

Marathon Science School

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

Inspection dates

21–23 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in business studies, humanities and religious education.
- The quality of teaching remains variable across the subjects offered.
- A single assessment system is not in place to check pupils' progress over time.
- The trustees are clear about the priorities for improving pupils' education, but do not hold leaders to account for the school's work. Their strategic direction is therefore not strong.
- Leaders are not consistently thorough and timely in using systems to record events in the boarding and school provision. Consequently, the school does not meet all of the minimum standards for boarding schools.

The school has the following strengths

- The trustees and leaders ensure that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Pupils behave very well, displaying a good work ethic and self-discipline. Good relationships between pupils and staff support their learning.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils. It enables them to pursue higher studies in engineering, mathematics and the sciences.
- There are many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and the boarding accommodation. They know about potential risks and how to keep safe. Pupils' attendance is high.
- Supervision of pupils during social time is effective in the boarding provision.
- Residential guidance and support are strengths.
- Parents report that they very much appreciate the school's work.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools are not all met. The school must take action to meet the requirements of the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that they are consistently good or better in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - teachers focus sharply on pupils' interpretation and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary to support them in expressing their written responses accurately, particularly in literacy-based subjects
 - teachers use questions effectively to sharpen and deepen pupils' understanding of literacy-based subjects
 - pupils use teachers' detailed guidance to improve the quality and presentation of their written work, particularly low- and middle-attaining pupils in key stage 3.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that pupils' achievement in business studies, geography, history and religious education is checked carefully so that support is offered quickly when assessment information shows that they are not making good progress.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - trustees focus more on school improvement and consistently challenge leaders about the school's work and effectiveness
 - teachers use a well-organised and planned assessment system to check pupils' progress
 - senior leaders are consistent in their approach to challenging the progress pupils make in all subjects
 - safeguarding training is in depth and routinely kept updated
 - the school meets the national minimum standards (NMS) for boarding schools that have not been met.

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met (NMS 13.4).
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. In particular, the boarding provision must maintain records of staff supervision and appraisal (NMS 13.8).
- The school must ensure that arrangements to safeguard the welfare of pupils have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This relates to the designated safeguarding lead of the boarding provision receiving in-depth safeguarding training (NMS 11.1).
- The school must ensure that all medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration (NMS 3.4).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision	Requires improvement
How well children and young people are protected in the boarding provision	Requires improvement

- Systems to record and manage the school's work are not followed carefully enough by senior leaders. Leaders have not tackled all areas for improvement thoroughly to ensure that the school is good.
- Leaders regularly check teachers' work to assess the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. They link this work to staff appraisal, including teachers' training and development. The process ensures that staff receive useful feedback on their strengths and areas they could improve. However, financial constraints and limited time mean that leaders have not been able to provide opportunities for staff to observe good practice beyond the school or spread the benefits of their training widely.
- Leaders check pupils' progress, but the school does not have a unified assessment system to help them accurately monitor pupils' progress.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision, building on his predecessor's work. Priorities identified in the development plan show that leaders are ambitious for the school. They want consistently good or better teaching that will lead to improved standards in all subjects. However, the development plan does not include success criteria, milestones or timescales. Consequently, it is hard to evaluate the extent to which the plan is leading to the targeted improvements.
- Parents are happy and supportive of the school's work to help their children achieve well and return as individuals who will serve the community well. They see the school's work as ground-breaking provision within the Turkish community. Comments such as 'positive school', and, 'I am satisfied with his results' are indicative of parents' views.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and offers pupils a range of subjects that meets their needs and abilities. For example, the school makes the most of pupils' home languages and offers courses in a number of languages, including Arabic. Additionally, the expanded curriculum now includes GCSE English literature.
- Subjects such as citizenship, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, religious education, humanities and Islamic education contribute to providing pupils with insight into the lives, faith and cultures of other groups. These subjects and the school's programmes on 'world vision' and 'etiquette' give pupils opportunities to consider issues of respect, resilience, tolerance and equality of opportunity. The school extends pupils' leisure and curriculum time with enrichment activities that allow them to explore London and travel further afield, including trips abroad. The school's work to engage pupils in a wider range of activities prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The school is a welcoming place and embraces pupils from different cultural backgrounds.

Governance

- The trustees are well intentioned. However, they have relied on leaders to provide them with information on pupils' performance without asking questions or challenging them about all aspects of the school's work. This is primarily because the small size of the school and limited resources have led trustees to prioritise financial management, so that the school remains financially viable.
- Trustees have a good understanding of the school's work to provide pupils with a solid foundation to move on to the next stage of their education. However, they do not know about the quality of teaching and the impact on learning for all groups of pupils. The trustees' strategic management of the school is not consistently robust in all areas of their work.
- The trustees meet regularly with pupils at the boarding provision. They listen to them well and act on their views. For example, they have worked with pupils to provide more recreational space at the boarding provision.
- Trustees ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements, although this is not the case for the boarding provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pre-appointment checks to assess the suitability of teaching staff and trustees are fully in place. The recruitment checks in relation to references and employment gaps for boarding staff are not thorough. Methods for recording are not comprehensive. Leaders explore employment history but do not systematically transfer it to the formal records; they keep the information in notebooks. In spite of the school not using robust procedures to record information, pupils are kept safe.
- Protective features are in place to safeguard the pupils' welfare. For example, there is close monitoring of internet safety, behaviour management is excellent, and the school environment is safe. The curriculum provides good coverage of topics on how pupils should keep safe in and out of school.
- Effective partnership work with the local police liaison officer, and work covered in Islamic studies, ensure that pupils have a good knowledge of their faith to protect them from the risks of radicalisation.
- All staff are aware of the local and national priorities on safeguarding pupils. The school engages in discussions with the local police and maintains links with the local authorities from which most pupils are drawn.
- Leaders, including trustees, have ensured that the school complies with regulations in relation to health and safety, for example, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

- Arrangements for training and management oversight are not always robust to ensure that all staff have an in-depth knowledge of roles and responsibilities. Formal training on child protection and the 'Prevent' duty has taken place. The school prides itself on ensuring that pupils are thoroughly versed in their faith to prevent them being swayed towards radicalisation. Informal training has taken place on a range of safeguarding topics such as female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Leaders have now made suitable arrangements for formal training.
- Staff are very clear about the procedures they need to follow if there is a concern. This was observed during the inspection when the designated safeguarding lead made a referral to social care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The impact of good-quality teaching over time is not evident in all subjects across the curriculum. Pupils' progress is uneven in some subjects such as business studies, religious education, history and geography. Pupils' slower progress in these literacy-based subjects is linked to their understanding and interpretation of English. Teachers recognise the barriers that pupils experience and provide much support to develop pupils' skills to write succinctly and accurately. This was evident during the inspection.
- Pupils make good progress to reach above-average standards in mathematics, additional science, statistics, physics, chemistry and biology.
- Teachers do not always explain the meaning of key words to develop pupils' understanding of texts read. This makes learning more difficult for pupils, particularly if unknown words and phrases refer to cultural references outside pupils' personal experience.
- Pupils do not always apply the taught skills to consolidate their understanding of tasks. This is because too often pupils adopt a 'slapdash' approach to answering questions and completing tasks, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers provide helpful feedback to pupils, but do not regularly comment on untidy work or insist on pupils using the advice to improve the quality of their work.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to tease answers out of pupils and assess their understanding of their work. Typically, when teachers use role play in English during the reading of Shakespeare's plays, this brings the text to life and helps pupils to understand the figurative language.
- The teaching of pupils requiring additional support, particularly if they are new and learning English as an additional language, is good. Teachers identify pupils who need extra support and they plan different activities and work alongside them so that they learn well. Additionally, pupils will ask for support at the end of a lesson.
- Across the subjects, it is normal practice for teachers to use visual images and information and communication technology to reinforce teaching points. Typically, teachers do this before they assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the taught skills. This works well for pupils when they move on to standard examination-type questions; they find that they can complete them well within a set time, as seen in a Year 11 science lesson.

- The teaching of mathematics is a strong feature of the school's work and pupils excel in the subject. This is because, in the words of the former headteacher, 'Pupils have an affinity to mathematics; they find the language of number easier to understand.' Pupils make good use of their knowledge of mathematics in other subjects such as physics and chemistry.
- Teachers have done much to improve the quality of pupils' reading and writing skills since the last inspection. Pupils now read daily in school and this is helping them to develop their vocabulary and language skills. Furthermore, the teaching of English literature as a GCSE option provides boys with insight into the English literary culture. However, pupils are still developing their understanding of English literary terms.
- Good relationships between teachers, other staff and pupils lead to pupils learning well. Pupils are respectful, listen well and are eager to learn and please. This means that classroom management is very good and interruptions are rare.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement because of the shortfalls in relation to the recording and administration of medication.
- Throughout the year groups, pupils demonstrate a strong work ethic, and they focus very well in lessons. Pupils are proud of their school, value learning and want to achieve their ambitious goals and give back to their community. As a result, pupils do not waste time in lessons, relationships at all levels are very good, and they cooperate well with each other and their teachers.
- Pupils see themselves as part of a close and caring community, in which they see each other as 'brothers', living together and sharing. Within this community, the buddy system works well and pupils build on that sense of belonging to, and identifying with, a group. Pupils value the friendships they make and demonstrate excellent social skills. They treat each other and visitors with respect. Pupils have a sense of shared values and as they say, have a desire to 'do the right thing'.
- The school council members see themselves as elected and effective representatives of others. They have actively engaged in bringing about change such as campaigning for better quality food, and improvements to the boarding provision and use of their leisure time. Outside school hours, pupils enjoy a range of constructive activities within the school, the boarding provision and locally. Pupils enjoy competitive wrestling; they benefit from professional coaching to help them develop their skills and gain a raft of medals.
- Pupils thrive in a clear and comfortable 'home' and school environment. Pupils say that they are well prepared for the practicalities of adult life. This is because they make good use of the facilities at the boarding provision to carry out basic communal chores and personal care.
- Pupils are responsive to the careers advice and guidance they receive, especially when they take part in careers fairs and listen to professionals from different occupations.

- Pupils communicate well in lessons, but tend to display less confidence when talking to visitors. On such occasions, they can portray a reserved image and become reluctant speakers when talking to visitors.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently high. It is unusual for any pupils not to attend school regularly; they very much enjoy attending school daily.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. At other times it can be exemplary, such as when they move around the school, dine together and socialise with each other.
- Staff are highly effective in managing pupils' behaviour and pupils are responsive to observing the code of conduct and teaching on 'etiquette'. Pupils know that it is important to treat each other and other people outside school with respect. The school has no reported incidents of bullying. Pupils know about prejudice-based bullying, including that relating to disability, race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Pupils are familiar with the importance of showing tolerance towards other faith groups and are articulate about their understanding of other cultures and faiths.
- Pupils see their school and the boarding provision as safe places. They say that bullying behaviour is uncommon. On the rare occasion when an incident occurs, boys sort out their differences very quickly. Pupils know that they can turn to specialist staff if they have any concerns.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Standards and pupils' rates of progress require improvement because, by the end of Years 10 and 11, outcomes in GCSE subjects remain too variable. Pupils' progress is not good enough in a few subjects where standards are below or well below the national average. These include business studies, core science, religious education, geography and history.
- The school's tracking systems and evidence from lessons confirm that pupils make better progress in statistics, physics, biology, chemistry and additional science, their home languages and mathematics, than in other subjects.
- Based on pupils' below-average starting points, most continue to achieve exceptionally well in statistics, Turkish, mathematics and information and communication technology. Above-average standards have been sustained in these subjects and in other modern foreign languages since the last inspection.
- At the time of the last inspection, pupils did not perform well in English. Since the expansion of the English department and the introduction of English literature, the majority of the small cohorts have achieved GCSE grades A*–C in both English and English literature over the last two academic years. This represents good progress.

- Work in pupils' books and assessment records show that pupils in Years 7 to 9 make average progress. However, pupils do not make better progress in literacy-based subjects. This is because they do not take sufficient care and pride in their written work and presentation. For example, weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the quality of pupils' work. Not all pupils readily act on the feedback teachers give to improve the quality of their work.
- The school uses early entry to GCSE in mathematics and languages for pupils who are ahead in their studies. This approach enables pupils to take statistics as an extra GCSE option in Year 11.
- The school offers the most able pupils very good opportunities to move to AS- and A-level courses in their home language, such as Turkish, Persian and Urdu. Pupils who speak other languages attain well-above-average standards in the home languages at GCSE or at advanced levels. Pupils also study Arabic and Spanish as additional subjects.
- Pupils achieve sufficient GCSE grades to go on to the next stage of their education. Almost all move on to local colleges to gain level 3 qualifications in preparation for university.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

- The boarding provision requires improvement because it does not meet all the requirements of the national minimum standards.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for the boarding provision has received basic safeguarding training. Further and more comprehensive training is planned.
- The boarding provision has not had any significant child protection concerns and staff know what action to take in response to safeguarding concerns. Young people do not engage in risk-taking behaviours and staff provide high levels of supervision and support.
- Safeguarding training for the boarding staff is appropriate. Inspection evidence confirms that safeguarding training is ongoing, including working closely with the local police, who provide training on the 'Prevent' duty and the risks of radicalisation. The local link police officer works very well with leaders to increase pupils' awareness of the risks of radicalisation.
- The head of boarding promotes a culture of high achievement and aspirations. Young people are able to articulate clear goals and ambition when talking about their future plans. The head of boarding and trustees are accessible and work directly with pupils. As a result, pupils say that the head of boarding is 'firm but fair, and understands us'.
- Pupils behave very well. This is because leaders and other staff manage behaviour effectively in the boarding provision. Pupils, through the teaching of Islamic studies, learn strong values of social responsibility and respect. The boarding provision has not had any incidents of physical restraint, and sanctions for misbehaviour are rare.
- The quality of supervision and support for pupils is good. High expectations of behaviour mean that pupils cooperate very well with staff. Pupils say that the rules are 'fair and just'. They have trusting relationships with adults and can share any concerns with them; they reported that they feel safe in the boarding provision.

- Staff have a secure understanding of the risks associated with the internet and ensure that effective safety measures are in place. Staff give pupils a good grounding in the dangers of using social media and the internet, and they closely monitor the use of mobile devices.
- Partnership with parents and the police is good. Parents were overwhelmingly positive in their praise of the service.
- Morale is good and staff work effectively as a team and have a shared sense of values and purpose.

Quality of care and support in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

- The boarding provision requires improvement because of shortfalls in the quality of provision. While there is no evidence of medicines being administered incorrectly, record keeping for pupils' medication is imprecise.
- Pupils are generally healthy. The school receives general advice from a doctor who, because he is not registered with the General Medical Council, does not provide any healthcare to pupils. Instead, when required, pupils are taken to a general practitioner for a check-up and treatment.
- The quality of individual support and induction for pupils is good. Pupils say that they feel supported by each other and staff. One pupil said, 'I was homesick when I first arrived but staff treated me like they were a mother and father.'
- Pupils keep in touch regularly with their families, and parents are very happy with the care their children receive. The boarding accommodation is comfortable, clean, warm and welcoming, with spacious rooms. This leads to pupils feeling that they are moving from home to home.
- Pupils enjoy the food; they eat well and make healthy choices in relation to their diet.
- The school provides a good range of activities, including for example local, national and international trips and events. Pupils enjoy and participate in the well-planned extra-curricular activities, especially in the football club and their favourite wrestling competitions.
- Leaders and trustees consult pupils about their views in relation to their care and welfare plans. The school council says that it plays an active role in influencing decisions about pupils' care, guidance and support. For example, it contributed to decisions on using mobile phones in the evening and eating healthier meals.
- Pupils have opportunities to reflect on what matters to them and the areas of care and welfare for which they would like support. Similarly, they record their own reflective account when there are behavioural incidents. This allows them to tell their side of the story, consider the impact on others and rectify their mistakes.

School details

Unique reference number	135901
Social care unique reference number	SC400622
DfE registration number	209/6409
Inspection number	10020714

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. 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.

Type of school	Secondary school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	66
Proprietor	Seven Hills Educational Trust
Chair	Hakan Ozgul
Headteacher	Omer Gokcek
Annual fees (boarders)	£7,900
Telephone number	020 7231 3232
Website	www.marathonschool.com
Email address	omergokcek@marathonschool.com
Date of previous inspection	17–19 September 2013

Information about this school

- Marathon Science School of Excellence is an independent secondary boarding school with an Islamic ethos. It is registered for boys aged 11 to 19 years. The school opened in September 2009 and currently has 66 pupils on roll. All pupils are boarders. The number of pupils on roll has declined, but the school currently has 25 pupils who will join the school at the start of the new academic year in September 2017.
- The school is located in Surrey Quays and the boarding provision is in Shoreditch. All pupils belong to the Muslim faith and most are of Turkish background. Pupils mostly come from neighbouring London boroughs and the East Midlands. A few pupils are from Austria, the Netherlands and Germany.
- Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language. New arrivals from abroad are at different stages of developing their fluency in English.
- The school currently caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years. The school currently has a waiting list and expects to increase the number on roll at the start of the next academic year in September 2017. The school intends to open the sixth form at the same time.
- The school does not have any pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school does not have any pupils who attend alternative provision.
- The school day begins at 8.30am and ends at 3pm. The school uses its own transport to transfer pupils between the school and the boarding provision. Each day, pupils follow a set routine where they engage in social activities before they take part in Islamic studies, and complete their homework. Each year group has a specific day when a tutor is available to provide them with additional support to complete their work.
- Following the retirement of the founding headteacher, the newly appointed headteacher had been in post for six weeks at the time of the inspection. The former post holder is a mentor to the new headteacher.
- The proprietors include a group of four trustees who comprise the Seven Hills Educational Trust.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in lessons across a range of subjects in all year groups. The headteacher accompanied inspectors on three observations.
- The inspectors observed pupils during form time and break- and lunchtime. Pupils were also observed at the boarding provision at the end of the school day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and previous headteacher, other middle leaders who hold specific responsibilities, and with a representative of the trust. The inspectors met with the school council and spoke with small groups of pupils during social times and at the boarding provision.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and boarding provision and scrutinised a range of documentation. This included the school's development plan, records of pupils' attainment, attendance and behaviour, minutes of the trustees' meetings, appraisal records of teaching and learning, and information about enrichment activities, including trips and visits.
- The inspectors considered the three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views of a parent who had a telephone conversation with an inspector.
- Telephone conversations were held with the local safeguarding board officers for Hackney and Lewisham local authorities, the boroughs from which most pupils are drawn.
- The inspectors reviewed records and policies relating to the school's systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils, including their care in the boarding provision.

Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lee Kerwin	Regulatory Inspector
Barnaby Dowell	Regulatory Inspector

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