

Inspection of Marling School

Cainscross Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 4HE

Inspection dates:	19 and 20 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations of its pupils and students. Pupils and students uphold the school motto of 'let us go forward through study to character'. They are positive about their learning. Pupils especially enjoy debate and discussion. They are curious and apply their learning with careful thought. Pupils and students in the sixth form achieve high outcomes.

Pupils are polite and courteous. Students in the sixth form respectfully welcome the girls who join the school in Year 12. Pupils value the friendly relationships between one another. If pupils have a worry, the pastoral team supports them to manage their concerns.

The school plan enriching experiences throughout school life. Local and international trips and visiting speakers enhance the learning of pupils. For example, a visiting string quartet work with pupils on their compositions. Sixth-form students run clubs for younger pupils. Pupils participate in an array of enrichment activities. These include clubs such as learning Japanese, fencing or dissection with the medical society.

Sixth-form students lead pupils in discussing school matters. They encourage pupils to share their ideas to improve the school. The school is developing greater opportunities for leadership in the lower years. Eco leaders and members of the school council contribute to developing the school.

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

The school has designed an ambitious, broad and personalised curriculum. It offers subjects beyond the statutory requirement of the national curriculum. At each stage of their education, pupils choose courses that prepare them well for their future aspirations. From key stage 3, pupils study more than one foreign language. However, the number of pupils choosing subjects from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects is not as high as the school plans for.

The school has made some decisions to refine and change the curriculum in key stage 3. Staff have worked together to be specific about what they want pupils to learn. The school ensures pupils learn the knowledge and skills they need to know in an appropriate order. The school is vigilant in checking that pupils do not have gaps in their knowledge because of the changes it has made.

The learning motivates pupils. In the sixth form, students engage in seminar-style discussion. The school has experienced some change and absence in staffing. When this happens, students work with the support provided to maintain high outcomes. In the sixth form, the school provides students with specific and precise guidance. As a result, students achieve high grades. They are well prepared to proceed to their choices of universities and future training.

The school embeds an ambition for reading throughout the curriculum. It makes sure it knows how well pupils can read. It chooses ambitious, diverse and rich texts for pupils to read. Younger pupils read to sixth-form students. The school focuses on making sure pupils with English as a second language have support to read with fluency. The school has recently prioritised the work it does to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive the information they need to adapt learning for pupils. Recent professional development ensures staff have the expertise to do this well.

Pupils travel from a wide distance to attend the school. Attendance is high. The school is robust in the procedures and monitoring it does to maintain strong attendance. Around school, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Poor behaviours are unusual. The school has revised its approach to be more celebratory of pupils' achievements.

The governing body has been through a period of robust change. An interim school board has focused on the immediate school priorities. They provide a high level of strategic scrutiny. As a result, a newly trained governing body provides challenge and support to the school. During a recent period of rapid change, communication with parents, staff, pupils and students had diminished. As a result, these key stakeholders express their concern at the lack of communication from the school. The school has newly implemented systems for improved communication. New leaders share a refined vision for the school. The embedding of this with stakeholders is underway.

The school builds enrichment through the curriculum. It builds on a long tradition of what it means to be a 'Marlingtonian'. Changes to the house system concern pupils that there is less opportunity for competitive sports and arts. However, the school plans these experiences to continue through the 'learning communities'.

Through 'life skills' lessons, pupils and students in the sixth form learn about respect and healthy relationships. The highly developed careers programme gives all pupils and sixth-form students a wide exposure to future careers, training and higher education opportunities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some aspects of the key stage 3 curriculum are newly designed or re-sequenced. This means staff are becoming familiar with the revised subject content and its implementation. The trust needs to make sure the new content is well embedded.
- The school does not ensure that there are strong lines of communication with key stakeholders. As a result, parents, pupils and staff express frustration about the lack of communication they receive about important information. The school has recently

introduced new mechanisms for communication, but these are in the early stages of use. The trust needs to ensure that communication between school and stakeholders is responsive and timely.

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 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	137123
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10344613
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,191
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	340
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Brierley
CEO of the trust	Duncan Cook
Principal	Jules Godfrey
Website	www.marling.gloucs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Cotswold Beacon Trust. There is one secondary school, one junior school and two primary schools within the trust.
- There have been recent changes to some of the key leadership roles in the school and within the trust. The CEO commenced their role in November 2024. The headteacher took up their post in April 2024. The school appointed a vice-principal, who is the designated safeguarding lead, in January 2024.
- An interim school development board replaced the existing governing body in November 2023. A newly appointed governing body (school development board) has now been appointed.
- The school uses 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth-form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, music and modern foreign languages. 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.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5 about their experiences of school. They observed the school during breaktimes and visited assembly and tutor time.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the online pupil survey and the responses to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

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