

Maiden Erlegh School

Off Silverdale Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 7HS

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have successfully created a learning community where students of different abilities and backgrounds are all able to learn well and make good progress.
- Leaders and governors have made sure that disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs receive the teaching and support they need to learn well. As a result, these students typically make good progress.
- Leaders hold teachers to account well and provide them with effective training and support. Teaching is good and continuing to improve.
- Students make good progress across subjects and year groups. All groups of students in Years 7 to 9 make progress well above that seen nationally. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is high.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and skilfully impart this to students.
- Teachers have high expectations and make sure work set is suitably challenging for students of differing abilities so all learn equally well.
- Students typically engage well in learning during lessons. Low-level disruption is very rare. Their conduct is exemplary around the school site. Students are polite, respectful, and tolerant of difference.
- Students feel safe and secure. They know how to keep themselves safe in and outside school and online. Incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with effectively.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is on average above that seen nationally at Level 3. Most students who retake mathematics and English GCSE successfully gained a grade C or higher.
- Students receive helpful and unbiased careers guidance. They are supported well to make the right choices for their next steps in learning and employment. All students who left the school last year went on to further study or training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and others have not closed as well in Year 10 as in other year groups. In Years 10 and 11 boys do noticeably less well than girls.
- Teachers' marking and questioning of students are not always highly effective. At times, they do not play the part they should in helping students to learn really well.
- Opportunities to develop students' mathematical skills in other subjects are not well developed.
- Students in the sixth form have not yet had suitable opportunities to do work experience. They also do not routinely have opportunities to explore in depth issues related to equality, the rule of law and how to protect themselves from exploitation and harm.
- The local advisory board has not considered the impact of the school's work to promote students' spiritual, social, cultural and moral development as well as it has considered other aspects of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, eight of these jointly with senior leaders. In addition an inspector, together with one of the co-headteachers, undertook a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at teaching in performing and expressive arts subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, members of the local advisory board, teachers, support staff and groups of students. An inspector also met with the Chief Executive of the Maiden Erlegh Academy Trust and the teaching school director to discuss the work of the teaching school.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents, including safety procedures, behaviour and attendance records, self-evaluation and planning documents and the school's records on performance management and teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took into account 138 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 113 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Diana Choulerton, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Una Maria Stevens	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional Inspector
Ian Tustian	Additional Inspector
Paul Metcalf	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maiden Erlegh School converted to become an academy school on 14 April 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Maiden Erlegh School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has a large sixth form.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average, as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest proportions being of Indian and Pakistani ethnicity.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is much lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is much lower than the national average.
- A very small number of students attend alternative education at other establishments namely, Foundry College, Berkshire College of Agriculture, Cranbury College, Brambles, JAC Stables, Reading SEN and Youth Offending Service, and Berkshire Adolescent Unit.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is a teaching school. It leads a teaching school alliance in partnership with four other local schools and Reading University.
- The school has set up the Maiden Erlegh Academy Trust. The Trust is opening a free school for 900 students also called Maiden Erlegh, in Reading in September 2015.
- The previous headteacher of the school is now the executive director of the Trust. The school's two deputy headteachers have been promoted to the roles of co-headteacher. They have led the school jointly since September 2014.
- The school owns and runs an outdoor centre in Wales, Tirabad, in a trust with two other schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure teachers' marking and questioning are consistently effective so students learn exceptionally well in all their classes.
- Make sure that teaching in subjects across the school supports students' mathematical development.
- Close the gaps in achievement between boys and girls, disadvantaged students and others at Key Stage 4 so all students achieve equally well.
- Make sure members of the local advisory board hold leaders rigorously to account for all aspects of the school's performance by regularly considering the impact of the school's work to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Ensure all sixth form students have the opportunity to participate in work experience that clearly links to the subjects they are studying.
- Make sure all sixth formers have opportunities to deepen their understanding of equality, diversity and the rule of law, and the risks they may face in the world beyond school, so they are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The co-headteachers share with the school's staff a passion and commitment to ensuring all students feel valued and all learn equally well. Leaders at all levels have a sophisticated understanding of students' achievement, the quality of teaching and behaviour and know exactly what needs to improve. This information is shared with governors. Collectively, leaders are working effectively to bring these improvements about.
- Leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and make sure it is of good quality. Senior and middle leaders make regular visits to lessons, scrutinise students' work and review students' achievement. Teachers are held to account for their performance well by leaders. Appraisal arrangements are rigorous. Teachers receive the training and support necessary to develop and improve their practice. Any teacher whose practice is judged less than consistently good is effectively supported and challenged to improve.
- Leaders make sure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Students are set suitably challenging targets for each subject. Leaders track students' progress rigorously. The standards strategy manager for each key stage works with subject leaders to make sure underachievement is tackled. Students who have fallen behind receive helpful support to catch up.
- Pupil premium funding is spent well. Support, including small-group sessions and mentoring support, helps disadvantaged students make good progress and catch up with their peers.
- Students who enter the school with low levels of attainment study an integrated curriculum called the 'purple pathway' in Years 7 and 8. Students on this pathway study English, mathematics, humanities and languages in a combined way, with a focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Students on the 'purple pathway' typically make strong progress and catch up on previous underachievement.
- Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is effective. These students are taught and supported well during lessons. Outside lesson time they receive further support at the school's Achievement Centre. This support includes clubs such as handwriting and study skills. Students also receive individual support related to their specific needs. Examples include speech and language development sessions and support to manage anxiety and anger.
- Leaders' commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination is clear. Students develop their understanding of equalities issues well through assemblies and the school's personal, social and health education programme. Leaders make sure there is zero tolerance of name-calling, including that which takes place between friends. Staff communicate this message effectively to students.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Students study a full range of subjects in Years 7 and 8. In Years 9 to 11 students follow one of three pathways. Students are guided to the pathway most suited to their needs. More-able students study the English Baccalaureate but can also study practical subjects. The other pathways include suitable opportunities for vocational and academic study in a variety of subjects.
- The curriculum contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Students learn how to cooperate and work together and have a clear sense of right and wrong. Assemblies promote their understanding of issues such as homophobia and democracy. Art, music and drama lessons are particularly effective in enabling students to use their imagination and creativity. Religion and philosophy lessons develop students' understanding of different faiths and ethical issues. Many students take part in the school's enrichment programme. This provides opportunities for students to engage in a wide range of sporting, cultural and artistic activities before and after school. Disadvantaged students and those of Pakistani ethnicity do not participate so well.
- Leaders have made sure that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Staff receive suitable safeguarding training. Risk assessments and recruitment processes are sound, including for Tirabad. Leaders check students' attendance and achievement at alternative provision rigorously. They keep regular contact with the students, their parents and carers and tutors to make sure the provision meets their needs. A suitably qualified leader visits all providers before first use to make sure safeguarding arrangements are secure.
- Students are supported well to make the right choices for their next steps in learning and employment. Individual careers interviews, careers education in lesson time and a yearly careers fair all contribute to this. All Years 11, 12 and 13 students who left the school last year went on to further study or training.
- Through its teaching school, leaders and teachers who are specialist leaders of education provide valued support to other schools to help them improve. Support has included working with a school leadership team to sharpen their use of student achievement information, running middle leadership courses and work with several schools to improve the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**

- The local advisory board has a strong understanding of strengths of the school and areas for development. Board members make sure that leaders are addressing the latter. They receive detailed reports on achievement, teaching quality and students' behaviour. Individual members of the board consider specific areas of the school performance in more detail. The 'narrowing the gaps' board member has made sure that pupil premium money is well spent and gaps are closing. The board's lead for safeguarding has made sure the board fulfils its statutory duties in relation to this. Board members make sure that pay is linked to teachers' performance and they have a clear oversight of the school's finances and resources.
- Members of the board do not consider some aspects of the school's performance so well. They do not consider in much depth how effective the school is in developing students spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students behave well in lessons. They arrive prepared to learn and engage with the tasks set. Low-level disruption is very rare. Where teaching is most effective, students display a high level of commitment to their learning and behaviour is outstanding. They show pride in their work and what they have learnt. Where teaching is less strong, this is less prevalent. In a few instances, students' paperwork is disorganised and work is untidy.
- Students' behaviour around the school site is exemplary. They conduct themselves in a calm and orderly manner and are courteous and considerate of others. They have a well-developed understanding of the importance of showing respect for each other and not using derogatory or discriminatory language, including that which is homophobic or racist. Name-calling of all types is increasingly rare. When it does occur, students share their concern with teachers, who deal with it effectively.
- Attendance rates at the school are high. Attendance and behaviour at alternative provision are good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and well cared for, and parents and carers agree.
- Bullying in all its forms is rare. Students know it will be dealt with effectively if it does occur.
- Staff have been trained on the risks that students may face from extremism and radicalisation. They keep an eye out for students who may be at risk. Appropriate plans are in place to discuss these risks with students so they know how to keep themselves safe from exploitation and harm.
- Suitable arrangements are in place to keep students who attend full-time alternative provision safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school enables students to learn well and make good progress. Teachers have strong knowledge of their subjects. They skilfully explain ideas and tasks so students can learn well. Teachers have high expectations for what students can achieve. They set work suited to students of different abilities, including those who are most able.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers' use of questioning to further students' knowledge and skills is highly effective. Students develop a deep and accurate understanding of their learning. Teachers skilfully involve students in assessing their work and identifying what they need to do to improve. As a result, students take full responsibility for their learning and make extremely strong progress. Where teaching is less strong, teachers are at times too ready to tell students the answers rather than challenging them to explain and think for themselves. Students still learn and make progress but opportunities for them to really deepen their skills and understanding are lost.
- Teachers assess students' work regularly and accurately. Students receive helpful advice on how to improve. However, students do not routinely act on this advice so it does not always lead to significant gains in students' skills and knowledge.
- Teaching in English and mathematics is effective. Students typically have well-developed reading, writing and mathematical skills. Other subjects contribute well to developing students' literacy skills. However, teachers of other subjects do not routinely consider how their teaching can help support students' mathematical development.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress across subjects and year groups. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is high. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades is above that seen nationally. Leaders set challenging targets for all students and many meet these successfully. Students' achievement in Key Stage 3 is particularly strong. High proportions of each student group make good progress in all their subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9. Overall students' progress in Key Stage 4 is also strong. However, some gaps remain in the achievement between different groups of students. Over the last few years, boys have achieved noticeably less well than girls. This gap is closing. However, boys still achieve less than girls at Key Stage 4. This is most noticeable in Year 10 where the proportion of boys on track to gain five A* to C grades at GCSE, although in line with the national average, is much lower than for girls, whose attainment is high. The proportion of Year 10 boys making good progress in English is also low in comparison with girls.
- The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others are closing well. In 2013, by the end of Key Stage 4, disadvantaged students were over a grade behind their peers in English and half a grade behind other students nationally. In mathematics, they were two grades behind their peers and over a grade behind other students nationally. In 2014, the gap between these students and other students in the school closed to less than half a grade in English and just over a grade in mathematics. Disadvantaged students closed the gap on other students nationally in English and were only half a grade behind in mathematics.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students making expected and better progress from their starting points in English and mathematics is well above that of other students nationally in most year groups. Disadvantaged students make particularly strong progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 and achieve well in all subjects. Typically, they attain as well as their peers. However, the proportion of disadvantaged students in Year 10 making expected and better progress is noticeably below that for other students nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make strong progress. Effective teaching and well-considered support help them learn really well.
- Students who speak English as an additional language and those from Pakistani and Indian ethnic backgrounds typically make at least as good and often better progress than their peers.
- Leaders work effectively with alternative education providers. They make sure students who attend these provisions have their needs met so they can learn well.
- Most-able students make good progress. Leaders make sure they study English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects at Key Stage 4. The proportion of most-able students who gain the EBacc at the end of Year 11 is much higher than for most-able students nationally.
- Leaders entered about half of the Year 11 students for mathematics GCSE early in 2014. This did not limit the most-able students' opportunity to do well. These students sat the examination for the first time in the summer. The proportion of this group who achieved an A or A* grade was much higher than the national figure for this group. Nationally published performance data for 2014 will only report the results from the first entry, so will not reflect how well all students had achieved by the end of Key Stage 4.

The sixth form provision is good

- Teaching in the sixth form is effective. Students, on average, make good progress and achievement above the national rate in all subjects at A level and Level 3 BTEC. Most students who retake mathematics or English language GCSE successfully gain a grade C.
- Leadership of the sixth form has been strengthened by the introduction of the Key Stage 5 standards manager. Together with the head of sixth form, he makes sure teaching is effective and students who are behind are supported to catch up. All students meet with their tutors each half term to discuss their progress and set targets for improvement. Students who are behind in several subjects are required to record the actions they are taking to catch up and review this weekly with their parents or carers and their tutor.
- When not in lessons, students make good use of private study time. They are also required to help support students lower down the school and some support pupils in primary schools. However students have not had opportunities to do work experience that relates directly to the subjects they are studying. Leaders now have a plan in place to address this. All students studying vocational subjects will attend relevant work placements in the summer. Students studying A levels will have work experience related to their career aspirations in the autumn term.
- Sixth form students are well prepared for life in modern British society. They are polite, respectful and tolerant of difference. They understand issues related to discrimination and respect for the law. They

know how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media, and are aware of the risks of radicalisation. However, students do not routinely have opportunities to deepen their thinking and understanding of these issues. The tutor time programme covers issues such as the dangers of alcohol and safe driving and assemblies tackle issues related to discrimination, but opportunities for deeper exploration and discussion are limited. Only students who study subjects such as philosophy and ethics or attend enrichment activities such as debating club have the chance to do this.

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	136637
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	449434

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,789
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Huw Jones
Headteacher	Mary Davies and Mike Haddrell
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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