

Inspection of Marlwood School

Vattingstone Lane, Alveston, Bristol BS35 3LA

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement
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The headteacher of this school is Seema Purewal. This school is part of Castle School Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Will Roberts, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Simon MacSorley.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at Marlwood School. Staff know pupils well and build positive relationships with them. Pupils have a trusted adult they can talk to about any worries they have. This helps them to feel safe in school.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils respond well to these. They work hard and are keen to do well. The atmosphere around school is calm. Pupils are sensible and show maturity, both in and out of lessons.

Pupils relish leadership roles, such as being Year 7 'buddies', running performing arts clubs and being sports captains. These boost pupils' confidence and help them to 'live' the school value of responsibility. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged are well represented in leadership roles.

Pupils appreciate the clubs that are available to them. These include a range of sports and performing arts. The annual 'Marlwood's Got Talent' event enables pupils to showcase a diverse range of interests. The school checks that all pupils take part in the range of opportunities available to them.

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

The school has made significant improvements to the curriculum. The curriculum is now broad and ambitious for all pupils. The essential knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn has been identified.

Teachers have the subject expertise they need to explain new knowledge clearly. However, sometimes teaching activities are not well matched to what pupils know and can do. When this is the case, pupils do not learn new content effectively.

Teaching includes opportunities for pupils to revisit previous learning so they remember more and build on what they know. Teachers check what pupils have learned. They close gaps in pupils' learning and correct misconceptions. Pupils with SEND get the support they need to learn well.

Most pupils read widely and often. This helps them to become more confident readers and to expand their vocabularies. The school provides swift support to help pupils who need to improve their reading.

Most pupils behave well. Pupils with SEND get the extra support they need to meet the high expectations of them. Staff follow school systems for managing behaviour. Consequently, it is rare for learning to be interrupted by poor behaviour. However, the school does not always identify and tackle the underlying causes of poor behaviour quickly enough. This means that the same small number of pupils repeatedly do not behave well enough.

Pupils receive helpful information and guidance about careers and further education. They gain an insight into the world of work through careers events and work experience. Pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged get additional support to make decisions about their futures. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy. They know the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise. The school provides information to parents about how to keep their children safe online. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They show tolerance and respect in the way they treat one another. Pupils enjoy discussing contemporary issues. They value what they learn about wider society. However, they do not always recall what they have learned about fundamental British values or how this connects to their wider understanding.

Trustees' decisions have facilitated school improvement. Expertise from the trust has had a demonstrable impact on the curriculum and pupils' behaviour and attendance. Staff have the expertise they need. Consequently, most pupils achieve well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teaching activities do not allow pupils to deepen their understanding or apply the knowledge they have. This means that they do not always learn as well as they could. The trust should ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to consolidate and apply their knowledge over time and in a variety of contexts.
- The school does not use the information it collects about behaviour and wider personal development effectively. Therefore, it does not always identify or address the root causes of issues that affect groups of pupils. The trust needs to ensure that the school uses available information to identify issues and to address them promptly.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141341
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10288200
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	544
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon MacSorley
CEO of the trust	Will Roberts
Headteacher	Seema Purewal
Website	www.marlwood.com
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision and one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, history and art.
- For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector contacted the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders from the school and the trust, including the CEO and the director of secondary education.
- An inspector met with a trustee and members of the local community council.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff in meetings and around the school site.
- Inspectors also visited assemblies, reading time and morning line-up.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Tong	Ofsted Inspector
David Simons	Ofsted Inspector

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