



The Marlborough Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123267
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281445
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Martyn Rhowbotham HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Shipton Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Woodstock
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Oxfordshire OX20 1LP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01993 811431
Number on roll	1049	Fax number	01993 813530
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Gordon Lloyd
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs J Fenn

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	Inspection number 281445
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Marlborough Church of England School is situated in Woodstock, a prosperous part of West Oxfordshire. Very few pupils at the school are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below the national average. Attendance is above the national average. The school has joint specialist status in business and enterprise and humanities (specialising in English). The school has good links with business and with local community. The Ormerod School for pupils with physical and/or learning disabilities is on the school site and pupils integrate well into lessons and other additional activities. Years 7 to 11 participate in a comprehensive weekly electives programme of sporting, cultural and artistic activities. The school is committed to inclusion and has a sixth form catering for a wide range of abilities. Facilities are used by the local community in the evening for the provision of adult education courses.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the overall effectiveness of the school is good. Pupils' achievements are good and they make good progress. The school meets demanding targets for GCSEs but a much higher proportion of girls achieve higher grade passes. School leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and of what needs to be improved so as to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential. Their evaluation of the school's performance is rigorous. However, these self-evaluation skills are not yet firmly embedded within the leadership of all subject departments. The school has well-developed plans in place to improve this through departmental links with the leadership team. The care, guidance and support provided to students are effective in helping them to learn well. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils' involvement in the life of the school results in them taking a pride in their school and they are keen to do their best. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous and they enjoy their education. Teaching is good overall and pupils respond well to this. In a few lessons the more able pupils are not challenged enough and there is insufficient attention given to pupil's individual abilities. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well and the electives programme of additional sporting, cultural, artistic and personal development activities is successful and valued by pupils. The links with the Omerod School are outstanding and add greatly to the inclusive ethos of the school. The school's capacity to improve further is very good. This is shown by the improvements since the last inspection and the determination by the headteacher and other leaders to provide the best possible education for all pupils in the school. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agreed with the school's own evaluation that the effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students make good progress in most subjects and pass rates, including the proportion of higher level grades, are above the national average. Students in the sixth form enjoy their education and are active in supporting students lower down the school and organising social events. A small minority of students were unable to take their first choice subjects due to clashes in their timetables. The sixth form is led well and students receive good support from their teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

* Reduce the gap in attainment between boys and girls in the higher grade GCSEs*
Improve the quality of self evaluation in departmental level to that of the best*
Ensure all teaching takes account of individual pupil's abilities and that higher ability pupils are challenged sufficiently

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards in the main school and in the sixth form are good. Pupils start the school with standards above the national average. The school builds on these well. Pupils make good progress in lessons and with their written work and the standards pupils reach are significantly above national averages at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pass rates and the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades are also above the national average at the end of the sixth form. In 2005 the school narrowly missed its very challenging targets for the end of Year 9 but met its similarly demanding targets for GCSE. The progress made by more able pupils is in line with expectations but the school's target for grade A*s and As at GCSE was not met in 2005. In GCE A level, the more able students perform well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Boys and girls make equally good progress in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. By the end of Year 11, however, a much higher proportion of girls gain five or more GCSE grades at A* - C. Boys who start Year 10 with average attainment make the least progress. A much higher proportion of girls take vocational subjects in Year 10 and Year 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school judges that pupils' personal development and well-being are good, but inspection evidence shows it to be outstanding. Pupils enjoy their education and are highly supportive of the school. Well-planned assemblies reinforce the school's values very effectively and make a major contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils respond well to these opportunities and take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils feel safe in school, care for each other and see it as a place where they will do well. Pupils' positive attitudes to the school are reflected in the low number of exclusions, above average attendance, a high level of punctuality and high retention of students on sixth form courses. Pupils' behaviour and the quality of relationships help create a very positive learning environment. Pupils show a strong awareness of safe practices, for example by the care shown as they move calmly around the school. Pupils with physical difficulties are fully involved in the life of the school. A highly active school council makes a key contribution to decision making in the school. For example, the school council, 'Marlborough Voice Heard,' has successfully promoted healthy eating so that many pupils now choose healthy options at lunchtimes. Pupils enjoy a wide range of additional sporting, cultural, artistic and personal development opportunities and work well in different groups and with pupils of different ages. The contribution that pupils make to the school and wider community is outstanding and is highly valued by external partners. Through well-established business links, work experience and the skills developed through their high level of involvement in decision making, pupils are very well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges the quality of teaching and learning to be good and this was confirmed by the inspection. In most lessons pupils make good progress. They work hard and enjoy their learning. They are very enthusiastic and are keen to do their best. In the good and outstanding lessons all pupils are challenged by interesting and well planned activities. They work very hard and their achievements in these lessons are good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They know their pupils well and adapt their teaching accordingly. Pupils develop good learning skills. In an outstanding science lesson, pupils carried out an experiment involving the refraction of light and did a detailed analysis of their results so as to understand fully the principles involved. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and physical disabilities is very good. In a physical education lesson on netball a pupil in a wheelchair participated fully and made very good progress in the development of her skills. In the less effective lessons there is insufficient attention given to pupil's individual abilities and what they already know. Insufficient use is made of target setting for pupils. Higher ability pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and lessons are sometimes too slow.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and other activities are good. The school reviews the curriculum frequently and systematically. It contains a good range of academic and vocational courses that prepare pupils well for further study and the world of work. The curriculum in the main school takes account of a wide range of needs and students with special educational needs and with physical disabilities participate fully and enjoy success. Pupils' progression through the school is planned well and the school has a clear and successful programme of courses for pupils aged from 14 to 19. Students in the sixth form have a good range of courses to choose from and many mix academic and vocational courses successfully. A small number of students were unable to take their first choice subjects due to timetable clashes. The additional sporting, cultural, artistic and personal development activities are valued by pupils. These activities give them a good opportunity to gain and develop new skills and to work with pupils from other year groups. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is currently being reviewed to try to reduce the gap in attainment between boys and girls. The school plans to provide more flexibility, more appropriate ICT courses and to attract more boys onto vocational courses.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care the school provides is good. Pupils feel safe because the environment is well organised and the school has established effective systems that ensure their welfare. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but when it does occur, the school deals with it effectively and rapidly. The school's commitment to pupils' and students' welfare is reflected in the establishment of pupil counsellors, a buddy system that pupils say works well and the work that has gone into establishing the anti-bullying system. More vulnerable pupils are supported well, for example through the deployment of teaching assistants and through the way that teachers organise activities. In a mathematics lesson, the more vulnerable pupils were fully involved through small group activities led effectively by adults. External partners involved in pupil welfare say that the school picks up and addresses individuals' problems quickly. Pupils value their strong, positive relationships with staff. Sixth form students receive good, impartial advice to help them make choices. The school is not complacent and is working to improve further its systems for guidance and support, as shown in the school improvement plan. The school meets child protection requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and displays a determination to improve the school further. Along with the governors, she is effective in providing a clear direction for the school and in establishing an ethos for further improvement. The senior management team are regarded by staff as being pro-active, supportive and approachable. They are effective in maintaining and promoting the inclusive ethos in the school. This results in pupils achieving well and enjoying learning in a purposeful and caring environment. The school has been very successful in developing links with the community and local business and these impact positively on the work of the school. The benefits to pupils from the school's very close links with the Omerod School are outstanding in adding to the school's ethos of treating everyone with respect and as an individual. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection and has good capacity to make further improvements. This is because the school's overall approach to self-evaluation is thorough and based on a rigorous analysis of achievement and other data. This includes the quality of teaching, which is monitored well by senior staff. It also takes account of the views of parents and pupils. The outcomes of self-evaluation are used to establish priorities for further improvement. The school's practice of involving all pupils fully in all it offers is very effective. Leaders systematically seek information about how well things are working and they are willing to change things in order to improve them. Self-evaluation is appropriately self-critical but the school acknowledges the quality of self-evaluation at departmental level is as yet too variable. In the sixth form, strong leadership has been effective in raising standards. Pass rates are now above the national average and courses in the sixth form now meet the needs of a wider range of

students. Accommodation is clean and tidy. A number of new classrooms have been built recently but accommodation for science, art, technology and sport are cramped. Plans are in place for a new school hall and additional classrooms.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know your school was inspected recently. Many of you will have seen inspectors around the school and an inspector may have visited one of your lessons. Some of you came to meetings where we discussed the school with you. Some of your parents/carers filled in confidential questionnaires about the school and we took their views into account when reaching our judgements.

We were impressed with your behaviour during our visit and how enthusiastic you were in most of your lessons. You were very polite during the inspection and were very good at helping us to find places when we got lost! You talked about your work and progress very well. You, and the pupils from the Omerod School, all made a contribution to the inspection and we would like to thank you very much for that. The main strengths of the school are: * The standards you achieve and the progress you make * The involvement and achievements of students with learning difficulties and disabilities * The wide range of extra activities such as electives, sports and trips * Your enthusiasm and your good attitude to learning * The support and teaching offered by your teachers * Its involvement with business and the community * Your sensible and mature behaviour around the school * How well it is led and managed

In order to improve further the school needs to: * Work to make sure that boys do as well as girls in getting higher grade GCSEs. * Ensure that all lessons take into account what you already know so that everyone is challenged to produce their best work. You can help in this by continuing to behave well and work hard in all lessons and by attending all of the time. Thank you again for all of your help in the inspection.