

# Marathon Science School of Excellence

1–9 Evelyn Street, Surrey Quays, London, SE8 5RQ

## Inspection dates

17–19 September 2013

## Overall effectiveness

**Adequate** **3**

Pupils' achievement

Adequate 3

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good 2

Quality of teaching

Adequate 3

Quality of curriculum

Good 2

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Adequate 3

Leadership and management

Adequate 3

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience

Adequate 3

## Summary of key findings

### This school is adequate because

- There is not enough good or better teaching.
- The high standards that pupils achieve in some subjects are not replicated in others.
- Leaders understand the weaknesses in academic achievement and teaching but have not yet found a way of addressing them in all subjects, particularly English.
- Not enough pupils speak or write good English. This makes it impossible for them to attain high grades in their GCSEs.
- The school has the right policies and procedures to ensure that pupils are safe but the child protection policy is not written well.
- Care plans for boarding pupils do not ensure they receive good or outstanding support closely linked to their needs.

### The school has the following strengths

- The curriculum offers pupils many opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills and to excite and challenge them.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They get on well together, are self-confident and make a good contribution to British society.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

## Information about this inspection

- The school was given one day’s notice of the inspection
- Inspectors visited 18 lessons and after-school activities in school and in boarding, spoke with the chair of trustees, staff and pupils, reviewed pupils’ written and other work and evaluated school policies and other documentation. They also had lunch and dinner with pupils.
- They met boarding staff and examined the school’s plans for structural and other change to the boarding accommodation.
- The evidence from 13 staff questionnaires and 30 responses to Ofsted’s ‘Parent View’ online questionnaire was taken into account.
- The school requested a material change. It is seeking permission to extend the age range of pupils to 19 years of age.

## Inspection team

Paul Armitage, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angus MacKay

Social Care Inspector

Rory O’Doherty

Additional Inspector

Pietro Battista

Her Majesty’s Inspector, Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Marathon Science School of Excellence opened in 2009. The school is registered for up to 144 boys aged 10 to 16 years, including 120 boarders. The current number of boys studying at the school is 94. All these boys are boarders.
- The school is located in London in Surrey Quays but the boarding accommodation is located 20 minutes away in Shoreditch. Most of the boys are of Turkish origin although other cultures are represented. The vast majority are living in London boroughs. For most of them, English is their second language. They have varying degrees of fluency in English. None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs and none is disabled.
- The school day begins at 8.30am and continues until 4.00pm after which pupils have snacks and homework time. Pupils are then taken back to the boarding accommodation by minibus. Dinner is eaten at the boarding house. Every two weeks, pupils go home for weekends. In the weeks when they stay in school, the school organises recreational activities. Lessons are in English except in Turkish language classes and in religious studies when some Arabic is taught.
- The school uses a local park and sports centre for physical education (PE), games and recreation.
- The proprietors are a body of four trustees comprising the Seven Hills Educational Trust.
- The school's last full inspection was in June 2010 when it failed to meet a number of independent school regulations and national minimum standards. This was followed by a further inspection in October 2010 which found that the failings had been addressed.
- The school aims to meet the needs of the Turkish community by ensuring that its pupils achieve well academically and by providing excellent care. It seeks to develop pupils' self-confidence and deepen their understanding of their faith and culture while at the same time giving them the opportunity to play a full part in the wider British community in which they live.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In education, leaders and managers must improve the quality of teaching to ensure that the high levels of achievement in some subjects are replicated in others. To do this they must:
  - improve teachers' use of assessment data to understand better the needs of pupils
  - ensure that all teachers carefully monitor what pupils are doing in class and in their homework, especially their ability to use English
  - ensure that teachers give pupils more opportunities to think for themselves and identify what they need to learn
  - ensure that areas for improvement identified by staff appraisal are followed through to definite action to improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences.
- In boarding, leaders and managers must:
  - ensure that care plans are improved to record pupils' identified needs, risks and protective measures
  - improve the impact of staff appraisal by ensuring that subsequent training is properly recorded and its effectiveness thoroughly evaluated.
- In education and boarding, leaders and managers must:
  - ensure that the child protection policy is reviewed to improve its clarity for all readers including parents and carers.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

#### Adequate

Achievement is adequate overall as a result of adequate teaching. It is not good because pupils' achievement is inconsistent between subjects. This is reflected in the examination grades pupils attain at GCSE. This variation is largely due to teaching not always meeting the needs of pupils. Pupils are not always encouraged to think enough for themselves. Pupils' limited fluency in written English also plays a big part.

In Turkish and mathematics pupils achieve well with many pupils achieving the highest grades at GCSE. Last year, in Turkish, almost all pupils achieved A\* or A grades. Given pupils' often low levels of knowledge and understanding when they begin school, many make outstanding progress in these subjects. Similar success is also evident in information and communication technology (ICT) when pupils do well in their study for the Diploma of Digital Awareness. In other subjects, achievement is lower with GCSE grade C predominating but with a fair number of pupils achieving grades below this. Subjects in this category include science and English. A similar pattern of progress and test results is found when analysing data on the achievement of younger pupils.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

#### Good

Pupils' personal development and their behaviour are good. The school's aims, which deal with developing pupils' self-confidence, deepening their faith and playing a full part in the wider British community, are well met. They lay themselves before *Allah* when they pray and can explain what this means to them; they are developing a deeper understanding of the *Qur'an*. Outside lessons they very often speak confidently and ask questions of their own. They are involved in community sport, work experience, charity work and visits to significant British institutions such as Parliament. The proposals for a new sixth form curriculum include the training of pupils to become *Hafiz* (guardians of the *Qur'an*), leading prayers and also giving last rites to people in the Muslim community.

Pupils are polite and are respectful of adults and their fellow pupils. They get on well together, cooperating in class, on external events and in boarding. Older pupils are often seen helping younger pupils. They understand what bullying is and know how to deal with it. Instances of bullying are rare. There is almost no disruption in class or in the boarding accommodation. They are keen to learn in class and in extra-curricular activities. Their positive attitudes are reflected in the high attendance rate with very few unauthorised absences.

Pupils enjoy the time they spend in boarding, particularly the friendships they develop, describing it as a 'family community'. Through their boarding experience pupils develop an understanding of living with others and an appreciation of cultural and other differences. Pupils are confident in the support they can access from staff and how any concerns are dealt with. Pupils say that the headteacher is always available to talk to.

The school council is active and meaningful in that it has an impact and in boarding, the pupils successfully influence what is provided for them. Pupils handle conflicting views well and the school is good at ensuring that it presents both sides of an argument.

The one negative is that in lessons, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to take more initiatives in their learning and this is why personal development is not outstanding.

### Quality of teaching

#### Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate. It is adequate rather than good because the teaching results

in pupils' making adequate progress overall. There were a small minority of high-quality lessons observed, for example in mathematics and in Turkish. In the first, the teacher knew the needs of the pupils very well. Pupils were divided into groups according to need and the work they were given was very well targeted on these needs. The teacher constantly moved between the groups checking how well they were doing and problems were sorted out as they arose.

In the Turkish lesson, the key features were the fast pace and challenging lesson content which was well selected to match the pupils' abilities. There were excellent professional relationships between the teacher and pupils which meant that there was constant exchanging of ideas as they discussed the topic of the lesson. In both examples, the pupils made outstanding progress.

In weaker lessons, these qualities are not present to the same degree. For instance, although in some subjects pupils are taught in ability sets, there is sometimes little recognition that pupils within the sets still have different needs. In a few other classes, teachers take a 'middle ground', meeting the needs of those of average ability but not the needs of either the less or most able. Sometimes teachers tell pupils too much which has a negative impact because pupils do not learn to ask questions and find things out for themselves. The use of assessment data on pupils' performance is used inconsistently between teachers.

Teachers assess pupils regularly through the school's own tests and also a commercial test which provides a national comparison. Teachers also assess using National Curriculum levels. Some teachers use the information adequately to focus on what will help pupils the most and they monitor carefully what pupils do in class and in their homework; however, others do not do this carefully enough.

The issues around the teaching of English are highly significant, in particular because examinations are written in English. There is a lot of good work done by the English teachers with a majority of the pupils, enabling them to be literate enough in writing and reading English to achieve at least grade C at GCSE. However, the school is not successful in meeting the English language needs of all pupils to a sufficient degree. It is trying, even to the extent of providing good one-to-one support in some classes, but this is still not enough. Too few teachers of subjects other than English realise that they also must teach English.

Teachers make a good, substantial contribution to organising and supporting pupils on trips and other extra-curricular activities. They are well qualified in knowing the content of their subjects and will be able to deliver at least adequate sixth form teaching.

In boarding, in addition to helping pupils live together and make good relationships, staff provide help with homework and also provide additional recreational activities. The school talks about providing a taught '24 hour curriculum' with good justification.

## Quality of curriculum

## Good

The quality of the curriculum is good. This is because although it is a small school, it nevertheless provides a wide range of curriculum options in class, in activities outside school and in boarding. It enables pupils to make adequate progress in their academic work.

In school the curriculum covers all the required areas of learning including music and art. There is a strong personal, social, health and citizenship programme and also a good careers programme which includes work experience. Almost all pupils go on to college rather than paid work and the school offers good advice on college options. Opportunities in physical education are extensive including football, tennis, badminton and swimming. There is good provision for ICT.

A strength of the curriculum is the extra-curricular activities which have greatly improved since the last inspection, in part as a response to the criticism by that inspection that pupils were too insular.

In addition to a visit to Parliament, there have been recent visits to various museums and art galleries linked to work in school. Through a local community group, the pupils have played a football tournament and the school supports charities, especially at the time of the Muslim holiday of *Eid*. There are overseas trips and Year 11 pupils are about to go on an adventure weekend with other young people. In boarding, in free time, there are many possibilities including chess, cooking and wrestling. The weekend curriculum also offers a wide range of activities.

In the proposed new sixth form, the school intends to offer A levels in mathematics, science, ICT and German, Turkish and Spanish. It will also continue with Islamic Studies. This is a reasonable programme given the strength of the school in mathematics, Turkish and ICT. There are some German pupils of Turkish descent who will welcome the chance to study the language at a higher level.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

### **Adequate**

The quality of pupils' welfare, health and safety is adequate. It is not good because although the child protection policy document details the required procedures, it is not well written and could confuse readers such as parents and carers. In addition, although the school supplied all the required information on staff security checks, it took some time for staff to find all the information. It is not efficiently stored in one place to facilitate regular checking by school administrators and visitors such as inspectors.

In boarding, pupils' safety is adequate with many good features. However, one negative is that care plans do not clearly identify risks and protective factors for individual pupils although in practice, current working practices ensure pupils' safety.

More positively, the school has all the required policies including those for behaviour, health and safety, anti-bullying and first aid. They are understood by staff. For example, when questioned, it was clear that staff knew how to deal with a safeguarding issue. Risk assessments are rigorous both in the main school and in the boarding accommodation. They include risk assessments for fire and for visits outside school. The admissions and attendance registers are properly maintained. There is a properly constituted single central register of checks on staff suitability. Staff have been properly trained in first aid and safeguarding. Supervision arrangements are good.

Pupils have a very good understanding of staying safe and healthy. They are aware of child protection issues and also the virtues of frequent exercise and good food. Physical education is very popular both as part of the formal curriculum and as an extra-curricular activity. In discussion with a few older boarding pupils, they made reference to their body mass index score. Lunch and dinner are nutritious and well presented.

Systems for pastoral support are good. For example, in boarding, the role of the nurse is successfully broad, extending beyond medical matters to include counselling. The intended pastoral support for the proposed sixth formers is likely to be at least adequate in both the school and in boarding.

### **Leadership and management**

### **Adequate**

The quality of leadership and management is adequate. The main reason why it is adequate rather than good is because the senior leaders have not yet found a way of raising achievement to good or outstanding. They have the aspiration but they have not yet sufficiently trained all teachers on how to meet the needs of all the pupils so that they attain the highest academic standards.

The headteacher and other senior staff know the school very well and are aware of this weakness and the reasons for it. There have been steps taken to address problems and there is evidence of success in more successful subjects but, despite knowing what needs to be done, senior staff have

not been able to extend this success to all subjects, especially English. Staff appraisal has helped identify some solutions but these have not always been followed through into improvement for a range of reasons including limits on cost.

In boarding, leaders and managers have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Staff are regularly appraised and then provided with appropriate training but details are poorly recorded. This makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of training on improving the quality of care.

However, leaders have achieved much that is positive. The atmosphere in the school including the boarding accommodation is very welcoming. There is a rich curriculum. Opportunities to support pupils' personal development are good. The school's aim, articulated by the headteacher and supported by parents and carers, of encouraging the development of pupils who are comfortable in British society has substantially been achieved.

The school accommodation is good. Classrooms are of a good size and all areas are well ventilated and lit. The situation is different in the boarding accommodation. Although the school is currently registered for 120 boarders, the accommodation is suitable only for the present number of pupils – 94. In relation to the school's request for an increase in the age range of pupils to 19 years of age, the evidence of the inspection is that the school will be able to provide accommodation and a suitable education for the extended age range. This recommendation is conditional on maintaining the number of boarders at 94. However, the school has plans to alter the present accommodation. If these are put in place, then it is likely that 120 boarders will be possible.

Parents and carers receive all the required information by hard copy and on the school's website and the complaints procedure meets requirements. Regular reports of good quality on pupils' progress are sent to parents and carers.

The trustees and the headteacher have ensured that the school meets all the independent school regulations and the national minimum standards for boarding.

<b>Outcomes for boarders</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Quality of boarding provision and care</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>Boarders' safety</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the boarding provision</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

## What inspection judgements mean

School and boarding		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education and care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education and care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education and care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135901
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC400622
<b>Inspection number</b>	422806
<b>DfE registration number</b>	209/6409

This inspection was carried out 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. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary school
<b>School status</b>	Independent boarding school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	94
<b>Proprietor</b>	Seven Hills Educational Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Hakan Ozgul
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Uzeyir Onur
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 October 2010
<b>Annual fees</b>	£7,500
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