

The Marlowe School

Hartpury Old School, Gloucester, Hartpury, GL19 3BG

Inspection dates

2–4 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school.

- The headteacher leads with determination and an unshakeable belief that every pupil can succeed. This had led to significant improvements since the last inspection in all areas of the school's work.
- Good teaching successfully engages pupils who have a history of extremely challenging behaviour. As a result, they enjoy learning and take pride in their work.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points because teaching is typically good. Careful lesson planning meets the needs of all pupils well.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. This ensures pupils feel secure and safe.
- Teaching assistants support learning well. They make a strong contribution to pupils' academic achievements and personal, social and health education.
- The school places a strong focus on the teaching of reading.
- The school has implemented rigorous systems for checking pupils' academic achievements and personal progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and well managed by staff. The daily communication between teachers and care staff ensures consistency of approaches between the school and homes.
- The school offers a range of accredited courses so that all pupils successfully transfer to the next stage of their education.
- The standard of artwork is outstanding. This is making a very positive contribution to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The directors consistently challenge leaders and staff to improve. They have ensured that all independent school standards are met in full.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers do not consistently ensure that their feedback helps pupils to know what their next steps of learning are. As a result, pupils do not always understand how to improve their work.
- Teachers do not have enough training to develop their teaching skills and subject knowledge fully to maximise learning in every lesson.
- Targets in school improvement plans lack agreed milestones during the school year to enable leaders to regularly check the school's performance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 13 lessons or parts of lessons taught by staff and looked at pupils' work, teachers' planning and information about pupils' progress. The headteacher observed four lessons jointly with the inspector.
- Meetings were held with the Chief Executive Officer of The Marlowe Child and Family Services, the headteacher, senior leaders and teaching staff. Informal discussions were held with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views.
- School policies and the school's documentation were scrutinised. Records relating to behaviour, attendance, bullying and safeguarding were examined. The inspector checked the school's documentation relating to the curriculum and schemes of work.
- The inspector took account of 13 staff questionnaires and the views of two parents or carers, one in person and one in writing, and one social worker by telephone.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for these to be published.

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Marlowe School is an independent special day school providing education for boys and girls with emotional, social and mental health difficulties. The school is owned by The Marlowe Child and Family Services. The school opened on its current site in September 2000.
- Most pupils are looked after by their respective local authorities. The majority live in one of the homes provided by the same company. Other pupils live with foster families or in residential care owned by another organisation.
- The school is registered for 30 pupils aged eight to 18 years.
- There are currently no pupils in the sixth form.
- The school currently offers provision for 19 boys and two girls, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school was last inspected in January 2012, when it was judged to be satisfactory. At that time, the school failed to meet regulations in respect of the quality of education provided.
- The directors provide governance for the school.
- The school makes use of additional off-site provision for music at the Cheltenham Community Centre, run by Gloucestershire County Council. The school also makes use of facilities at Hartpury College to provide physical education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that pupils are able to improve their work as a result of teachers' precise guidance
 - providing teachers with the training they need to develop their teaching skills and subject knowledge further.
- Refine the school's improvement plan by:
 - setting out measurable short-term targets so that leaders and directors can frequently check the difference their actions are making
 - recording when to check progress on actions taken and who is responsible for carrying these checks out.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is driving improvement at a fast pace. He leads a committed staff team with determination and a shared resolve to improve the life chances of every pupil. Teaching and achievement are improving because expectations are high. As a result, pupils make good progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The support for pupils' welfare, health and safety is strong. Leaders and staff set clear boundaries for pupils. They implement the school's high-quality policies effectively, monitoring closely patterns in pupils' attendance and behaviour. Pupils respond positively to these clear guidelines and behaviour is good. Pupils who have missed large parts of their education now attend regularly. Pupils told the inspector, 'I give this school 10 out of 10.' Parents and social workers who spoke with the inspector agree with this view. One parent stated, 'My child is a changed pupil. This is a great school'.
- The school's vision of 'Securing a brighter future for the children in our care' underpins its work. The headteacher and directors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They work tirelessly to check the school's performance and safeguarding procedures. The school meets all the independent school standards.
- The school has developed effective systems to check and analyse the academic and personal progress of pupils. The headteacher and middle leaders track pupils' progress carefully, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. They ensure support is swiftly put into place to address gaps in learning. This has a significant impact in improving pupils' progress and personal development.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning frequently. Teachers share good practice with each other. This helps them improve their performance. However, they lack opportunities to seek further training to develop their teaching skills and subject knowledge fully. As a result, on occasions, learning slows. This limits pupils' progress.
- Leaders have drawn up action plans which focus on improving outcomes for all pupils. However, timescales to achieve these outcomes are too long. Targets lack planned regular checks so that leaders and directors can monitor the difference their actions are having.
- The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are robust and meet statutory requirements. Leaders ensure all staff rigorously implement the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe. They act swiftly and effectively if there are concerns. Recruitment practice meets requirements. All training is up to date, which enables staff to undertake their roles effectively.
- The school offers an appropriate range of accredited courses to support pupils' career aspirations. Leaders ensure that pupils receive extensive guidance, work experience and take the right qualifications to access their chosen career pathway. Consequently, all pupils have an equal chance of succeeding in this school. They all transfer to college, training or employment.
- Leaders have successfully developed 'The Marlowe School Character Curriculum'. This enables their pupils to develop the necessary skills and values to be successful learners. This is at the heart of the school's work and prepares them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Pupils learn to be resilient, tolerant and respect others, including those of other cultures and religions. This approach fosters good relations and tackles prejudice and discrimination.
- Teachers prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. They study all subjects covered in the National Curriculum, with a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils learn about the workings of Parliament in citizenship lessons and have a good understanding about the rule of law.
- The standard of artwork is outstanding. The subject leader provides high-quality art lessons for all pupils. Examples of work on display include pupils' paintings inspired by the work of other artists and their interpretation of Islamic art. This strongly promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Leaders ensure pupils are safe when attending the off-site physical education and music provision. Risk assessments set out clear guidelines and the school's expectations. Consequently, pupils behave well and attendance is good.
- The Chief Executive Officer and directors ensure the school is well maintained. The premises provide a welcoming and bright learning environment. This is enhanced further by the very high standard of displays in all areas of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chief Executive Officer and directors are determined to improve pupils' life chances. This is

evident in the relentless focus on ensuring their safety and personal development. The directors review the safeguarding policy annually and seek to continually improve provision at the school. The Chief Executive Officer visits the school regularly. Directors meet with leaders weekly to check on the school's performance. This ensures directors are well informed about pupils' achievement and progress. They know where there are strengths in teaching and where it needs to develop further. They hold the headteacher to account for the progress and achievement of the pupils. Effective systems are in place to check the performance of staff with links to their salaries and pupils' progress. They reward good teaching. This is driving improvement and improving the quality of teaching. However, the school is looking for further opportunities to develop teachers' skills and subject knowledge to improve teaching further.

The directors manage financial resources efficiently. The premises are of a high quality and well resourced. This enables pupils to learn and make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff are skilled in managing challenging behaviour in a calm and consistent manner. This enables pupils to settle quickly in lessons and achieve well.
- Pupils join the school exhibiting very challenging behaviour and often find it difficult, initially, to trust the staff. However, the school successfully manages their behaviour and engages them in purposeful learning. The school's own records show a decline in serious incidents.
- Staff deal with occasional outbursts with sensitivity, and consistently implement procedures set out in school policies. The school has developed effective, information-sharing links with the care staff. Leaders have developed well-established, consistent approaches to managing individual pupils' behaviour. This ensures pupils understand the boundaries set and feel safe and secure.
- Attendance is good. The school assiduously monitors absences, checking for patterns and punctuality. Once settled, pupils say they like school and trust the adults working with them. As a result, pupils attend regularly and make good progress.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Relationships between pupils and all staff are strong. Students say they feel safe and appreciate the caring and supportive learning environment. This helps them learn well.
- Staff provide pupils with informative advice and guidance on safe use of the internet. Visitors to the school reinforce important messages in keeping safe. Pupils receive information about the risks of drugs and alcohol misuse. This helps them understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders are vigilant in ensuring all safeguarding training is up to date. This includes child protection procedures and the most recent guidance on keeping children safe in education. Staff act immediately and appropriately if they are concerned. Pupils say they feel very well cared for. Inspection evidence supports their views.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes are sociable occasions. Pupils say bullying is not tolerated and staff deal with incidents swiftly. The school's records show all incidents are carefully recorded and followed up diligently. This contributes positively to pupils feeling safe and secure.
- Staff carefully monitor pupils' behaviour and actions when they attend the off-site provision. Subsequently, pupils enjoy these sessions and act safely and sensibly.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Most pupils have missed significant periods of their education. This means they have substantial gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, teachers plan tasks which interest and engage the pupils and precisely match their needs. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well.
- The school gives a high priority to teaching English and mathematics. Teachers regularly check pupils' achievement in these subjects and identify gaps in their skills and understanding. They set aspirational targets and provide appropriate support quickly. Consequently, pupils soon begin to catch up and close the gaps in their learning.
- All staff have high expectations. They plan suitable tasks which challenge the most able and give support

to pupils when appropriate. For example, older pupils discussed being homeless and how homeless people feel. They worked well together to think of descriptive vocabulary to use in their writing, while empathising with homeless people. However, some teachers lack training to develop their teaching skills and subject knowledge even further to extend and deepen learning.

- The school places a strong focus on the teaching of reading. Students read regularly in class, sharing books together. Pupils, including previously reluctant readers, show an increasing love of books and knowledge of authors. Consequently, all pupils achieve well in reading, relative to their starting points.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. For example, the teacher carefully encouraged the most able pupils to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. As their confidence grew, they tackled increasingly difficult challenges and made good progress. The personal pride in their achievement was clear.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning and personal development well. They skilfully encourage pupils to work hard and behave well. This helps pupils' confidence and self-esteem to improve over time.
- Teachers encourage pupils to write neatly and develop good handwriting. Work in books shows strong improvement in pupils' presentation of their work. Pupils take pride in their work; they are keen to show visitors their books.
- Pupils are not always given clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. Consequently, pupils are sometimes unsure how to correct their work to achieve higher standards. This limits the progress they make.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school at different times with skills and knowledge which are typically well below average for their age. Many have missed substantial parts of their previous schooling. Some have not attended school for up to two years. As a result, they have significant gaps in their learning and are initially extremely reluctant to get involved in lessons.
- The school quickly checks pupils' ability and achievement on entry. Staff set aspirational targets and plan personalised work to address each pupil's learning needs. Pupils settle and develop positive attitudes to learning because they receive high-quality support. All pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school expects pupils to make similar progress to their peers in mainstream schools. The school's records of pupils' achievement, supported by the work in books, confirm that nearly all pupils make at least expected progress. An increasing proportion make good progress from their starting points.
- The most able pupils make progress in line with national expectations for their age. Older pupils study courses which are appropriate to their ages and capabilities. In Years 10 and 11, pupils sit GCSE examinations in mathematics and art. They also achieve appropriate accreditation in other subjects, for example, English, information and communication technology (ICT), science and music production. The school is insistent that all pupils are challenged to achieve high standards. This increases their opportunities to achieve their personal career aspirations.
- Virtually all pupils receive the additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils achieve well because they receive good teaching which carefully addresses their individual needs.
- The achievement of pupils attending off-site provision is good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are on track to achieve the same qualification in music production as their peers in mainstream education.
- All pupils study a broad range of subjects, including subjects to develop their creative and aesthetic skills. Work in books and on display demonstrates high-quality history, geography, religious education and science work. Visits to places of interest, such as a Roman burial site, bring subjects alive. As a result, pupils are engaged with their learning and achieve well.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well over time. They receive intensive, targeted support from teaching assistants to ensure they make similar progress to their peers.
- Teachers take every opportunity to teach reading in lessons. Consequently, pupils build their knowledge of the sounds letters make and become confident readers. They read aloud in lessons with increasing confidence and develop fluency and comprehension skills. This supports their learning in all subjects.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	115809
Inspection number	462863
DfE registration number	916/6072

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Proprietor	Marlowe Child and Family Services
Chair	Steve Miller CEO
Headteacher	Harry Howells
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 January 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,200
Telephone number	01452 700942
Fax number	01452 700866
Email address	School.marlowe@the-marlowe.co.uk

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