

Marriotts School

Brittain Way, Stevenage, SG2 8UT

Inspection dates

22–23 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Not enough students make consistently good progress. Students' progress varies between subjects and remains slower in mathematics and science.
- Too few students gain five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics.
- Teaching has not been strong enough over time to promote good progress in some subjects.
- Some teaching does not ensure that the most-able students are given work that is hard enough to challenge them to do their best.
- In mathematics and science, students who lack basic skills, are not given rapid enough support to enable them to achieve as well as they could.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to apply and practise the skills they learn in mathematics in other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has brought about rapid improvements to all aspects of the school's work. She has established an environment in which all staff and students are valued and supported.
- All leaders, staff and governors share a drive and ambition to ensure the success of every student. Consequently, teaching is improving quickly and students' progress is accelerating, particularly in English and in work-related subjects, where the standards reached are now above average.
- Attendance has risen markedly to above average, and exclusions are now rare.
- Students behave well, have good attitudes to learning, feel safe and are willing to take on responsibilities.
- The school strongly supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. British values are promoted well.
- Governors now monitor the work of the school closely and provide a good balance of challenge and support to leaders.
- The sixth form has improved and is now good. New leaders have ensured that students are taught well and supported effectively. As a result, students make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 29 lessons, including 16 observed jointly with the headteacher or other senior leaders. They checked the quality of the work in students’ books, how the learning environment contributes to their achievement and engagement, and how effectively students are challenged to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, staff, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation including: teachers’ planning; the school’s analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans; information on students’ attainment and progress; records of the monitoring of teaching and meetings of the governing body; safeguarding documentation; and samples of students’ work.
- Inspectors listened to some Year 7 students read. They also spoke with students across the year groups about their learning and behaviour, and reviewed the work in their books.
- Inspectors considered 40 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the school’s own recent parental survey and the 48 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Douglas Folan	Additional Inspector
Neil Stanley	Additional Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Marriotts is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports students known to be eligible for free school meals) provides support for two in every five of the students. This is above the national average.
- About one in seven of the students are supported through school action because they are disabled or have special educational needs. This is above the national average. About one in twelve of the students are supported through school action plus, with a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan. This is close to the national average.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Unvalidated 2014 test results indicate that the floor standards have now been met.
- A very small number of students experiencing behavioural and emotional difficulties, special educational needs or medical needs attend alternative provision at: North Herts ESC, Letchworth; Brandles School, Baldock; or Richmond Training Centre, Stevenage. Some are home educated by the Education Support Team for Medical Absence (ESTMA).
- Some aspects of the post-16 curriculum are taught in partnership with three other schools.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a large staff turnover. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2013 and other senior and middle leaders took up their posts during the past year with some starting in September 2014. In total, about a quarter of the teaching staff was new to the school in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students make faster progress and raise their attainment, especially in mathematics and science, by ensuring that:
 - all groups of students, especially the most able, are given work which challenges them to attain the highest grades of which they are capable
 - students with gaps in their basic knowledge of mathematics or science are given the support they need to catch up rapidly
 - students have more opportunities to apply and practise their mathematical skills.
- Improve the leadership and management of mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that the recent actions taken by the new subject leader to improve teaching become firmly embedded and lead to higher achievement
 - providing more opportunities for students to improve and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Students and staff told inspectors that the new headteacher has transformed the culture of the school. Staff and students have great respect for each other. There is a sense of common purpose in which all staff and students are helped to thrive and aspire to be their best. All fully subscribe to the school's motto: 'Aim high, work hard and be kind.'
- Since the previous inspection, leaders, including governors, have ensured that students' behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved significantly. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated through a comprehensive training and coaching programme. By frequently checking on teaching and learning and holding teachers to account for their student's progress, the quality of teaching is continuing to improve. As a result, students' made markedly faster progress in the past year and continue to do so. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve.
- The school's evaluation of its progress, undertaken by leaders and governors and supported by an external advisor, is accurate. It has informed the detailed development plans which have led to the many improvements in all aspects of the school's work since the arrival of the new headteacher.
- No discrimination of any kind is tolerated. Leaders have introduced new systems for frequently checking on the progress of every student. Students not meeting their targets are given additional support to help them improve. In this way leaders make sure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding effectively on additional small group and one-to-one support, as well as funding additional holiday-time revision classes. As a result, gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and their classmates narrowed last year. Leaders recently appointed a coordinator responsible for supporting students supported through the pupil premium, their parents and their teachers so that any remaining gaps in performance can be closed.
- Subject and faculty leadership has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Leaders frequently check on students' work and teachers' performance. They provide good quality training to their colleagues and challenge them to ensure that all students make good progress. They attend leadership training, such as the 'inspiring leaders' course, and are mentored by senior leaders. As a result, standards are rising. Early indications are that the new subject leader for mathematics and the assistant headteacher responsible for special educational needs have made a good start in improving teaching and achievement in their areas of responsibility
- Leaders' monitoring of students attending alternative provision is good. They frequently liaise with staff and regularly visit students at off-site settings. As a result, these students are able to succeed on programmes of study that were not available to them in the school.
- The school has benefited well from the good support it receives from the local authority in developing the skills of leaders and teachers. This has helped the school to improve in many areas of its work, especially during the last year.
- The good curriculum, provided in partnership with other schools, offers students a wide range of choices suitable to their needs and interests. It is enriched by many additional activities, such as exchange visits to a school in Germany. Leaders have identified the need to create more opportunities for students to improve and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects so that they can make faster progress.
- Careers education and advice for students taught from Year 8 upwards are particularly effective. As a result, all students who left the school after Year 11 last year continued in education, employment or training.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning, including teaching British values, are promoted well

across the curriculum. For instance, students learn about a variety of faiths and cultures, tolerance for all, and the work of human rights organisations. Students contribute to the wider community through activities like raising funds for charities, such as the armed forces and are supporting the building of a school in Africa.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard with parents and carers to help them support their children's learning. For example, parents and carers are invited to attend 'taster' lessons in Year 9 with their children to help them make their GCSE choices. Reports sent to parents and carers are detailed and easy to understand. Consequently, they know how well their children are learning and behaving and know what they need to do to support their children's progress.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the previous inspection the governing body has been reinvigorated. Governors bring experience and expertise from the world of education. One governor is a National Leader of Governance. All of them have benefited from good quality training. The governing body is now knowledgeable and very effective, helping to drive forward many improvements and remove barriers to successful learning. Each month a different governor spends a day in the school visiting lessons, observing behaviour and talking to groups of students and staff. Governors know that the values of tolerance and respect for all are promoted well.
- Governors receive good quality information on the progress of students and performance of staff which is verified by external consultants. Minutes of meetings confirm that governors both challenge and support leaders, and that they scrutinise teachers' performance before approving pay increases.
- Resources are employed effectively and governors are ensuring that the pupil premium funding is used well to meet students' needs. As a result, gaps in attainment are narrowing. Governors rigorously fulfil their statutory duties, including safeguarding requirements. As a result, students' health and safety are assured. Prospective staff are fully vetted. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about the safety of a student.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students say that that behaviour has improved considerably since the new headteacher arrived. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the surveys and all staff completing the inspection questionnaire agree.
- Students make a strong contribution to the school. For instance, members of the student council initiated the 'Student Charter' based on how students would like to work with their teachers and peers in their lessons, so that all can thrive in positive learning and social environment. The resulting agreed routines ensure that all of them can learn in a calm, supportive environment, free from disruption.
- Students arrive punctually to lessons and are ready to learn. They show commitment to their work. They are courteous to each other and to adults, and support each other well.
- Students wear their uniform with pride and ensure that the environment is clean and tidy by taking good care of the school's and their own equipment and always clearing up after themselves. Inspectors saw no disruptive behaviour in class or at social times around the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students know that if they have any concerns they can turn to a member of staff who will help them.
- Students highlighted the effectiveness of regular workshops that help them understand how to stay safe. These included information about drugs, gangs, sexual harassment and when using the internet. Additionally, they learn tolerance and respect for all people, no matter what their race, culture, religion or sexual orientation. As a result the school is a harmonious community and British values are promoted well.

- Students enjoy coming to school. Attendance, including in the sixth form, has improved significantly and is now above average. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced drastically and is now below average.
- Students who attend alternative provision off-site for part of the week attend regularly and are well looked after. This contributes to their success as learners.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of the teaching is improving quickly. Previously inadequate teaching has been tackled decisively and eliminated. Nonetheless, teaching is not yet consistently good enough across different subjects to fully eradicate a legacy of underachievement and ensure that all groups of students achieve well.
- In some lessons, the work set is not hard enough, especially for the most-able students. The progress of these students is held back when they do work that they have already covered and understood. As a result, some do not reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- In Key Stage 4, some students lack some basic knowledge and understanding because their achievement in Key Stage 3 was weak. Sometimes, in mathematics and science lessons teachers do not tackle their misconceptions quickly enough. This holds back their progress.
- Students' progress in mathematics last year was a considerable improvement on the previous year, but their overall progress was still not good. This is because leadership and teaching in the subject were not strong enough. While they are improving, students still do not have sufficient opportunities to develop and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The quality of teaching in English improved dramatically over the last year. 'Reading for all' is actively encouraged, and students have many opportunities to write in other subjects. All teachers ensure that students develop their vocabulary, and they consistently correct any spelling or grammatical errors. As a result, students make good progress in English in all year groups.
- Teachers and other adults show that they have high expectations of all students. A culture of mutual respect ensures that lessons proceed at a good pace and students try their best throughout. This enables adults and students to work collaboratively to achieve common goals. Teachers regularly reflect on their own and each other's effectiveness in order to improve their skills.
- The work in students' books shows that teachers usually ensure that students have challenging targets, although this is not always the case for the most able. Marking of ongoing work and regular tests is frequent. Helpful guidance ensures that students can learn from their mistakes and improve their work. Teachers are increasingly making better use of the information gained from marking and assessments to plan the next stages of students' learning.
- The quality of the homework, including extended projects and research, and the teachers' feedback to students have made a good contribution to raising standards in the past year and continue to do so.
- Teaching assistants and other adults who are now under the direction of the new special educational needs coordinator who joined the school in September 2014, give well-targeted support to students needing additional help. This is helping them to learn well and make increasingly good progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When students join the school in Year 7, their attainment is much lower than average. In 2014, unvalidated school data show that 42% of students in Year 11 gained five or more good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics. This is a marked improvement on the 2013 results, when just 29% achieved this benchmark. Nevertheless, in some subjects, including mathematics too few students made good progress. This means that achievement still requires improvement.

- Although much improved, there was variation in the progress made across different subjects in 2014. In mathematics, rates of progress from students' starting points increased markedly but they still remained below the national averages. This was also the case in some other subjects, such as in core and additional science.
- The most-able students do not achieve well enough and too few reach the highest grades at GCSE. This is because teachers do not always plan work that is challenging enough to help them attain the higher grades of which they are capable.
- In 2013, disadvantaged Year 11 students who were supported through pupil premium funding were about three quarters of a grade behind their classmates, and two grades behind other students nationally in English. In mathematics, they were one grade behind their classmates and over two grades behind other students nationally. In the last year, these gaps have been closing because disadvantaged students are now making more rapid progress in all subjects. Students in Year 11 reached much higher attainment in 2014 than in 2013. The gaps narrowed between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students in the school, particularly in English.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 'catch-up' funding made small gains in reading and mathematics in 2014 because support only started in the summer term as leaders had not made this a priority. Current students in Year 7 are already receiving additional support that is helping them to catch up at a faster rate.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs made less progress than other students last year. This was because the quality of leadership and training of adults giving additional support was not effective enough. Currently these students are making faster progress because the new special educational needs coordinator is making sure that students receive a suitably high level of teaching and support.
- The small number of students studying a range of qualifications off-site learn well and make similar progress to their peers.
- In 2014, students in Year 11 reached standards and rates of progress in English that were above national averages. Additionally, students entered for the single sciences made good progress to reach average standards. Across the work-related subjects such as in the performing arts faculty, students make consistently good progress and achieve well.
- The school's internal data indicate that across the subjects and year groups, rates of progress, including for disabled students and those with special educational needs, are faster this year than at the same time last year. This is because the quality of teaching is continuing to improve, support is better targeted and students have better attitudes to learning. They now try hard and want to succeed.

The sixth form provision

is good

- New leadership of the sixth form has ensured that the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and achievement have improved and are now good.
- Partnerships with other schools ensure that all students can choose to follow a wide range of both A-level and work-related courses. Students value the breadth of the study paths open to them and the clear impartial information and guidance they receive to help them make the most suitable choices.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching to ensure that students of all abilities are supported and challenged to achieve their best. Additionally, leaders frequently check the progress of students on all courses. Anyone not meeting their aspirational targets is given additional support, including one-to-one tutorials to help them catch up.
- Unvalidated 2014 results show that a greater proportion of students attained the higher A* to B grades at AS and A-level. There was a 100% pass rate on work-related courses, with more students achieving merits

and distinctions than previously. Disadvantaged students made faster overall progress than their peers because of well-targeted support.

- The curriculum helps to develop students' employability skills and other important skills for life after school. For instance, they cover diverse topics such as self-defence and financial planning, moral dilemmas and behaviours. All students participate in weekly work experience activities.
- Students' behaviour is good. Their attitudes to learning are good. Students are now required to be in school or a partner school for the whole day doing independent study when they do not have timetabled lessons. Like students in the rest of the school, they want to learn and succeed.
- Students take on many responsibilities in the school such as being prefects, coaching younger students and supporting senior staff in the appointment of new teachers and leaders.

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	442099

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	865
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melany McQueen
Headteacher	Bethany Honnor
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2013
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