

Great Marlow School

Bobmore Lane, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, SL7 1JE

Inspection dates

18–19 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and students

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress, especially in English and mathematics, and they achieve well.
- Students start school in Year 7 with average skills and abilities. Because they make good progress, the proportion gaining five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has been above average for the last two years.
- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Most teachers plan effective and enjoyable lessons.
- Leaders have worked hard to make sure that the school continues to improve each year. They understand the school well and are ambitious to improve it further.
- Staff, parents and students are very positive about all aspects of the school.
- Students make good progress in the good sixth form.
- Students behave well and are respectful and courteous.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although achievement in science has improved, some students are having to catch up and redo work in Year 11 because it was not covered well enough in Year 10.
- There is still some teaching which requires improvement because a few lessons do not ensure that all students always make sufficient progress.
- The school has good information on how well students are doing but in a few cases this is not used as well as it should be to check that students' progress is good enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 42 lessons. Two of these observations were made jointly with senior staff.
- The inspection team held meetings with a representative of the governing body, senior staff, subject leaders and groups of students.
- The inspection team observed other work of the school, including the school’s plans for improvement, safeguarding information, assessment records, attendance information and the school’s information on the progress made by students.
- Account was taken of the responses in questionnaires completed by 88 members of staff, 93 responses to the online parental questionnaire (Parent View) and two emails sent to the inspection contractor by parents.
- Inspectors reviewed the work of students in lessons and as part of a scrutiny of progress. A group of Year 7 students were heard reading.

Inspection team

David Bray, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Richard Kearsley	Additional inspector
Kevin Morris	Additional inspector
Gill Walley	Additional inspector
Cliff Mainey	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Great Marlow School converted to become an academy school on August 1st 2012. When its predecessor school, Great Marlow School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- This is a slightly larger than average secondary school with a small sixth form.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the student premium is below the national average. The student premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and students with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of students supported with a statement of special educational needs or at school action plus is average. The proportion supported at school action is below average. The proportion of disabled students is below average.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision at a local pupil referral unit on a part-time basis.
- Approximately one in nine students is eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme. This is additional funding provided by government to support those students who did not achieve a Level 4 or above in either mathematics or English at Key Stage 2.
- The school works in partnership with other local schools in order to provide a wider range of sixth-form courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- This is a non-selective school situated in an area with a selective education system.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the achievement of students in science by:
 - ensuring that all students make sufficient progress in Year 10 and teachers are less reliant on catching up work in Year 11
 - using effective practice from other subjects to provide support to the interim leadership in science
 - ensuring that the new leadership in science is supported in bringing about rapid improvement and that clear milestones for how this will be achieved are set out in school planning.
- Improve the effectiveness of data further by ensuring that:
 - it enables all teachers to have high enough expectations for the progress made by all students and
 - monitoring systems always enable quick enough action to be taken when students may be falling behind.
- Improve teaching that currently requires improvement, especially in science, by:
 - ensuring that teachers always plan lessons that take account of the prior attainment of students so that they are able to make sufficient progress
 - using the outstanding teaching within school to model good practice and provide effective support for the small amount of teaching that requires improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The progress of all students, including those in the sixth form, disabled students and those with special educational needs, and those from minority ethnic groups, is good. Some students with special educational needs did not make sufficient progress in the last academic year but this has been addressed so that current progress is good.
- The students attending the local pupil referral unit are making good progress, especially in their social skills, and provision is helping them to maintain their attendance.
- Students typically start school with skills and abilities that are average, although the proportion with the highest attainment on entry is below average. The proportion of students leaving Year 11 with at least five GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, has been above the national average for the last two years.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieved on average about one GCSE grade lower than other students in English and mathematics in 2012. The school's data show that these students are starting to make better progress and that the gap is closing slightly. The school's analysis of the impact of actions it has taken to support these students' needs is not sharp enough.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme are making good progress. The progress of the small number of students following these alternative courses is good but the school needs to check this on a more-regular basis.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. Their attainment is lower than average when they start the sixth form and the school has been effective in ensuring that they achieve well.
- The school is developing high-quality speaking, reading and writing across the curriculum, and this is having a positive impact. Evidence gained from conversations with students and work in their books show that they are starting to develop a good range of literacy and numeracy skills, which they are then using effectively across a range of curriculum subjects.
- Some students are entered early for both English and mathematics GCSE. The school has developed three different programmes, or 'pathways', to meet students' varying needs, and uses early examination entry effectively to ensure that students achieve well.
- In the large majority of lessons that are well taught, students are eager to learn. They work well to support each other's learning. Students achieve well in English and mathematics because the teaching enables them to understand examination criteria very well and they are expected to produce work which is of a quality that enables them to succeed.
- There is a good range of additional opportunities that enhance students' achievement in lessons. Students appreciate these and they value the chance to take part in a good range of musical and sporting activities. Sport is especially strong, and the Great Marlow School Boat Club includes over 140 members and offers an exceptional opportunity for students to participate and excel.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View believe that their children are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good because most lessons are planned well and this enables students to build their knowledge and skills effectively. Students make good progress in English and mathematics. Teachers use their good subject expertise to lead well-focused and challenging question-and-answer sessions that extend learning. For example, in an outstanding drama lesson, the teacher probed students' understanding well and ensured that their understanding was very secure.
- Most teachers assess students' learning and progress regularly and accurately. In the most effective lessons, students are given many chances to use the skills they have learnt in order to deepen their understanding.

- While most teachers provide helpful feedback on what students need to do to improve, this is not always the case. Some students in science are having to catch up on previous work.
- A few lessons require improvement. In these lessons, teachers do not plan activities effectively enough so that some students are not challenged sufficiently.
- The effective teaching of students attending the local pupil referral unit is enabling them to make sufficient progress and improve their social and employability skills.
- Teaching assistants are often effective in supporting learners and in these lessons, they have a positive effect on improving understanding. In a few cases, the work of the teaching assistant is not planned well enough and they provide general support that does not have sufficient impact.
- In the best lessons, older students have a very good understanding of what they need to do to meet examination criteria. Teachers often have high expectations and get students to explore difficult ideas through high-quality discussion. There is very effective teaching across a range of subjects and students often have the opportunity to engage in practical tasks they enjoy as well as using their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in a range of contexts.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to learning are positive and their behaviour is good. Those spoken to said they felt safe in school and that older students often supported younger ones well. Students attending the pupil referral unit are behaving and attending well.
- Students say they believe that bullying is rare and that if it happened the school would deal with it very effectively.
- The school is calm and purposeful because students are polite and courteous. Students from different ethnic groups get on well with each other.
- Students say they understand the school's systems for rewards and sanctions, and they believe that the majority of students accept and comply with them. Students are clear that on the rare occasions when students do not comply they are dealt with in an appropriate and effective manner.
- Staff, parents and carers who responded to questionnaires feel that behaviour is good in school.
- Attendance is average. The school has systems in place to follow up attendance. Despite this, there is a small group of students whose attendance is well below average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors have provided effective strategic leadership for the school. This has enabled the school to achieve above-average results. Leaders have also planned developments such as a new state-of-the-art sports centre, with an all-weather floodlit artificial surface pitch.
- The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate and the school improvement plan has identified clearly the most important priorities for improvement. Some of these priorities do not have sufficiently clear milestones for success and further work is required to ensure that the plan is even sharper and more focused.
- Senior leaders understand the school well and are clear about its priorities. They are supported well by middle managers, especially in English and mathematics, who share the school's vision and are effective in meeting their responsibilities.
- Staff are positive about the school and feel that it is continuing to improve.
- The quality of teaching is good, especially in English and mathematics, and there is a significant amount of good and outstanding teaching. The leadership team understands that there is more to be done to ensure that all teaching is of the same standard as the best lessons and that provision in science improves further.
- The school has used performance management effectively to reward teachers who are performing well and challenge underperformance. There has been a successful strategy to

recruit more effective leadership in science and a clear focus on the need to ensure that the current Year 11 students make good progress.

- The school has a well-developed system to track the progress of students. This has contributed strongly to the improved outcomes at Key stage 4, so that the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades is above the national average. The tracking system has not always provided sufficiently clear information about how well all students are progressing and this is now being addressed by senior staff.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and the three curriculum 'pathways' are well planned. The school provides a good range of academically challenging courses.
- The school has considered how to make best use of the student premium. Extra support has been provided for these students in order for them to make better progress. The school's progress data show that students who are eligible for additional funding are starting to catch up with other students, but that there is more to do.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body works closely with school leaders and makes a good contribution to the school's strategic direction. Governors have a good range of skills and these are used to challenge and support school leaders effectively. They have a clear understanding of performance data and of the quality of teaching. Governors have received information on the allocation of student premium funding and are starting to ask more effective questions about the progress these students are making. The school gives sufficient attention to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Governors understand that they need sharper and more detailed information about the impact of resources allocated to student premium-funded activities. Governors have a good range of skills and expertise. They ensure they receive regular training and have a good understanding of the school's priorities for development. Governors ensure that teachers' pay is linked closely to performance and they challenge the school effectively.

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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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

Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	412820

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
Age range of students	11–19
Gender of students	Mixed
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	1,225
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Goulding
Headteacher	Geralyn Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2010
Telephone number	01628 483752
Fax number	01628 475852
Email address	info@gms.bucks.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

