

Inspection of a good school: The Marlborough Church of England School

Shipton Road, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1LP

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

The Marlborough Church of England School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff share a mutual understanding of the importance of education. In lessons, staff give pupils time to think. Pupils respond by carefully considering the challenges they are set. They trust their teachers to design lessons which will improve their knowledge and help them to achieve highly.

Pupils' wider education is an important part of the curriculum. This helps pupils prepare for their future. Opportunities abound throughout the school. Pupils are proud to take on responsibility and they are keen to make a positive impact both in school and within the community. Sixth-form students look back to their younger years fondly. They remember how welcomed they felt in Year 7. They help to ensure this continues by mentoring pupils when they join the school.

Leaders have created a supportive pastoral support system. Pupils appreciate knowing staff are there for them, including when there are the very rare incidents of bullying. The school is a caring community. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attend the Ormerod Resource Base for some of their learning. At other times of the day, they are welcomed and supported in lessons in the main school. Here, they work with their friends, fully participating in the life of the school.

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

Lessons are highly effective. Leaders support teachers in utilising teaching strategies that help pupils achieve highly, including those with SEND. Pupils who attend the Ormerod Resource Base follow highly personalised timetables, attending as many lessons in the main school as possible. Teachers confidently implement the school's curriculum well and ensure that any adaptations needed to meet the needs of pupils are effective. This helps to ensure that learning is consistent across the school.

Pupils know how each different part of their lessons will help them to learn more and remember more. They use this knowledge to identify what actions they need to take to improve their learning. As a result, pupils are resilient and patient, knowing that each lesson will strengthen their knowledge and understanding. Sixth-form students welcome this approach, which continues into their post-16 lessons. Like pupils in the lower school, they are keen to receive the thoughtful feedback provided by teachers to improve their learning.

Leaders have designed a curriculum which precisely identifies the knowledge that pupils need at every stage of their learning. Leaders check that activities used in lessons help pupils to retain important knowledge and skills. Because of this, pupils have a range of strategies to use to solve problems. Many lessons include a focus on reading, which helps to build pupils' vocabulary and fluency. Pupils who are not fluent readers receive support to improve. Subject vocabulary is central to learning. It is used effectively by staff to enable pupils to talk and think about their work with clarity. A small number of pupils who need additional support benefit from learning some key knowledge and skills before their peers. This transforms lessons for pupils who may otherwise find learning some topics difficult. Instead of feeling at a disadvantage when their class encounters a new topic, these pupils become the experts. Pupils take delight in this knowledge and relish the chance to help others.

Personal development is a priority in the school. Pupils take part in a rich selection of timetabled 'Elective' activities. These range from arts to performance and sporting endeavour. 'Electives' develop pupils' wider love of learning and support their health and well-being. Leaders ensure that there are no barriers to participation. For example, careful adaptations are made to enable physically disabled pupils to undertake the Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Careers education threads throughout the school. Pupils are knowledgeable about both apprenticeships and university routes. Sixth-form students feel supported to discuss their plans, however much those plans change and develop.

The school's values of 'respect', 'perseverance' and 'ambition' shape the way leaders develop the school. Pupils' calm and highly positive behaviour is underpinned by leader's focus on the value of respect. Pupils are consistently engaged in their learning and are exceptionally considerate towards each other's education. Pupils who may find managing their behaviour more difficult get support to understand and modify their actions. Pupils appreciate the positive tone that the weekly whole-school assembly sets. They enjoy celebrating each other's success and take time to reflect on the messages they hear.

School leaders are supported by knowledgeable local governors and the multi-academy trust. Leaders ensure that staff benefit from high-quality training and support. Staff at all levels are committed to and proud of the school. They support each other well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is central in all that leaders do. Staff are trained and understand their role. Reporting systems are known and used by the staff. This ensures that staff have appropriate expertise to enable identification of pupils who may be at risk from harm. Leaders work with other local agencies and schools to share information and respond to wider safeguarding concerns.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe within the personal, social and health curriculum. Pupils know where to report their concerns. Sixth-form students receive appropriately targeted information about staying safe to support their increasing independence.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	138817
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10269087
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,054
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Valeri Munro
Headteacher	Andrew Hanlon
Website	www.marlborough.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018

Information about this school

- The Marlborough Church of England School is part of the River Learning Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The last Section 48 inspection took place in January 2017.
- The school currently uses six registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of provider access legislation which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The Ormerod Resource Base provides specialist provision for 23 pupils with education, health and care plans relating to physical disabilities and autism spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and staff.
- The inspectors met with representatives from the local governing body, and the director of education and chair of trustees from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, checked staff's safeguarding awareness and met with the designated safeguarding leaders.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Foster

Ofsted Inspector

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