

Marlwood School

Vattingstone Lane, Alveston, Bristol BS35 3LA

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school's decline has been characterised by low expectations at all levels. Trustees' and governors' low expectations of senior leaders have resulted in similar expectations of middle leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they should across a range of subjects and year groups. In key subjects, such as humanities and languages, pupils' learning varies far too much.
- Disadvantaged pupils make much less progress than others nationally. While there is some sign of improvement in some year groups, this is not consistent across the school.
- Teachers do not routinely take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. Therefore, they do not challenge pupils to think more deeply and extend their learning.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes requirements are not being met. Many Year 13 learners have chosen inappropriate subjects because they were badly advised.
- Pupils' attendance is below average, particularly for girls and disadvantaged pupils. The school has been ineffective in addressing pupils' poor attendance.
- Governance is ineffective. Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the school. They fail to challenge school leaders effectively.
- Middle leadership is not having sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching. Lack of effective management of teachers' performance has hindered progress in improving teaching.
- Too many parents are dissatisfied with the school's work. They are particularly concerned about the quality of communication from the school about their child's progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make better progress in mathematics and they attain in line with the national average.
- The chief executive of the trust has acted to support improvements in the curriculum, assessment and behaviour management since his appointment in September 2016.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - urgently improving governance, so that school leaders are held rigorously to account for pupils' progress and for the spending of targeted funding, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding
 - improving senior and middle leaders' skills by providing them with training to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring that middle leaders are held to account for the progress of pupils in the areas they lead
 - improving the rigour of the performance management of staff
 - developing the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all pupils
 - improving communication with parents
 - developing a culture of sharing good practice that exists within the school and implementing the systems required to achieve this.
- Improve teaching, and raise pupils' achievement, by:
 - taking urgent action to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of
 - ensuring that teachers provide learning which meets the needs of all pupils, based on accurate and appropriate assessments of their prior understanding
 - ensuring that the needs of different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are met
 - providing pupils with activities that deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly for the most able.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by improving the attendance of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to at least the national average.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The Castle School Education Trust (CSET) has had responsibility for the school since November 2014. During this period, the progress of pupils has been poor. Pupils' attendance has been low and, for too many pupils, shows no sign of improvement.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have been over-generous in their view of the performance of the school relative to national standards. They have not provided governors with an accurate interpretation of pupils' progress information. Leaders have focused too much on pupils' attainment and not sufficiently on their progress.
- The quality of senior and middle leadership is too variable. There is little accountability, at any level. This limits the effectiveness and sustainability of new initiatives.
- Leaders have not managed teachers' performance adequately. Teachers and middle leaders are not set challenging targets and therefore they do not challenge their pupils to achieve highly enough. This has led to a culture of complacency and low expectations.
- Pupils made inadequate progress in 2015 and 2016 in a wide range of subjects. This continues to be the case because inconsistencies in teaching have been allowed to persist. Leaders have not ensured that the best teaching practice, for example in mathematics, is shared more widely across the school.
- Leaders do not use pupil premium funding well. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve. Leaders have not provided clear guidance for teachers on how to support disadvantaged pupils, so teachers are not equipped to support these pupils effectively.
- Leaders have failed to raise teachers' expectations of the most able pupils. Teachers do not consider the needs of these, and other groups of pupils, well enough. This limits the progress they make.
- Leaders do not have a secure understanding of how well initiatives are implemented, or their impact, because systems for monitoring are ineffective. Leaders rely on anecdotal evidence, without checking its accuracy. Therefore, their efforts to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not had the desired impact.
- The curriculum enables pupils to follow a broad range of subjects at GCSE and A level. However, pupils do not receive effective advice and guidance and so they do not make the best choices in terms of their career aspirations, interests or abilities. The curriculum, and the way it is delivered, is not meeting the needs of the most able pupils, particularly the most able girls, or disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, these pupils underachieve. They also do not attend well.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to consider life in modern Britain. As a result, they develop a sound understanding of democracy and tolerance of the views of others.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities available, to cater for artistic, sporting, academic and cultural interests. For example, key stage 3 pupils' aspirations are being raised by university visits.

- Until recently, leaders have failed to ensure that high-quality, impartial careers advice is available for all pupils and particularly for students in the sixth form. Consequently, many pupils are not following appropriate courses, or are not being supported towards their next steps. While there is evidence that the current Year 12 students have made better choices than previous cohorts, pupils in other year groups have not been well supported.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been used effectively. The new leader of special educational needs has improved how work is tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. While this has had a positive impact in Years 7, 8 and 9, there is little impact for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils understand and appreciate other cultures and points of view.

Governance of the school

- Governance is inadequate.
- Governors are over-reliant on school leaders to present and interpret school performance information. They have accepted the over-generous views that leaders present without effective challenge. For example, governors were shocked to be informed that the 2016 attendance of certain groups was in the lowest 10% of pupils nationally, despite having had access to this information for some time.
- Governors have not ensured that pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used to good effect.
- The trust is reorganising the governing body, to centralise financial oversight, because the local governing body has been unable to oversee financial issues in a timely manner.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory responsibilities ensuring pupils' safety are carried out. Appropriate checks are made on adults working in the school. All staff receive safeguarding training which is updated regularly. There is a good understanding among staff of how to recognise signs of abuse or neglect, and procedures are followed where concerns are raised.
- Staff understand the issues which may lead pupils to be unsafe or abused, but pupils' awareness of risk is not as well developed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate because, across a range of subjects, teachers do not challenge pupils to make the progress that they should.
- Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils are capable of

achieving. They do not use information about pupils' prior attainment and learning effectively. Disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils do not make sufficient progress because their needs are not being met.

- Too often teaching fails to provide sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able pupils and does not support the least able pupils. As a result, the achievement and progress of both groups are limited.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils understand what they are learning. For example, in science, the most able pupils were carrying out experiments without understanding what they were investigating or why. As a result, pupils carried out the task without developing secure knowledge or a deeper understanding.
- Teachers do not use homework consistently. Pupils and parents complain that expectations vary between teachers and from week to week. Because of this, both the amount and usefulness of homework vary considerably.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally positive and pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions. Teachers' expectations of behaviour have been raised through the recently introduced 'Readiness to Learn' system. While pupils report that disruption in their classes has reduced as a result, a number of pupils are being placed in the isolation area. The impact on their learning has not been evaluated at this stage.
- The quality of teaching in English has improved this year and, where teachers in this subject are consistently applying the new strategies, the progress of pupils has improved. However, there is still inconsistency within the department which impedes some pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils respond well when teachers ask them to tackle challenging work. Lower prior attaining pupils, for example, were confidently tackling high-level concepts in Year 9.
- As a result of variable expectations of teachers, the development of the attitudes required for pupils to be successful learners is inconsistent. Pupils' presentation and the quality of their work vary from one subject to the next because of the inconsistency between teachers.
- Most pupils show pride in their school. They wear their uniform smartly and conduct themselves well around the school site. They respect the school environment. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive, creating an environment where pupils feel safe.
- Parents and most pupils report that bullying is not common. School records indicate that incidents are rare and appropriate action is taken where it does occur.
- Pupils articulate clearly where they have been taught how to be physically healthy, but are less secure in terms of maintaining emotional or mental health. The recently

introduced personal, social, health and citizenship education programme is designed to address this. However, the support for pupils with mental health issues is strong and the school supports pupils, in off-site provision, who are unable to access mainstream education.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe within and outside school, and on the internet. However, pupils do not demonstrate the same level of awareness in terms of radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.
- The school has recently changed the programme of careers advice and guidance to enable pupils to make informed choices about their future. However, leaders have not yet measured the impact. Pupils and parents do not feel that the information previously provided by the school gives sufficient information to enable them to make informed choices. Pupils in key stage 3 do not feel that the school has supported them in making decisions about their GCSE subject choices.
- A very small number of pupils attend off-site provision. Staff monitor their attendance and they are well looked after. The school ensures that information is effectively communicated to the provider, so that they can effectively support the pupils in their care.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the site is generally calm and respectful. Pupils are polite and courteous to one another and adults. Consequently, there is an orderly atmosphere around the school at break- and lunchtimes and during changes of lessons.
- Behaviour in lessons has been improved by the recently introduced 'Readiness to Learn' system. Low-level disruption is now rare, and quickly dealt with by teachers. While pupils report that there are some inconsistencies in the application of the procedures, school records show that the number of incidents is reducing as the system becomes more embedded.
- Fixed-term exclusions have fallen over the past three years due to more robust systems for managing behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance rates have been below national averages for the past two years and, for 2016, in the lowest 10% of schools for disadvantaged pupils and girls. The school has been ineffective in addressing the issue and, while a small improvement in the attendance of girls has been achieved, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has declined further. Too many disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- In 2015 and 2016, the progress of pupils was inadequate. Compared with national benchmarks, except in mathematics, pupils at this school achieved well below pupils of similar starting points in other schools.
- Most-able girls and disadvantaged pupils did particularly poorly. Their progress was in line the lowest 10% of schools nationally.
- Pupils join the school in Year 7 with attainment which is in line with or above the national average. Pupils are not learning well enough in a number of subjects, including English, science, languages and humanities. Therefore, they do not attain the GCSE grades of which they are capable.
- Pupils produce work of varying quality, dependent on the expectations of their teachers. In English, where leaders have been making some improvements, there is still too much inconsistency to secure good progress for all groups of pupils.
- Leaders are able to provide evidence that differences between the outcomes for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils are diminishing in Year 11. However, in Year 10, the differences are widening. Improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils are not yet secure across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now better supported in school. In 2015 and 2016, they made inadequate progress. However, current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 3 are making better progress because of recent improvements in provision. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are still not making sufficient progress.
- Pupils generally are not well prepared for their next stages of education, training or employment. Pupils do not achieve the grades of which they are capable, limiting their options for the future.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- School leaders recognised that leadership in the sixth form was weak. In 2016, leadership was strengthened by the appointment of a new head of sixth form in collaboration with the Castle School. The new leadership has taken action to improve provision in the sixth form; however, this has had limited impact on outcomes for current Year 13 students.
- In 2016, the retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13 was very low. Many students have not been guided to follow the most appropriate courses. Leaders are now addressing this for the current Year 12 students, but have still not fulfilled all statutory requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. Leaders do not ensure that students have the opportunity for appropriate work experience.
- The quality of teaching at A level is too variable. Where it is strong, teachers use good subject knowledge to plan learning. Teachers' feedback to students enables them to re-shape their work and make improvements. Weaker teaching and learning are

characterised by low teacher expectations. For example, in chemistry, Year 13 students have insecure understanding of basic work, which means that they cannot access the deeper learning required for higher grades.

- Outcomes in the sixth form are too variable. Leaders do not have confidence in the assessment information provided by teachers and, therefore, are not confident that they know how well students are progressing. School leaders recognise that student transfer from one site to the other and communication between teachers are having a negative impact on students' progress. As a result, all sixth-form teaching is transferring to the Gloucester Road site in September 2017.

School details

Unique reference number	141341
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10035845

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	653
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	99
Appropriate authority	The multi-academy trust
Chair	Rhona Allgood
Headteacher	James Pope
Telephone number	01454 862525
Website	www.marlwood.com
Email address	theschool@marlwood.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school converted to become an academy in November 2014 and is part of the Castle School Education Trust. The current chief executive officer of the trust was appointed in September 2016.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English

as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as requiring additional support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- A small number of pupils who have emotional or health needs are educated off site either at the Pathways Learning Centre or in a Bristol hospital.
- The school's GCSE results were above the national floor standards in 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons, including in the sixth form. They visited tutor time and an assembly, and observed pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtime, as well as at changes of lessons. Many of the observations were done with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' work provided by senior leaders and looked at pupils' work in lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders, governors and the chief executive officer. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils, including sixth-form students, and spoke with others informally. Inspectors also considered the responses of 118 pupils to the online pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the 38 responses to the online staff questionnaire and the 119 responses to the online parent questionnaire, including the free-text responses. The lead inspector spoke with a parent on the telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents provided by the school. These included: evaluations of the school's progress; development plans; policies; governance and safeguarding procedures; and records of how the school supports vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website.

Inspection team

David New, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Trudi Baker	Ofsted Inspector
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Martin Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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