

Marriotts School

Brittain Way, Stevenage, SG2 8UT

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although progress rates in English and mathematics are improving, the proportion of students achieving 5 A*-C grades remains below the national average.
- Students' skills in English and mathematics are not sufficiently reinforced in other subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Attainment is improving but is not yet consistently good or reviewed frequently enough.
- Although more teaching is good or better, some still requires improvement. Expectations are too low in some lessons, where work is not well matched to abilities, especially for the more able.
- Marking does not consistently show students how to improve and not all teachers ensure students act on the advice they receive.
- Data on students' performance are collected regularly but are not analysed carefully enough to accelerate progress.
- Subject leaders do not consistently check students' progress in their subjects.
- Communication with parents and carers needs improvement, especially with regard to the way the school manages students' behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is now good and students feel safe as a result of the clear, consistent systems that have been put in place.
- Attendance rates are improving and exclusion rates have fallen dramatically.
- Links with other schools in the local sixth form consortium are developing well.
- The range and effectiveness of systems to support students' learning has increased.
- The executive and acting headteachers have accurately identified the key weaknesses in the school and are working effectively to improve teaching and achievement.
- Students believe that their opinions are valued and that they have a real voice in improving the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 40 lessons taught by 38 teachers.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher and the executive headteacher, governors, staff, a representative from the local authority and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors also looked at the school’s own recent survey of parent and carer opinions.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work. They also looked at the school’s improvement plan, data on students’ attainment and progress, monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, a range of policies and arrangements for safeguarding students.
- Students’ books were examined in lessons and in a separate work sample with senior staff.
- Inspectors listened to students reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Cheryl Jackson	Additional Inspector
David Bowles	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of the students are White British.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children from forces families.
- A number of students join the school at times other than the usual starting point each year.
- Alternative part-time education is currently in place for a few students who follow courses offered by the local sixth form consortium, North Hertfordshire College in Stevenage or training courses at Ridgmond Training Centre, or are supported at Education Support Centres in Stevenage, Letchworth and Hitchin.
- The executive headteacher is also headteacher of another local school. The acting headteacher has been in place since April 2012.
- The school provides a breakfast support club before school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has achieved 'International Schools' status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of all teaching to good or better by ensuring:
 - teachers' expectations of students' progress are always high and that work in lessons is carefully matched to students' abilities, including for more able students
 - marking and assessment show students exactly what they need to do to improve and teachers follow up on this quickly if improvements are not carried out by students
 - the classroom skills of the most effective teachers are shared more frequently with others.
- Improve attainment, particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - providing regular opportunities for students to reinforce their skills in literacy and mathematics in other subjects
 - reviewing students' targets and the progress they make towards them at more frequent intervals and adjusting those targets by reference to the most recent data on student progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - developing the consistency with which subject leaders check students' progress
 - improving the use and analysis of data to accelerate the rate of improvement in students' achievement
 - provide governors with further training opportunities which show them exactly how to improve the school
 - improving communication with parents and carers so they are well informed about improvements in the school as they occur.

- Improve systems and outcomes in the sixth form by:
 - working closely within the local consortium to provide a broader range of opportunities for students
 - reviewing progress regularly with students and setting clear targets for them to improve their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter the school with attainment below, and often well below, national averages. The percentage achieving 5 A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, remains below national averages but the gap is closing. Standards are rising in both, with mathematics slightly better than English.
- Sixth form results are below the national average in most subjects. Attainment improved at AS and A2 levels in 2011 and 2012 but is not yet securely good across all subjects. Progress at A2 has been stronger in the past but, in both years, is now at the expected rate.
- Weekly intervention groups after school in English and mathematics and support from advanced skills teachers are helping to raise students' aspirations. Data on students' achievement is now collected at regular intervals. However, although progress rates are rising, the data is not analysed in enough detail to bring the really accelerated progress required for students to attain consistently good standards.
- Students have previously entered early for GCSE examinations under the accelerated curriculum and then progressed to AS level studies but poorer than expected outcomes have led the school to drop the practice of early entry in all subjects.
- Standards on entry have been particularly low recently at Key Stage 3 but progress rates are improving due to interventions such as extra literacy tutors and support club sessions before school. Year 7 catch-up programmes are proving successful in helping to raise students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students who attend courses at other providers in the sixth form consortium, at North Hertfordshire College, local education support centres and Ridgmond Training Centre make similar progress to other students because the school works closely with providers and regularly checks progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make expected progress in lessons, and sometimes better, because teaching assistants provide good support.
- The impact of pupil premium funding has been variable. Interventions are successfully improving attendance rates and also achievement through additional initiatives such as counselling, one-to-one sessions and packs of additional materials. These interventions have been more successful in English than in mathematics. The gap in expected progress in English between students known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers is narrowing. In mathematics, it has widened slightly so extra sessions after school are now being employed to ensure students make consistent improvement in both subjects and eliminate any gaps in the course of the next three terms.
- The achievement of students taught off site at Education Support Centres is similar to that of students taught in the school and is regularly monitored by school staff.
- Reading skills are very varied. Supplementary reading sessions are used to help students develop into better readers. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are developing in other subjects but inconsistently. The school is identifying more engaging books and resources to involve students more with reading.

- Few parents and carers replied to the online survey. Those who did largely feel that their children are making good progress. Students feel that their progress is improving because teaching is better.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement. Some teaching was outstanding and inspired students to learn exceptionally well. However, a few lessons were inadequate and teachers' expectations were also too low in other lessons and did not consistently promote learning or progress.
- In lessons which required improvement, work was not closely matched to individual needs, and did not enable more able students to reach the highest levels or provide opportunities for them to work on extended tasks on their own.
- Sixth form teaching provides increasing challenge for students. Much more frequently, it succeeds in deepening students' knowledge and understanding and increasing their participation in lessons. However, in a few lessons, activities are not well paced or timed and students are not sufficiently encouraged to aim for the highest grades.
- Assessment procedures have sharpened and books are regularly marked. Presentation is generally neat and there are opportunities for peer- and self-assessment. However, marking does not always show students exactly what they need to do to improve. Teachers do not consistently follow up students who have not quickly made the improvements which teachers have highlighted. Students' targets are not reviewed or adjusted quickly enough by reference to the latest data on progress.
- In the best lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge gave students the confidence to explore their creativity and make exceptional progress. In a Year 10 dance lesson, careful teacher planning, with continual opportunities for students to self-assess, led to rapid progress and clear enjoyment by all involved. Teachers frequently checked students' understanding and adjusted tasks in the course of the lesson.
- Teachers are developing better questioning skills and have a better understanding of assessment procedures. However, there is not enough sharing of the classroom skills of the strongest teachers with other staff.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported because staff know their individual needs. Additional sessions before and after school are used effectively to reinforce the careful blend of support and challenge in lessons.
- Reading is reinforced in extra English lessons during the school day. The school has not yet fully evaluated their impact. Early indications are that students' understanding of what they read is increasing as is their desire to read more.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is positive and calm. The school sets clear expectations. Tighter procedures and follow-up have led to substantial improvements recently. Students are punctual to lessons and enter and leave politely.

- Attitudes to learning are good in almost all lessons. Students strive to complete work set. They ask questions, listen respectfully and respond to other students' comments appropriately. Students occasionally lose concentration when the lesson pace slows but do not disrupt the learning of others.
- Students feel safe in school. They say that the small amount of bullying is promptly and properly dealt with. Students are aware of most types of bullying and say they can always talk to someone about problems. The majority of parents and carers feel that the school deals well with bullying issues.
- Students are keen to help improve the school because they feel that their opinions are valued and their efforts on the school council and in raising money for charities are appreciated.
- More parents and carers believe students are well behaved than do not and this is reflected in recent school surveys. Exclusion rates have reduced dramatically because of new, stronger behaviour management policies and leadership. Some parents and carers who responded on-line feel that behaviour is not good but inspectors found behaviour good. The school recognises the need for increased communication about this and other aspects with parents and carers to make them fully aware of school improvements.
- Attendance is low but rising for all groups. Persistent absence has significantly reduced this year through work with students and families. Holidays during term time are discouraged.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The executive and acting headteachers are working together to improve the school. With senior leaders, they have accurately identified areas requiring improvement and are implementing carefully planned actions. Achievement is increasing and teaching is more consistently good.
- Leadership and management are not yet good because the use and analysis of data are not sufficiently refined or frequent enough to drive improvement forward as rapidly as the school would like.
- Many subject leaders are new. Roles are better defined and regular team meetings and close links with senior leadership have added rigour to their work. However, subject leaders do not consistently check on students' progress in their subjects or ensure that it is regularly reviewed with students, including in the sixth form, and that precise targets are set to improve learning and progress.
- Procedures for managing staff performance have been tightened and made clearer. Staff know they are accountable for their classes' progress and must indicate where improvement has occurred. Targets have precise dates.
- The school has recently developed more effective and streamlined teaching programmes. Creative subjects like art and dance report many successes with students progressing to university. Refined information and communication technology facilities in the new building have highlighted the need to develop literacy and numeracy across all subjects.
- Part-time placements on courses off-site have increased the range of opportunities on offer to students. The school has begun to work closely within the local consortium to provide further opportunities for sixth form students. The leadership of the Sixth Form requires improvement because monitoring and tracking procedures are not yet consistent enough to ensure that all

attainment is good or better.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is improving. The school is building on its International Schools status. Links with local religious groups are expanding. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They get on well with each other.
- The school has had strong links with the local authority to raise achievement and improve teaching. These links have helped the school develop the capacity for sustained improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and effective. Staff and governors undergo regular training, including in safer recruitment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. The newly reconstituted governing body has increased the challenge it offers by accurately identifying what needs to be better. Governors receive regular training, visit the school regularly and have an up-to-date picture of teaching and the school's plans for development. They ensure that the performance management of teachers is carried out rigorously and that any underperformance in teaching is swiftly dealt with. They do not, however, possess enough high quality information about students' performance to ensure improvements here are rapid or to compare the school's performance with others properly. They frequently review the use of the pupil premium and have a good picture of its impact.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117534
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	399756

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	850
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melany McQueen
Headteacher	Geraint Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2012
Telephone number	01438 726 999
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