

Inspection of a good school: Marlborough School

Marlborough Park Avenue, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9DP

Inspection dates: 15–16 January 2020

Outcome

Marlborough School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and well cared for in this friendly and welcoming school. They attend school regularly and enjoy taking part in the many different experiences on offer. These include regular outings and cultural activities. Parents and carers are very positive about how well their children's individual needs are met.

On both school sites, the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Adults set clear routines which pupils understand and follow. Pupils behave very well, both in and out of class. Adults deal swiftly with any potential disagreements or issues. Bullying is not an issue here. Exclusions are rare. Ample supervision means that pupils learn and play together harmoniously.

Leaders expect all pupils to achieve their best, both personally and academically. They plan pupils' learning carefully and ensure that pupils are successful in all areas of school life. In all year groups, pupils study a wide range of subjects. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education or employment.

Adults provide exceptionally well for pupils' emotional and mental well-being. Staff are skilled in supporting pupils who may be feeling anxious about their learning. Pupils develop positive relationships with adults and each other. This means that pupils are keen to learn and experience all the school has to offer.

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

Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. They work together well to provide pupils with a safe and stimulating learning environment.

Leaders are determined that pupils will be as independent as possible. Pupils benefit from well-planned opportunities to develop important life skills. Each pupil is supported to grow in confidence and take part in the wider community. For instance, pupils enjoy making and selling products at local markets. These experiences contribute well to the

development of pupils' social and communication skills. Leaders have high expectations of sixth-form students. The curriculum meets students' needs very well. Students take part in work experience and learn key skills that they will need in adult life. Staff support students to make well-informed decisions about their options after leaving school.

All pupils study a broad range of subjects. Topics are ambitious and inspire pupils' interest in learning. Within each topic, planning identifies how pupils should develop their understanding of important ideas. In a small number of subjects, long-term goals for pupils' learning are not clearly defined. In physical education (PE) for instance, staff know what they should teach within each topic. However, leaders have not fully considered how these topics support pupils' readiness for their future learning. Leaders are currently strengthening subject planning to address this shortcoming.

Staff have an in-depth understanding of pupils' needs. They plan experiences that build on what pupils already know or can do. Teachers select activities which help pupils to understand what they are taught. For instance, pupils benefit from opportunities to use their senses to discover new concepts. Pupils also have many opportunities to apply their knowledge in different contexts. Examples include working in the school café and taking part in dance workshops.

Communication is the cornerstone of the school's work. As soon as pupils arrive each morning, staff encourage them to make choices and share their views. This continues throughout the school day. Communication methods are personalised to each pupil. Pupils use photographs, signs, technology or words to communicate their thoughts and ideas. We saw pupils using 'eye-gaze' technology, touch and images to make meaningful decisions about their learning. We saw others using pictures to choose what they wanted to eat at snack time.

The teaching of reading is also a clear priority. Pupils develop a love of reading by listening to lots of different types of stories, songs and rhymes. When appropriate, staff ensure that pupils develop the phonics knowledge they need to read independently.

Pupils focus on their work because staff manage behaviour skilfully. Adults use consistent strategies to promote positive behaviour. As a result, pupils understand what is expected of them. If pupils become anxious, staff help them to feel secure. This means that the learning of others is rarely disrupted. Leaders model the behaviour they expect from staff, and staff replicate this. Adults speak to pupils sensitively and calmly. Staff encourage pupils to recognise for themselves when they are feeling overwhelmed. They support pupils to manage their feelings. For instance, pupils can choose to take a short break from classroom activities if they need to. Staff supervise pupils carefully at all times and make sure that they are safe.

Leaders are conscious of the workload demands on staff. They check on staff well-being and act on the feedback they receive. Staff value this and said it makes them feel that their views are heard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is consistent with the caring ethos of the school. Leaders' records of the checks they carry out on adults who work in the school are comprehensive.

Governors and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding. They know how to help pupils and how to keep them safe. When concerns arise, leaders act promptly to secure pupils' welfare. They work with a range of external agencies to get pupils the help and support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In most subjects, planning for each topic identifies exactly what pupils should learn and when. These plans focus on supporting pupils to make small but important gains in their knowledge and skills. However, in a few subjects, such as PE, planning does not set out precisely which knowledge and skills pupils should gain as they progress through the school. Leaders should strengthen subject planning so that staff teach and revisit the content pupils will need to achieve leaders' long-term curricular goals.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Marlborough School to be good on 23–24 January 2013.

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 are the school and you are 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

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| Unique reference number | 101487 |
| Local authority | Bexley |
| Inspection number | 10104289 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 76 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 26 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Rosalind Wright |
| Headteacher | Linda Lee |
| Website | www.marlborough.bexley.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26 January 2016 |

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, specifically profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school operates on two sites. Sixth-form students are educated in dedicated facilities on premises shared with a local secondary school.

Information about this inspection

- We met with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: communication, physical and sensory development and personal, social, health and economic education. This included how effectively pupils are prepared for life beyond school. We also considered pupils' learning in reading. We discussed the curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers about the curriculum.

We considered how the school's programme of extra-curricular activities contributes to the quality of pupils' learning in each subject.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, we met with leaders, looked at documents and records and spoke to pupils and staff. We also reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks.
- We met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- We held a telephone discussion with representatives from the local authority.
- We met with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- We considered the five responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, and five additional written responses.
- We considered the views of 44 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We observed pupils' behaviour at social times and in classrooms. We also looked at records related to behaviour.

Inspection team

Karen Matthews, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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