

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Linda Lee
Headteacher
Marlborough School
Marlborough Park Avenue
Sidcup
Kent
DA15 9DP

Dear Ms Lee

Short inspection of Marlborough School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016 with Rosemarie McCarthy, Ofsted inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the future and are committed to making the school an outstanding provider as soon as possible. Everyone works hard and is empowered to make a difference. Staff feel valued and supported because their ideas are listened to and acted upon. This has embedded a culture of continual improvement with everyone working together to raise standards and improve pupils' outcomes.

The school continues to provide very effective support for pupils who have complex special educational needs and disabilities. It is a welcoming and attractive place, designed to stimulate pupils to achieve as much as they can. All activities are carefully planned to ensure that learning makes sense and pupils can reinforce what they have learnt across different subjects and settings. Pupils like coming to school because they understand the well-established routines and enjoy positive relationships with staff.

Areas for improvement, identified in the previous inspection report, have been addressed. Teaching assistants have benefited from additional training and opportunities to build their skills. This has included working with a consultant to understand how best to support teaching and learning. They now have a very good

understanding of their responsibilities and are a valued and appreciated part of the teaching team. The use of information and communication technologies is fully embedded across the school and used effectively by staff and pupils. Some pupils successfully passed externally accredited courses in computing last year. Different technologies are used to support the wide range of learning, physical and sensory needs that pupils have and are targeted carefully to promote independence. The quality of subject leadership has also improved following the restructuring of leadership roles throughout the school. Ongoing training and support from more experienced colleagues, has ensured that all subject leaders are keenly focused on raising teaching and learning standards.

The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and leaders know what still needs to be done. For example, they have correctly identified that a number of staffing changes and absences have slowed improvements to teaching and learning. They have therefore taken immediate action to ensure that standards improve more quickly this year. Improvements are carefully planned but the systems for monitoring the effectiveness of leaders' actions are not robust. Monitoring roles are not clearly identified and milestones have not been established to check that improvements are happening quickly enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding considerations remain a key priority for everyone. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed to check they are effective. Training in safer recruitment practices has been completed and the required staff employment checks carried out. Therapies and personal care are conducted safely using well maintained facilities. Pupils are kept safe but are encouraged to be as independent as possible, for example, when moving around the building and using the outside play areas. Child protection roles and responsibilities are known and understood by everyone. All staff receive regular training and constantly review and refresh their understanding of how best to keep pupils safe. This has included recent training on how to minimise the risks of extremism and child sexual exploitation. They receive regular updates that reflect the latest statutory guidance and complete the required health and safety training appropriate to their roles. Staff know all pupils and their families very well and know what to do if they have a concern. They work closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils get all the support they need.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have high aspirations for the school and its pupils. They model the attitudes and behaviours they wish to see adopted by others. They are well respected by staff and parents for the effective leadership and support they provide. The capacity of leaders has been carefully managed to take account of planned periods of absence and changes in

responsibilities. For example, the school appointed a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) in September to give senior leaders more time to support teaching and learning. Leaders are given opportunities to take on new challenges and participate in nationally accredited leadership courses. This helps them take the next steps in their career and accept further responsibilities when they arise.

- Governors have worked closely with school leaders, parents and the local authority to ensure that standards are maintained. They make regular visits to the school and have a very accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for further improvement.
- Some staff changes have occurred as a result of the continual focus on improvement. Leaders have ensured that support has been provided where necessary and that new staff are able to take on the challenges of their roles and responsibilities quickly.
- Teaching and learning standards are improving as a result of effective training and development opportunities provided to staff. These are planned to link with the school improvement plan and the professional development needs of individuals.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of learning activities. All subjects from the national curriculum are studied, including modern foreign languages, sport, music and practical subjects. Therapeutic and sensory activities support the individual needs of pupils. All pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities that provide them with the chance to develop their learning in real-life settings. For example, some pupils help to run a small café that the school operates while others work on the school's allotment.
- School staff work very effectively with health professionals and therapists to ensure that individual learning and support plans are implemented successfully. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to record detailed progress information across every aspect of learning. This is used very effectively by teachers, who ensure that every small measure of progress is built on when they plan the next steps to be taken. However, it is increasingly difficult for leaders to monitor the volume of progress information being gathered to establish how well individuals and groups are doing over time.
- Pupils achieve good outcomes. More pupils successfully passed examinations and achieved externally moderated personal progress qualifications last year. Seventeen pupils have completed the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award in the last two years. Every pupil leaving the school since 2013 has maintained their place on their chosen college course.
- Pupils are given every opportunity to express their views and make their own choices whenever possible. Older pupils benefit from opportunities to work with a buddy pupil from mainstream schools.
- Parents value the high-quality care and support their children receive and can recognise the progress they are making. Staff keep in regular contact with parents to ensure that learning is reinforced outside of school. As a

result, all pupils make the expected rates of progress in English and mathematics, with a rising number making better than expected progress. This is also the case in other subjects and in their physical, therapeutic, sensory and communication development.

- Attendance rates improved last year and far fewer pupils were persistently absent. This was as a result of the effective interventions carried out by the school when concerns were identified.
- Pupils attending the sixth form make good progress and are prepared well for their chosen college placements. They are given opportunities to develop life skills through regular work experience. Sixth formers benefit from attending a centre away from the main school site. They are encouraged to become more independent and experience the changes that will be necessary when they leave the school. This allows them to prepare for adult life.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- school plans include precise timescales and more explicit monitoring roles for leaders and governors so that the impact of improvements can be fully evaluated
- all pupil assessment information is pulled together to ensure that a complete picture of every pupil's progress can be evaluated by leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Bexley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors met with a group of middle leaders and a group of support staff, and considered the 46 responses to the staff questionnaire. A group of health professionals and representatives from the governing body and the local authority were spoken to. Inspectors met some parents and evaluated the responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school's own parental surveys. Inspectors made short visits to classes at the main school site and the sixth form provision at Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School, accompanied by senior leaders. A range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, pupil progress tracking information and evidence of safeguarding arrangements, were reviewed.