

Marathon Science School

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

Inspection dates

15–17 January 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved teaching, especially in subjects where pupils have underperformed in the past. They check on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching with greater rigour. As a result, pupils now benefit from a good education.
- Teaching is good because teachers know their subjects well and plan activities to meet the needs of the pupils. Teachers regularly check pupils' progress and support effectively those who fall behind. This ensures that pupils are successful learners.
- Current pupils are making good progress overall across subjects. Over time, pupils' outcomes are particularly strong in mathematics, science, and European and community languages.
- The curriculum prepares pupils effectively for the next stages of their education and makes a strong contribution to their personal development. The school prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to avoid danger, including from being tempted into gangs and extremism. Pupils therefore feel safe and know they can approach a trusted adult should they have any concerns.
- Pupils do not routinely reach the highest standards of which they are capable. This is because, occasionally, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently to think more deeply. Sometimes, teachers do not help pupils to expand their vocabulary and sufficiently apply new concepts to different situations.
- At the start of the inspection, a few minor aspects of the independent school standards were unmet. These were quickly addressed, and the school is now compliant.
- The trustees, all new in post, are highly committed to the school and to ensuring pupils' welfare and safety. They support school leaders effectively but do not hold them to account as well as they could. They are at the early stages of developing fully their understanding of their roles and responsibilities for school governance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' outcomes by:
 - teachers routinely challenging pupils to help them reach the highest standards of which they are capable
 - increasing further the opportunities for pupils to broaden their vocabulary and apply it in various contexts
 - teachers learning from best practice
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders keep abreast with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance
 - trustees sharpening their understanding of their role so that they can better hold the headteacher to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, including trustees, aim to provide a safe education, through the boarding provision, for children in their Turkish community. They seek to give pupils the skills, academic and social, to become upright and successful citizens in modern Britain. They want them to be good role models, to make positive contributions to general society and to understand the need to keep clear of crime and radicalisation. All members of staff fully support these aims and morale is high.
- Leaders took decisive steps to improve the school since the previous standard inspection. They also successfully addressed the shortcomings found in the subsequent emergency inspection in July 2018. As a result, teaching, outcomes, pupils' personal development and behaviour have improved and are now good.
- Leaders regularly monitor teaching and give developmental feedback to help teachers improve. They hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress. They took firm action this year, in changing the teaching in geography, business studies and English literature, as those areas had underperformed. As a result, teaching is now routinely good, and pupils make strong overall progress across the subjects.
- Leaders design the curriculum to offer pupils a good range of academic subjects. These prepare pupils well for post-16 education and their future career ambitions. Leaders encourage pupils to study a range of community languages, including Arabic, which is linked to their Islamic faith. Leaders enhance pupils' learning and experiences through visits such as to the Bank of England, the National Gallery and London Design Fair. Most able pupils attend master classes, mainly in mathematics, at some of London's universities.
- The religious education and revised personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about the major faiths practiced in this country and learn about and respect people with protected characteristics. They have discussions about how to tackle radicalisation and how righteous people risked their lives to save others during the Holocaust. During the annual parliament week, pupils learn in depth about democracy and visit Westminster. A visiting barrister spoke to pupils about UK law, for example. The school therefore prepares pupils effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. All would recommend this school to other parents.

Governance

- The three trustees of the proprietorial body are the governors of the school.
- Since the start of this academic year, the trustees meet fortnightly with the headteacher, who keeps them informed about developments in the school. They take the lead role in ensuring the school's financial stability and support the headteacher well.
- Trustees take part in safeguarding training and place much emphasis on ensuring pupils' safety and well-being in the school and boarding provision.

- Trustees, however, do not hold school leaders to account with enough rigour. They are over-reliant on the headteacher for information as they do not have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All members of staff have attended training on the latest safeguarding guidance. In addition to face-to-face training, staff do additional online training, most recently on preventing bullying. Leaders make sure that they are compliant with all vetting procedures when appointing new staff.
- In this small school, staff know the pupils very well. All staff meet regularly to discuss the progress and welfare of the pupils. Staff are vigilant and quickly report concerns to leaders.
- Leaders have established good links with local authority safeguarding teams in the boroughs of both the school and boarding sites.
- The curriculum and visiting speakers, for example the police, help pupils to learn how to avoid dangers such as from gangs and when using the internet.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy on its website. The policy has proper regard to current government requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, pupils learn successfully and make strong progress across the subjects.
- Teachers and pupils respect each other and share a good rapport. As a result, pupils feel confident to ask questions without any fear of ridicule. Pupils get on with their work and do not waste time.
- Typically, teachers have very sound knowledge of their subjects. They prepare lessons that interest the pupils and that help them to build systematically on their earlier learning. They make sure that pupils revise regularly to help them remember, over time, what they have already learned. Through frequent testing and checking on pupils' learning during lessons, teachers know how well their pupils are progressing. They give pupils well-targeted feedback to help them improve and extra help if they fall behind. Teachers set effective homework which ensures that pupils consolidate their learning and prepare for new topics.
- In the best lessons, teachers make sure that pupils learn the definitions of key words related to their subjects and how to use this vocabulary in other contexts. This broadens their literacy and general knowledge skills effectively. Teachers set hard work to challenge pupils and questioning is probing and deepens pupils' thinking.
- Occasionally work is too easy for some pupils. Questioning is narrow, and teachers accept superficial answers. In a few instances, teachers do not make sure that pupils extend their vocabulary enough. As a result, pupils do not routinely reach the standards of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- As pupils progress through the school they gain in confidence. This is because they become increasingly competent English speakers, successful learners and gain a good understanding of life in modern Britain, its culture and values.
- Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that should it occur, adults would deal with it quickly and competently.
- Leaders take good care of pupils' welfare and well-being. Pupils take part in a range of sporting activities, learn about healthy eating and the dangers of substance abuse.
- Pupils also learn about mental health. Further, the school employs an 'independent listener' whom pupils can contact at any time if they have concerns that they wish to discuss impartially.
- Pupils benefit from well-planned career guidance and work experience that helps them make well-informed choices about their futures.
- The leader of the sixth form assists students in enrolling for courses that meet their needs and aspirations at a local sixth-form provision. He checks students' attendance daily and is in regular direct contact with each of their tutors to monitor students' progress and attitudes. As a result, students' attendance is high, and they work hard to meet their goals.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to succeed and work hard. These positive attitudes make a good contribution to their successful learning.
- Pupils are polite and respectful of each other, adults and visitors. They generally behave well when moving around the school and they eat lunch sensibly. On the odd occasion there is a little boisterous behaviour, but pupils soon calm down when asked to by an adult.
- Attendance is high. Leaders provide a bus from the boarding provision to school, so pupils arrive punctually.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the time of the previous inspection and are now good overall.
- In 2018 pupils working towards GCSE examinations made strong progress to reach high standards, particularly in mathematics, statistics, science and languages. The most-able linguists successfully completed GCSE qualifications in European and/or community languages at the end of Year 10. By the end of Year 11, more than half the cohort attained an A level in a language, some two. Progress in other subjects was broadly good,

but weaker in English literature, geography and business studies.

- Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that current pupils make strong progress overall across the subjects and year groups. As a result of the changes the leaders have made to improve teaching, current pupils' progress in English literature, geography and business studies have improved. There remains, however, some variation between subjects.
- Pupils, including the most able, do not consistently reach the highest standards across the subjects of which they are capable. This is because some teachers do not challenge them enough to think deeply and do not extend sufficiently the breadth of their vocabulary.
- It is not possible to judge the progress of other specific groups of pupils, as group sizes are too small to have any reliable statistical significance.
- Pupils leave school at 16 very well prepared for the next stages of education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	135901
DfE registration number	209/6409
Inspection number	10067179

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.

Type of school	Secondary school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Seven Hills Education Trust
Chair	Kamil Canbay
Headteacher	Uzeyir Onur
Annual fees (boarders)	£8,500
Telephone number	020 7231 3232
Website	www.marathonschool.com
Email address	info@marathonschool.com
Date of previous inspection	21–23 March 2017

Information about this school

- Marathon Science School is an independent secondary boarding school with an Islamic ethos. It is registered for boys aged 10 to 19 years.
- The school is located near Surrey Quays and the boarding provision is in Hackney. Most pupils are of Turkish background and speak English as an additional language.
- Almost all pupils are boarders. The school uses its own transport to transfer pupils

between the school and the boarding provision.

- The school currently caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 17 years.
- The school does not have any pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The few boys in Year 12 reside in the boarding provision. They have a dual registration with New City College, Tower Hamlets, where they study post-16 vocational and A-level courses.
- The proprietors include a group of three trustees, who comprise the Seven Hills Educational Trust.
- The school's last standard inspection was in March 2017. The school also had an emergency inspection in July 2018.
- The founding headteacher, who had retired, returned last year and is once more the headteacher. The current trustees were appointed within the last year. A few new teachers joined the school in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's prior notice.
- The inspector observed learning in eight classrooms, all of which were visited with the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised samples of pupils' work. He checked the school's information about pupils' progress.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other members of staff and with the three trustees. He met with a group of pupils and had informal discussions with pupils during social times and lessons.
- The inspector took account of 15 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents and parents' additional written comments. He considered 12 responses to the staff questionnaire and 32 from the pupils.
- The inspector checked documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work for compliance with the independent school standards.
- This report is unable to include information on the progress and behaviour of the small number of sixth-form students, as they study at a sixth form college and not at the school.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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