

The Marlborough Church of England School

Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1LP

Inspection dates

20–21 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have established an ethos of high aspirations. They ensure that pupils benefit from a well-rounded education at the school.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects. Where outcomes have not been as strong in the past, for example in mathematics, progress is accelerating because of more effective teaching.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is improving, although it is not yet at the level of other pupils with similar starting points. Leaders and teachers now pay more attention to these pupils' needs.
- Good teaching successfully promotes pupils' interest, involvement and motivation in lessons. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan lessons effectively. Pupils receive helpful feedback, which they use well to improve their work.
- Teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils effectively. These pupils are sometimes given too much routine work, rather than tasks which stretch them.
- Leaders make careful checks on the quality of teaching and on the progress that pupils make, although this is weaker in the sixth form.
- Several new appointments have strengthened leadership. Middle leaders are making an increasingly effective contribution to raising standards.
- Most pupils attend school regularly, although there is a small minority whose attendance needs to be improved.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They are confident, polite and courteous to one another and to staff.
- The curriculum and wider provision promote pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures are well thought through and effective. Parents and carers agree that pupils' safety and welfare have the highest priority.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and who attend the Ormerod Centre, receive very effective support to enable them to attend mainstream classes and learn well.
- Governors carry out their duties diligently and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide effective challenge to leaders.
- The progress of students following A-level courses in the sixth form is below the national average. Leaders' actions are not yet bringing about improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress made by students following A-level courses across the sixth form.
- Accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, so that they achieve outcomes which are similar to those of other pupils nationally.
- Ensure that teachers consistently plan learning to suit the needs of all pupils, especially the most able, so that opportunities for pupils to make rapid progress are maximised.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal is determined and ambitious for the school. He is held in high regard by staff and parents, who recognise the efforts he is making to raise expectations and standards further. He has taken appropriate and decisive action to eradicate some areas of previously weak teaching and leadership.
- Leaders show passion and enthusiasm. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well, evaluating them accurately and honestly. Leaders have acted to address the reasons why pupils' overall progress dipped in 2017. They have reviewed the range of courses that some pupils follow, and increased the focus on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Skilful subject and pastoral leaders are strongly committed to the school. Recent appointments have strengthened the capacity of middle leaders to bring about improvement. They carry out their duties with dedication and confidence, and monitor the work of the teams they lead increasingly well. Middle leaders are held to account appropriately, and supported well by senior staff.
- Leaders make effective checks on the quality of teaching and on the progress that pupils make. This enables them to ensure that teaching is effective and pupils make good progress in their learning. However, leaders acknowledge that they need to make some further improvements to ensure that their evaluation of the progress of key groups of pupils is more robust.
- Relationships are very positive and staff morale is high. All of the staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to work in the school. New staff speak warmly of the numerous experiences provided to extend and broaden their teaching skills. Leaders ensure that staff have regular chances to share good practice and participate in other training. Teachers' performance targets are clearly linked to improving progress for pupils.
- Leaders keep the rich and varied curriculum under constant review. It has become more challenging and has a stronger academic focus. The number of pupils following a broad range of academic subjects is increasing. In addition, a broad range of vocational options is offered in key stage 4, including a new qualification in engineering. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, told inspectors that they are well supported when making choices about their next steps for the future.
- The curriculum is enhanced by the 'electives' programme, which offers pupils a wide range of chances to take part in additional learning and recreational activities. Pupils from different year groups appreciate the opportunity to work together, which supports their progress and development in a variety of ways. Pupils involve themselves in a range of charitable events, and participate in visits to theatres and museums, as well as trips abroad. The 'electives' programme also provides opportunities for some pupils to broaden their learning through the study of additional languages and sciences, where most achieve high GCSE grades.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. The weekly programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, collective worship

and assemblies for all pupils in Years 7 to 13 provide rich opportunities to raise awareness of moral and ethical issues, and develop understanding of different faiths and beliefs. These are central to the school's efforts to ensure that pupils are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain and have respect for diversity.

- Leaders are tackling the previously weak progress of disadvantaged pupils well. Improving outcomes for this group is the school's greatest priority. Use of the pupil premium funding is planned carefully and monitored rigorously by leaders and governors. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils has been steadily increasing and more are now successfully achieving a broad range of academic qualifications. Close scrutiny of current disadvantaged pupils' work shows that they are making faster progress than in the past. However, leaders recognise there is some way to go before the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils match those of other pupils.
- The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving under new leadership. Extra help to support pupils' learning has been reorganised and is ensuring that pupils are making faster progress, for example in their reading and spelling skills. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) recognises that systems to track the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, across all areas of the curriculum, need to be further developed.
- Pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision, the Ormerod Centre, receive particularly useful support. This helps them to make better progress in their studies and to access mainstream classes in a range of subjects. In addition, the effective emotional and pastoral support makes an important contribution to these pupils' overall personal development.
- School leaders use the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium effectively to support those pupils who did not meet the required standard at the end of their primary education. Additional booster sessions help pupils in Year 7 to develop greater security in literacy and numeracy.

Governance of the school

- Governors have considerable expertise and a wide range of skills, which they use well to support the school. The governing body has acted upon the findings of a recent external review in 2016 to enhance their effectiveness. Committee structures and governors' roles and responsibilities have been reorganised and there are clear lines of accountability.
- Governors make regular visits to check the quality of teaching and learning, and the progress pupils are making, linked to areas of the school improvement plan. Consequently, they are well informed about the strengths and areas for improvement in the school, and provide increasing challenge to school leaders.
- Governors use external support well to review teaching, learning and other areas of the school. To support their ambition to take the school forward, governors have decided the school will join the River Learning Trust (RLT) multi-academy trust in April 2018. Governors intend that this partnership will help leaders learn from the best practice of other successful schools.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders work closely and effectively with parents and a wide range of agencies to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders make sure that recruitment procedures are robust. They complete the required checks on all staff and keep careful records. Staff receive thorough safeguarding training, which is updated and checked regularly.
- A dedicated and highly skilled team of pastoral staff monitor concerns about pupils carefully. The actions they take as a result are recorded meticulously. Case studies, discussed with inspectors, showed how the pastoral team's timely actions and thorough liaison with external providers help to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils appreciate the concern staff have for their welfare and well-being. Parents overwhelmingly agreed, with 95% reporting, in the Parent View online survey, that their children are safe and well cared for in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. Clear routines and strong relationships between staff and pupils mean lessons are well managed and purposeful. This allows pupils to learn well in the majority of lessons.
- When teaching is at its most effective, for example in English, science, geography and religious studies, teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan well-structured learning which develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding very well. This is reinforced through probing questioning that stretches pupils' understanding.
- In the past, teaching in mathematics has not been as effective as for other subjects. However, leaders have made sure that it has improved over the past year. Increasingly in mathematics teaching, assessment is used well to check understanding and identify misconceptions. Teachers persist with lines of questioning which make pupils think, rather than simply giving them the answer if they do not understand things immediately. Improvements in the quality of teaching in mathematics have resulted in pupils' increasingly rapid progress.
- Pupils typically receive helpful feedback about their learning, in line with the school's policy. In most cases, pupils clearly understand what they must do to improve their work, and act upon this feedback.
- Teachers check pupils' progress throughout the year. Occasionally, teachers do not check pupils' understanding before setting the next task or planning future learning. Where misconceptions are not addressed promptly, such as in mathematics, pupils' progress is less rapid.
- Homework is now being set more regularly than in the past, and provides activities that extend pupils' learning. In history, for example, pupils were seen using their homework well to consolidate and deepen their understanding of social crimes in the 17th century.

- Leaders' focus on improving the quality of writing is having a positive impact. Pupils are writing with greater depth and sophistication in many subject areas. For example, in geography, pupils were able to write extended explanations of the effects of hurricanes because literacy skills were reinforced to support the subject content. Teachers' support for planning writing is helping lower- and middle-ability pupils, in particular, to extend their written work.
- Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire felt that they received valuable information about their children's progress. Several commented that communication has improved considerably since the appointment of the current principal.
- Sometimes, work for the most able pupils is not challenging enough, because they are not given enough opportunity to extend their thinking and plan their own writing. As a result, the pace of their learning slows down.
- Leaders acknowledge that teaching needs to improve in some areas, notably history, physical education and music, so that pupils make more consistently rapid progress across their range of subjects. A few parents expressed their concerns about this variation in teaching standards, although the clear majority believe that their children are taught well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff care a great deal about pupils' personal development and emotional well-being. Consequently, relationships between pupils and staff are very strong.
- The school's well-developed programme of PSHE is making a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils told inspectors that the promotion of mental health is a high priority in the school. In PSHE lessons, Year 7 pupils were actively participating in activities to support them in dealing with stress and anxiety that might be caused by exams.
- Staff encourage pupils to be respectful of others and to actively challenge stereotypes. For example, pupils told inspectors that the acceptance of people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual has a high profile in the school.
- Pupils reported to inspectors that bullying is rare. Parents agreed, with very few concerns expressed in the online survey.
- Leaders place great emphasis on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education. There is a coordinated programme of careers information and guidance in all key stages. Pupils report that they feel well supported when making choices about their next steps.
- Leaders work closely to support pupils who currently attend the Gateway alternative provision. They visit lessons to check the pupils' learning and support with the planning of appropriate tasks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school, and most wear their new school uniform correctly and smartly. They move around the school in an orderly fashion. They are courteous to adults, including visitors.
- Behaviour in lessons and assemblies is good. Pupils get down to work quickly and have a positive attitude to their learning. The 'Ready to Learn' agreement is understood and consistently followed. As a result, disruption in lessons is rare.
- Pupils' attendance at school and punctuality to lessons is good. However, the persistent absence of some pupils continues to be a challenge for leaders. Staff work very closely with pupils, their families and external agencies to support their attendance, and their actions are having a positive effect on some.
- There have been no permanent exclusions for the last two years. Fixed-term exclusions are much lower than the national average, and are falling.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in the school make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, as a result of the effective teaching that they receive. Girls are currently making very strong, and improving, progress across the curriculum. Also, middle-ability pupils are making much more rapid progress than they have in the recent past. These pupils are benefiting from the structure provided by teachers, particularly to support their writing.
- In English, pupils' ability to read, select and infer information develops well over time. In mathematics, pupils' progress accelerates as they are required to tackle increasingly difficult problems and develop their reasoning skills. Progress is also strong in other subjects, notably science, geography and religious studies.
- In 2017, pupils made similar progress to that seen nationally across a broad range of academic subjects. Except in mathematics, there was no significant difference between the progress made by lower-, middle- or higher-attaining pupils. Progress in mathematics improved to reach the national average in 2017, although middle-attaining pupils did less well. The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was also similar to the national average.
- Progress in the 'open' element of the curriculum, where pupils choose options, was below the national average in 2017, which also contributed to overall progress being below average. Leaders attribute this to a small number of pupils, who were not entered for qualifications beyond the core subjects. Overall progress for most other pupils was in line with the national average.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils improved in English and mathematics in 2017, with more achieving success in language subjects in particular. However, the progress made by these pupils was below the national average for other pupils. There were particular features of that year's cohort that had an adverse impact on the progress of the group overall, notably the long-term absence of a small group of pupils. School

leaders are well focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The work of disadvantaged pupils currently in key stages 3 and 4 shows that they are making better progress than in the past.

- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education because they achieve outcomes that are better than those seen nationally. Last year, the proportion of pupils who achieved standard and strong passes, in both English and mathematics, was above the national average. Pupils' attainment was also high in a number of other subjects, including science, geography and languages. Almost all pupils remain in education, employment or training after the age of 16. Large numbers go on to university after they have left the sixth form.
- Although pupils typically make good progress, there is some variation across subjects and for some key groups. The progress of boys, while improving, is much less than for girls. Also, the most able pupils sometimes make slower progress when they are not required to extend their responses or think creatively. In mathematics, pupils make greater progress in key stage 4 than in they do early in key stage 3, because work is more challenging.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017, the progress made by students on A-level and AS-level courses was below the national average. In particular, middle-ability students made less progress than others nationally. The very small number of students on Level 3 vocational courses made progress in line with the national average and attained results that were slightly above it.
- Leaders do not check sufficiently frequently that teaching standards are high enough in the sixth form. Therefore, they currently do not have a clear view of the strengths in teaching, or of the weaknesses which are adversely affecting students' rates of progress. A small number of parents expressed concerns in the online survey about teaching standards in the sixth form.
- Leadership of the sixth form is now improving. Leaders have higher expectations for students' progress, and are working through a thorough action plan to support improvement. New target-setting systems have been introduced and students' progress is now being checked more often and rigorously. However, the school's own assessment information suggests that improvements are not happening quickly enough to secure better outcomes for current students.
- Students' attendance in the sixth form is below the national average. Leaders recognise this and are now beginning to use the same systems as in the main school to ensure that students attend more regularly, particularly for morning sessions.
- Pass rates, for those students who need to retake GCSE English and mathematics qualifications, have been below the national average in the past. Although there were a small number of successes in the most recent resit examinations, the grades of the vast majority of students did not change.
- Student numbers and retention rates are improving and are strong between Years 12 and 13. Some students who changed courses reported they were well supported by

staff when making their decisions.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the PSHE programme. This programme provides students with a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the school and the local community, for example through supporting the 'electives' programme and being involved in peer mentoring.
- Careers information and guidance are effective. Leaders track students' destinations carefully and students are guided well to make appropriate choices about their options when they leave the sixth form. All students are supported with making university applications and some receive additional support to help them access the 'Oxbridge' universities. Apprenticeship opportunities are promoted regularly. As a result, almost all students who left the sixth form last year secured a university place or employment.
- Safeguarding is effective and promoted well in the sixth form. The progress and welfare of vulnerable students are monitored closely by the pastoral team, including the safeguarding officer. Students who spoke to inspectors were keen to emphasise that they feel safe and well supported, and have a strong sense of belonging.

School details

Unique reference number	138817
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10040948

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	1,067
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	192
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Simon Robins
Principal	Andrew Hanlon
Telephone number	01993 811431
Website	www.marlborough.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	admin.4560@marlborough.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 May 2014

Information about this school

- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.
- The principal was not in post at the time of the last inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs relating to a broad range of complex learning, behavioural and life-limiting

disabilities. This is called the Ormerod Resource Base and currently has 25 students who are taught within the base and, where possible, in mainstream classes across the school. All of these students have a statement of special educational needs. The base is funded by the local authority.

- Two pupils currently attend the Gateway alternative provision.
- The school is joining the River Learning Trust, a multi-academy trust, in 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons in detail and made briefer visits to observe PSHE lessons (nine) and 'electives' (eight), looked at students' books, and discussed work with students in each key stage and across a range of subjects. All lesson observations were undertaken jointly with the school's senior leaders. Inspectors also visited two assemblies and talked to pupils at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and nine other governors.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents relating to governance, the quality of teaching, school improvement, and the monitoring of students' attainment and progress.
- Safeguarding procedures were checked.
- Inspectors took account of 218 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and reviewed 65 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mark Bagust, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Tustian	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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