way unacceptable behaviour is dealt with, and the communication with the academy. In discussing these issues with senior staff, they agreed that these areas have yet to be addressed.

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 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 905 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	35	33	55	6	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	50	27	45	3	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	50	24	40	3	5	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	32	32	53	6	10	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	18	30	36	60	5	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	43	23	38	9	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	32	36	60	3	5	1	2
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)	23	38	26	43	5	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	45	27	45	5	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	37	24	40	10	17	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	35	27	45	7	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	57	20	33	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	52	23	38	4	7	1	2

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.



13 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate, CT12 6NB

On behalf of the inspectors and myself, I would like to thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your academy recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work and recreation. We very much valued the discussions we had with you and were particularly impressed with how your attendance has improved since the last inspection.

You, your parents and carers, told us that The Marlowe is a caring and happy place where you feel totally safe. As one parent commented, 'I cannot fault the academy. It is so understanding and the child always comes first'. You also told us you are pleased with the improving ethos in the academy. Some of you are making sound progress and getting good examination results at the end of Year 11, but too many of you are not making enough progress. We found that some improvements are needed, especially in teaching, so we have given the academy a 'notice to improve'. This means that it will be visited by inspectors again soon to check on the improvements made.

Your principal and teachers are determined to help you succeed and give you the best possible education. We have asked them to:

- plan work that will challenge and engage you in all lessons, showing you ways to learn by yourselves, particularly the more-able amongst you
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- look closely at information about your performance, in order to accurately pinpoint, design and share the necessary advice with you so that you have everything you need to accelerate your progress and attainment, particularly in English and mathematics.

You too can all play your part in improving the academy by asking for help when you are having difficulties with your learning. Once again, it was very good to meet you all. We wish you and the academy all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott

Lead inspector

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