

Maiden Erlegh School in Reading

Crescent Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5SL

Inspection dates

5–6 June 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This strongly developing new school benefits from experienced leadership and effective support from the Maiden Erlegh Trust.
- The ambitious headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision to build on successful practice brought over from the sponsor school, while simultaneously developing the school's own identity and character.
- The school's ethos is built on the values of equality and inclusion, leading to a culture of mutual respect and openness. Diversity and a sense of vibrancy permeate the school.
- Senior leadership is strong. Middle leaders are committed to driving further improvement and are developing well.
- There is an eagerness to learn across the school. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, and teachers are willing to refine their practice.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Strong relationships between staff and pupils help pupils feel secure and promote their learning and personal development well.
- Attendance is above national levels and improving, and exclusions are low.
- Safeguarding is a real strength of the school. Vulnerable pupils benefit from timely and effective support when required.
- The most effective teachers show good subject knowledge and use questions well to encourage pupils to explain their thinking. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching, and not all pupils are supported or challenged well enough to do their best.
- The rich curriculum offers pupils a wide choice of subjects. Enrichment programmes offer extension for the most able. Many pupils also enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities.
- Overall, pupils throughout the school make good progress from their starting points. However, leaders' evaluation of pupils' current progress towards their aspirational targets is overgenerous.
- Pupils who join the school with standards below those typical for their age, and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make particularly rapid progress.
- Governors are well informed and visit the school regularly. They are committed to using expertise in the trust to improve the school further.
- Leaders apply a range of strategies and interventions to improve the quality of teaching and help pupils falling behind to catch up. They do not fully evaluate the impact of these actions on pupils' achievement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to that of the best in the school.
- Clarify the way assessment information is used to evaluate the rate of pupils' progress so that it more precisely reflects outcomes across subjects and year groups.
- Strengthen leadership further through robust self-evaluation, following up the steps already taken to improve by measuring the impact of actions on pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has established a successful, engaging learning community over the three years the school has been open. Ably supported by senior leaders, he has built on the tried and tested practice and policies of the Maiden Erlegh Trust to create an inclusive school which meets the needs of its pupils well.
- Leaders from the Maiden Erlegh Trust give effective support and challenge to the school's leaders. The headteacher is given strong guidance by the executive headteacher. The trust has successfully recruited, developed and retained high-quality leaders, teachers and other staff. Professional development, including trust-wide training, is well targeted and effective. Leaders are managing the annual growth in staff and pupil numbers efficiently.
- Throughout the school, staff are hard working and committed to ensuring that pupils thrive, feel safe and gain the confidence they need to achieve. Newly qualified teachers and those new to the school are well supported. Staff are proud to be members of the school.
- Routines are well established. Consistent application of policies, alongside a commitment to inclusion, contributes to a respectful and harmonious environment. The school has recently been recognised by a national award for its work to promote equality. A sense of ambition permeates this diverse and vibrant school.
- Teaching overall is good and enhanced by subject-specialist teachers, although there is some variation in the quality of teaching across and within subjects. Subject leaders show a determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning further by implementing a range of responses to address aspects which could be even better. However, leaders' monitoring focuses on checking that actions have taken place, but does not yet evaluate precisely the impact of the actions on pupils' achievement.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. The SENCo identifies and implements suitable provision so that these pupils make very good progress. The SENCo rigorously checks the impact of strategies used and, where necessary, changes the response until the pupil makes the desired progress.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding well to support pupils who enter the school with below-average attainment in English and/or mathematics. The 'purple pathway' provision, focusing on English and mathematics support, has had a positive impact.
- The curriculum provides impressive breadth, given the limitations of the school currently being smaller than the national average for secondary schools. A number of subject-specialist teachers from the sponsor school, Maiden Erlegh School, teach part time at Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, and this enables the school to offer a very wide range of subjects at GCSE.
- The curriculum is enriched by a range of extra-curricular provision, which is well used by pupils. The most able pupils are also offered an enrichment programme after school to help raise their aspirations further.

- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the successful promotion of British values within the curriculum and a strong ethos of equality. Diversity is celebrated and there is a culture of 'openness'. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas, and they listen actively and respectfully to other people's opinions.
- Pupils' work is regularly assessed and compared with the aspirational targets set for them. The way the data is presented implies that the great majority of pupils, across the curriculum, are making stronger progress than they actually are. Leaders use this information to reach an over-positive evaluation of current outcomes. School leaders also judge achievement across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as being equally strong, whereas, in fact, science lags behind the other subjects.
- A low proportion of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Of those who did respond, eight out of 10 would recommend the school to other parents. The school is oversubscribed for entry into Year 7.

Governance of the school

- Both the trust board and the local advisory board have high aspirations and expectations of the school. Governors bring a wide range of experience to these different levels of governance within the trust.
- Governors have drawn on the strong practice in the sponsor school to establish a new school in a more challenging environment. They are rightly proud of the development of this caring school, where pupils can learn well and be successful.
- Governors visit the school regularly and are well informed about the school's work. Consequently, they have a detailed understanding of its strengths and also those areas that need to be further developed as the school grows.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school is a nurturing, caring environment in which every pupil is valued. Staff have very positive relationships with pupils and know them well. This means that staff are alert to any changes in pupils that may indicate a concern. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident in knowing that there is always a trusted adult who they can speak to in school if they are worried about something. Staff have received appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities and know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern.
- The school has well-developed systems in place to secure the well-being and safety of pupils. Safeguarding records are up to date, and referrals are followed up promptly and are well documented. The safeguarding leader works well with other agencies to help families receive the necessary support.
- Statutory procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are efficiently managed. Leaders ensure that regular training and updates about safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Teachers have high expectations, and they expect pupils to do their best. Teachers set tasks which are designed to engage and motivate pupils. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, skilful questioning probes pupils' thinking, to develop deep understanding.
- The most successful teaching takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses a range of strategies to meet their needs. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently stretch the most able pupils and so they do not make as much progress as they are capable of making. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks which they are not equipped to tackle because teachers do not plan well enough to provide low-attaining pupils with enough support.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They regularly check their pupils' progress through assessments which are moderated. There are examples of effective feedback from teachers, in line with the school's expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they have to do to improve, and they act on this feedback. However, there are some instances when the assessment policy is not being used effectively to help teachers plan the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants provide precise support and challenge for individuals and small groups of pupils during interventions and sessions out of lessons. During lessons, teaching assistants offer skilful questioning to help pupils who require additional support to work things out for themselves. This is promoting better progress for pupils who need to catch up or who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers and pastoral leaders have created a caring environment. Staff know pupils well, respond in a timely manner to any concerns and maintain contact with parents as much as possible.
- Pupils told inspectors that they know who to turn to if they have a concern. They report that, on the few occasions when bullying takes place, they are confident that it will be dealt with adequately. Pastoral staff are alert to difficulties faced by pupils, and they offer effective support.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. They appreciate fully why they should not give out personal information when using the internet or social media.
- The school provides strong support to vulnerable pupils. There is a graded response to helping pupils to overcome the difficulties that they are facing, including mentoring by older students from the local University Technical College and Reading University, and also counselling by professionals.

Behaviour

- In lessons and around school, pupils' behaviour is good, and the school is an orderly, well-organised environment for learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use the school's behaviour policy consistently. Pupils respond well to these expectations.
- Pupils are polite and show consideration for others. They are punctual to lessons, fully equipped, and are ready to get on with their learning as soon as they arrive. Pupils settle to tasks quickly, as they are used to the established routines.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly similar to the national average, and it is improving. The school has worked effectively with individual families to improve the attendance of those pupils where there is cause for concern.
- Rates of exclusion are low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As a member of the Maiden Erlegh Trust, the school sets highly ambitious targets. No pupils have yet completed GCSE courses, so there are no published outcomes for this school. To check that information about pupils' outcomes is reliable, leaders ensure that pupils' work is moderated by subject experts both within and beyond the trust.
- The school's performance information, along with work seen during the inspection, shows that, overall, progress is good, and in some cases, very good. Progress made by disadvantaged pupils is similar to that made by other pupils with similar starting points.
- However, rates of progress vary between and within subjects, depending on the effectiveness and stability of the teaching. In some classes, especially those taught by non-specialist teachers or supply teachers, pupils' learning is not being fully extended or supported. Overall, standards in science are not consistently as high as in other subjects, although there are examples of excellent work by pupils. However, pupils' positive attitudes to learning, and the consistent classroom routines, enable them to progress steadily, even when teaching is less effective.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their varied starting points. Additional support enables these pupils to make rapid gains because it caters precisely for their individual needs and links very well to work in class. The effective support provided by teaching assistants under the determined leadership of the SENCo improves pupils' self-belief and the progress that they make.
- Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 who start the school with low attainment follow a separate 'purple pathway' provision for several subjects, including English, mathematics and humanities. These pupils progress rapidly due to well-planned teaching. As a result, by the time they choose their GCSE subjects to study in Year 9, they have caught up well enough to pick any subject from the wide selection available.
- In a few subjects, most-able pupils make slower progress than other groups in the school. Work seen in lessons and in books shows that some of the most able pupils could be further stretched and challenged. During work scrutiny, inspectors found that many pupils wrote convincing accounts to explain their thinking when they were required to do so. However, these high expectations are applied inconsistently, and

sometimes pupils' work does not reach the highest standards.

- The development of pupils' literacy skills is a clear priority, and opportunities are taken, across the curriculum, to promote pupils' verbal and writing skills. Pupils read with confidence during lessons.

School details

Unique reference number	141886
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10046597

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	540
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Nick Jones
Headteacher	Andy Johnson
Telephone number	0118 966 8065
Website	www.maidenerleghschoolreading.co.uk
Email address	MERoffice@maidenerleghschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as a new free school in September 2015. It is sponsored by the Maiden Erlegh Trust. Governance is by a local advisory board which reports to the board of trustees.
- The school is currently smaller than average and presently has pupils in Year 7 to Year 9. There is no published performance information for the school because no pupils have completed key stage 4.
- No pupils attend an alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is similar to the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language are well above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 28 lessons across all year groups. Eleven of these lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in lessons, and a further selection of pupils' books were scrutinised. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around the school and during breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, the chair of the trust and two members of the local advisory board.
- Inspectors took into account 34 responses to the confidential questionnaires received from staff and also met with individuals and groups of staff.
- The views of pupils were taken into account, and inspectors met with groups of pupils from each year group.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 35 responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, 29 free-text responses and one letter.
- Inspectors evaluated a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, attendance information, safeguarding records, information on pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings and quality assurance reports.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Robb-Webb	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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