

# The Marlowe School

Independent school standard inspection report

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

The Marlowe is an independent special day school that opened in September 2000. The school is located in Hartpury, near Gloucester, and is registered to admit eight primary and 16 secondary pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or developmental disorders. The school provides education for pupils living in the five children's homes run by Marlowe Child and Family Services, as well as day pupils from the surrounding area. The pupils residing in the children's homes come from local authorities across the country. There are currently six pupils aged eight to 11 years in the junior class. In the three secondary classes there are 7 pupils aged 12 to 14 and three pupils aged 15 to 16 years. Almost all are White British and are looked after. Fourteen pupils have a statement of special educational needs. All have experienced continuous disruption to their education and have significant gaps in their learning.

The school strives to create an environment that is conducive to learning and, through a non-confrontational approach, improve behaviours with positive reinforcement and assertive discipline. The school's vision is 'Success breeds success.' The school was last inspected in October 2008, since when there have been significant changes in staffing, including leadership. Three of the four teachers commenced this academic year. The majority of pupils were admitted this academic year.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils' demanding behaviours are managed well. The curriculum is satisfactory and combined with satisfactory provision for spiritual, moral and social development ensures pupils improve their attitudes to learning and behaviour. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and requirements are fully met. Most but not all the regulations are met. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not as good as at the time of the last inspection.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is implemented effectively and pupils experience all of the required areas of learning. There are adequate opportunities for pupils to

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

acquire the necessary basic skills in literacy and numeracy and to improve their behaviour. This said, there is a lack of consistency in the way teachers plan to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through all subjects and there are too few opportunities for them to develop their creative talents. There are also missed opportunities within the broader curriculum to develop pupils' interests through the creative curriculum. Provision for independent self-chosen activity is not systematically planned for in lessons.

A suitable programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is in place. The school teaches all of the National Curriculum subjects and, where appropriate depending on the age of the pupils and their needs, externally accredited national qualifications are taught. Schemes of work suitably guide teachers' lesson planning, with a high priority given to teaching literacy and numeracy as well as developing pupils' social and emotional skills. Communication skills are emphasised well in the regular one-to-one support and guidance sessions provided. Suitable 'catch-up' programmes are also in place to further develop pupils' reading, spelling and mental arithmetic skills. These programmes are well linked to the students' education plans and the objectives identified in their statements.

The curriculum for older pupils has previously included vocational education as well as work experience. These are not suitable options for current pupils. Older pupils receive appropriate careers education. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop social and interpersonal skills through physical education and an outdoor education programme.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress over time. They make good progress in addressing their complex range of behavioural, social and emotional needs. A minority are making good progress acquiring reading and writing skills, closing the gap on lost ground. Provision and outcomes are not as good as when the school was last inspected, as there has been a period of weaker teaching quality caused by changes in staffing and leadership. The headteacher is clear about where improvement is still required and conveys this successfully through staff training. Teaching quality is improving rapidly, as the outstanding features seen in some of the lessons observed are being spread across the school. During the inspection, practical activities were provided which pupils enjoyed and increased their motivation to learn. Provision offered suitable opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and number skills in meaningful contexts, and increase their knowledge and understanding in subjects such as science, art and history.

Welfare staff suitably supported pupils and are good at encouraging them to take part in tasks and praising their efforts. The level of attentiveness and engagement was always satisfactory and is often good. It was best in those lessons where there was clarity about the learning expectations for individuals; clear success criteria were evident so pupils knew what must be achieved and prompts were given to help learners organise their thinking to best effect. Not all lessons had these features.

Teaching assistants provide good support and help boost students' confidence. Their input in one-to-one sessions results in good learning in the basic skills. In general the

expectations as to what must be achieved in lessons are not always made sufficiently explicit and pupils' interests could be better met along with greater support for self-chosen study. The pace of lessons varies because time is not always managed well enough, particularly in Key Stage 2. There is a lack of understanding, by both the pupils and adults, on how long each part of the lesson should be and how learning should be evaluated. The lack of clarity is not helping pupils to further develop their organisational skills, improve their short-term attention spans or reflect on their learning.

Assessment procedures are satisfactory. However, assessment information is not always used effectively to plan teaching. For example, learning targets specified in individual education plans are not always incorporated into all teachers' lesson planning with equal rigour, and the next learning steps are not always made explicit in the plans or to pupils. Nevertheless, during the inspection, the support provided in order that individuals could meet their behavioural targets was always good and often outstanding.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Strong support is provided by teachers and the therapeutic team to improve pupils' self-awareness and self-esteem. Provision is helping pupils to face challenging situations with increasing confidence. This is strengthened by a good understanding, on the part of welfare and education staff and pupils, around expectations of behaviour and how this is managed. Clear and unequivocal guidance is provided by the headteacher and the therapy team on how to respond to individual needs. During the inspection learning was rarely disrupted by poor behaviour and when this does occur it is managed well. The vast majority of pupils understand right from wrong and recognise that lapses in their own behaviour can affect others.

Attendance is good and behaviour is satisfactory. Compared with past educational experiences both are much improved and incidents of absence caused by temporary exclusions have fallen dramatically. The school encourages pupils to make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community. Pupils are involved in charitable fund raising, and in decision making concerning improving the premises. While there are incidental experiences that enable pupils to gain an understanding of cultural diversity and reflect on their own cultural backgrounds, there is no specific planning for this. Nevertheless, provision does promote a climate of tolerance and harmony.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Rigorous appointment procedures ensure that staff are suitably qualified and are appropriately vetted to work in this challenging environment. All staff, including the designated person for child protection, are suitably trained to fulfil their responsibilities. Health and safety arrangements are sound and all staff are confident in carrying out their responsibilities.

The school has an extensive range of good quality education and welfare policies. While risk assessments are adequate, there are occasions when the daily management of risk associated with pupils around the school site are inconsistently applied. Off-site risk assessments for pupils are suitably carried out. The behaviour policy is clear and is implemented consistently by all staff.

Record keeping has improved and the details of incidents of serious misbehaviour are rigorously reported. Staff are deployed well and supervision is good. Daily handovers between education and welfare are completed thoroughly. The school does not fulfil its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has carried out all of the required checks on the suitability of staff and others to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils. All of the required information is recorded in the single central register.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. They are safe, in good decorative order and suitably support pupils' academic and social development. The environment and displays are conducive to learning and celebrate individual endeavour. However, there are missed opportunities to use display to support learning in all classes. There is a small kitchen for cookery as well as a library and common room that are used for relaxation. The good sized outdoor play areas lack stimuli to further promote pupils' learning or social interaction.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information. Local authorities and carers are provided with clear, accurate and up-to-date information about students' attainment and progress.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made).

- ensure that teaching involves well-planned lessons and appropriate management of class time (paragraph 3(c))
- ensure that information from assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 3(g)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.<sup>4</sup>

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- provide more planned opportunities, within lessons and the creative curriculum, to develop pupils' interests and support self-chosen activities
- identify the expectations of what is to be achieved by individuals in all lessons
- provide guidance to teaching assistants on the teacher's expectations in lessons
- systematically plan for the appreciation and respect of their own and other cultures.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents).

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of pupils			✓	

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2000		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 11	Girls: 5	Total: 16
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 9	Girls: 5	Total: 14
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 11	Girls: 5	Total: 16
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£14,300 – £18,460		
<b>Address of school</b>	Hartpury Old School Gloucester Road Hartpury Gloucester GL19 3BG		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01452 702205		
<b>Email address</b>	school.marlowe@the-marlowe.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rob James		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Marlow Child and Family Services		

**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.**



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Marlowe School, Gloucester, GL19 3BG**

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I appreciated that you were prepared to talk with me and tell me what you thought about school life. I think your school is getting better, and at present provides a satisfactory quality of education. There is no shortage of ambition to make it even better and you can help by sharing your ideas on where things can be improved further.

These are the main points following the inspection.

You are making good progress in managing your behaviour because there are good structures in place to help you do so and these are applied consistently. You have formed good relationships with the staff that support you in school. Your attendance is good, and in the main you enjoy most of your lessons. The curriculum is adequately matched to your needs, although you say you would like more practical tasks. I judged that the teachers are good at making the learning interesting but I have asked that they do more to encourage your interests. There are opportunities in lessons and outdoor learning for you to develop your social skills. Teaching is satisfactory and there are well-established systems to ensure your needs are understood.

I have asked the school to focus on a number of areas. Firstly, to make sure that all lessons are well planned and structured in a way that ensures time is always used wisely so that you make better progress. Secondly, that the teachers explain precisely what they expect each of you to achieve in the lesson, and where possible always include your literacy and numeracy targets. Thirdly, provide you with more opportunities to develop your awareness of other cultures. Finally, to take more account of your interests by better supporting them through self-chosen activities.

I wish you all the best in your futures.

Yours sincerely  
Jonathan Palk  
Her Majesty's Inspector