

Inspection of Marlwood School

Vattingstone Lane, Alveston, Bristol BS35 3LA

Inspection dates: 11–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is enjoying a new lease of life. Pupils now look forward to coming to school. They are keen to tell visitors how much it has improved recently. There is a real community spirit that includes pupils, teachers and leaders alike. Parents and carers are virtually unanimous in their praise for the school and the headteacher.

Pupils behave well as they move around the school. They are respectful and have warm relationships with teachers. They feel teachers know them as individuals and care for them. There is very little bullying in school. Pupils and parents say that if there is a problem, teachers deal with it quickly. Leaders make sure that pupils who are feeling anxious or are vulnerable get the support they need to thrive.

Led by the headteacher, teachers now expect more of pupils. The result is that more pupils are beginning to reach their potential. Most teachers regularly check on what pupils can remember. Pupils are eager to listen and answer questions in lessons. They are keen to correct their work when teachers show them how to improve it. Some older pupils have got gaps in their understanding, however, and this is slowing down their progress.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school and he has energised teachers and pupils successfully. The school is now improving rapidly, although the impact of his work is not yet fully embedded. A new curriculum has been introduced in which teachers expect pupils to think deeply and remember what they have been taught. Teachers make sure that they put topics in the right order so that pupils can understand ideas easily. This new curriculum is at the heart of the school's improvement. Year 7 pupils, for example, are studying English literature at a depth that is well beyond that of previous years. However, literacy across the school is not considered often enough. Some teachers are not helping pupils to correct spellings and punctuation. Too often, pupils do not write extensively.

Pupils study a wide range of subjects in Years 7 to 9. Teachers give them good advice about which GCSE subjects to study. A higher proportion of pupils choose the English Baccalaureate range of subjects than that found in other schools.

Leaders continue to train teachers to sharpen their skills so that they can deliver the new curriculum. Most teachers are now asking questions that make pupils think more carefully. They often press pupils to improve their answers. This is helping pupils to develop their understanding. Not all teachers have yet reached this standard, however. Some teaching does not ask enough of pupils.

Teachers get the extra support they need to teach pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most of the time, this is successful, and pupils are reaching their potential. However, sometimes, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should because teachers do not meet their needs accurately enough.

Pupils are well behaved in lessons. They listen, and they want to learn. Most show pride in their work. When they get advice from teachers about how they can improve their work, they willingly have another try. Pupils report that the atmosphere in lessons has changed and they are now rarely disrupted. Pupils are proud of their school and they are proud of their achievements. Older pupils are keen to talk about how the school has changed over the past two years. Younger ones say they are glad they chose this school.

Pupils attend school at least as often as pupils in other schools. However, some disadvantaged pupils are absent too often. This makes it difficult for them to keep up with other pupils.

The headteacher puts a clear emphasis on making sure pupils develop their personal qualities as they grow up. Pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities in the modern world. They talk with pride about how, in their school, they accept everyone for who they are. Pupils feel that staff listen to them. They enjoy being greeted by the headteacher and staff as they move about the building.

The multi academy trust that the school belongs to has played a significant role in developing the school over the past two years. It has used its staff to support and supplement the senior leadership team and to support subject areas when problems arise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and teachers work together closely to keep pupils safe. They know which pupils are particularly vulnerable and check on them regularly. Leaders work closely with the police, social workers and other local agencies to make sure care extends beyond the school day.

Leaders make sure they train staff on how to keep pupils safe. They remind them regularly about how to spot a pupil who may be in danger. Record-keeping systems are good, and leaders share information with those who need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have put a good curriculum in place that is expecting more of pupils. This is relatively new, but it is already having an impact. Teachers are increasingly skilled in using it to help pupils learn more. However, some teachers are not yet getting the most out of it because they do not push pupils to think deeply enough about their work. Leaders should ensure that all teachers are skilled in using the curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding.

- Pupils' writing skills are improving but weaknesses remain. Pupils make spelling and punctuation errors that are often not corrected, and so are repeated. Some pupils are not confident in writing longer answers. Leaders need to keep literacy as a focus for development so that pupils' work in this area continues to improve.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141341
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10088267
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	442
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susannah Hill
Headteacher	Del Planter
Website	www.marlwood.com
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2017

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Castle School Education Trust.
- The school was deemed to require special measures in May 2017. It has subsequently received monitoring visits from Ofsted in January 2018, June 2018, November 2018 and March 2019.
- The school uses two alternative providers, the hospital school and the local authority alternative provider, to meet the needs of three pupils.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- We visited lessons with school leaders. We looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils in groups and informally.
- We considered the school's own documentary evidence and spoke with school and trust leaders about it.

- We spoke with teachers about their work.
- We considered the information gained from surveys of parents, staff and pupils.
- We did deep dives in English, mathematics, foreign languages and history as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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