

# Maiden Erlegh School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110064
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wokingham District Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	288577
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Maria Dawes HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1664
6th form	325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr H Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr P Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Silverdale Road Earley Reading RG6 7HS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 262467
<b>Fax number</b>	01189 266111

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Maiden Erlegh School is a considerably larger than average comprehensive school situated on the southern edge of Reading. It has a larger than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups although very few are at an early stage of English acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities including those with a statement of educational needs is below the national proportion.

The school was recently re-designated with Specialist School Status in Visual Arts and, as a 'high-performing' school, it now has a second specialism in Business and Enterprise. The school is currently undergoing a planned expansion and is currently completing an extensive building programme.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Maiden Erlegh describes itself as a 'school of opportunity and success' and the inspectors agree. It is an outstanding school where pupils of all abilities and with a wide range of needs attain excellence both in terms of their academic achievement and their personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school; it is heavily oversubscribed and enjoys an excellent reputation both in the local and wider community.

Maiden Erlegh is an inclusive school putting the needs of pupils first at all times. This leads to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they invariably behave well and a strength is the positive and mature relationships they have with each other and staff. Pupils enthusiastically involve themselves in the life of the school and make an outstanding contribution to the wider community both locally and abroad. For example, all Year 7s take part in community service through the school's 'Passport for Life' programme. They appreciate the wide range of activities and extended opportunities offered by the school; a particular highlight is their trips to the school's residential centre in the Brecon Beacons.

The school's specialism in visual arts has had many positive benefits across the school and has driven improvement. Several staff commented how specialist status has made teachers 'raise their game' in terms of teaching. The quality of the pupils' artwork is stunning and staff and pupils are very much involved in sharing their expertise with the wider community. The school has recently been designated by the Department for Education and Skills as a 'high performing specialist' school and building on its success now has a second specialism in Business and Enterprise.

Throughout their time at Maiden Erlegh pupils make very good progress and by the end of Years 9, 11 and the sixth form they attain standards that are exceptionally high. For example, in 2006, 81% of learners entered for GCSE achieved 5 or more A\* - C grades. A very high percentage of students leave the sixth form to study in higher education, including Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Achievement and standards are excellent largely because learning and teaching are outstanding. The school has a relentless focus on developing the highest quality teaching and has been successful in creating a culture for learning both in and out of the classroom. This combined with the excellent support and procedures to guide pupils, starting from the year before they join the school, ensures that all pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are particularly gifted and talented make equally good progress. One parent commented, 'My children have very different schooling needs and Maiden Erlegh has done an excellent job of meeting these.' The procedures for communication with parents are good although not always as explicit as they could be. A minority of parents indicate that they would like more contact between themselves and the school.

The curriculum is good throughout the school although currently limited in vocational and applied opportunities for some older pupils. A recent review has correctly identified the need to enhance and broaden the curriculum in order to better meet the needs of older pupils and has started to put in place changes.

A key factor in the school's success is its outstanding leadership and management. The head teacher with his senior management team provides first class leadership dedicated to attaining the highest outcomes from its pupils. All staff share this vision and are empowered to take ownership for initiatives in particular regarding teaching and learning. There is a willingness

amongst staff to 'go the extra mile' for the pupils and support one another. As one teacher put it, 'We work in a unique school', reflecting the sense of unity that staff feel.

There is an open and self-critical approach to school improvement. The school has in place a rigorous system of monitoring of performance which enables it to celebrate and share good practice as well as taking swift action to remedy shortcomings. Changes and improvements to provision are not rushed but well-thought out, carefully planned and their implementation is carefully evaluated. This combined with the improvements since the last inspection shows that the school has demonstrated excellent capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Sixth form provision is outstanding. It is very well led. Management actions have had a very positive impact on some specific areas of achievement, most noticeably the staying on rate, which is high, and the improvements in achievement over the last few years. This inclusive, growing and developing sixth form has retention rates that are impressively high. Students enter the sixth form with attainment which is well above average and make outstanding progress resulting in very high standards in examinations. The proportion of top grades is high and almost all go on to higher education.

A significant number of students join the sixth form from other schools each year and the school is now attracting students from abroad. These students receive an effective induction programme and all students benefit from a very good careers and guidance programme. There is good integration of academic and pastoral support with a regular and rigorous system for reviewing students' progress, which ensures that early support is provided for those who need it.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and promote their independent research skills well. The much improved facilities in the new Sixth Form centre, of which the students are justly proud, has increased the opportunities for this type of learning. Students enjoy their studies and take up significant roles in the rest of the school, willingly giving their time to contribute to all areas of school life. They are excellent ambassadors for the school.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

\* Implement and monitor the impact of the proposed curriculum development.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils start Maiden Erlegh with above average standards although within the school there is a comprehensive range of abilities. Pupils make outstanding progress through Key Stage 3 and reach exceptionally high standards in the end of Key Stage tests in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils continue to make very good progress through Key Stage 4 and by the end of Year 11 standards reached in GCSE are consistently high in nearly all subjects with 74% of students achieving 5 or more A\* - C grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics. Nearly all pupils finish Year 11 with five or more GCSE grade A\* to G grades. These results are well above

the national and local average. Many subjects reflect a significantly high number of A\* and A grades at GCSE with over half the grades in Geography and German being at this level. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make very good progress because of the careful support that they are given.

In the sixth form achievements are outstanding. In 2006 the GCE A-level pass rate was over 99% with 53% of all examinations taken passed at grade A or B. Students make exceptional progress in visual arts subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. Their enjoyment and appreciation of the school is reflected in the very high level of attendance and engagement in both lessons and other activities. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. The atmosphere throughout the school is calm and relaxed. Pupils report that bullying is rare and when it does occur it is taken seriously and dealt with promptly. They feel safe and very well supported by staff and appreciate the peer-counselling service 'Talk@Ease' that is available to them.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are reflective and thoughtful. They experience moments of surprise and delight in art, music, drama and poetry. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness and sympathy. This is evident in their effort to raise money for many local and international charities. For example, through the school's 'Global Citizenship' project, the pupils are generously supporting a school in Zambia.

Pupils' voice is taken seriously by the school and it is continuing to develop more formal processes such as the School Council. Pupils know well what is necessary to stay fit and keep healthy. They understand how to avoid unnecessary risks both in school and in the world outside. The attitudes and skills pupils develop prepare them exceptionally well through the next stage of their education and in later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. As a result, in most lessons pupils enjoy their learning and make very good progress. The school very effectively monitors the quality of teaching and senior and middle managers work closely to ensure high quality and consistency in their lesson observations. This enables them to accurately judge lessons and provide high quality individualised support.

Pupils are highly appreciative of the exceptionally high subject knowledge and expertise of the teachers. Warm working relationships are reflected in pupils' confidence in their teachers and they are quick to say how this helps them to take part in classroom activities. 'Teaching engages pupils in the lesson', 'teachers make very good use of their interactive whiteboards', 'a varied range of learning styles' and 'high expectations' were typical of phrases, which are regularly used by pupils when describing their lessons. Teachers plan structured lessons very effectively, use a wide range of activities to engage pupils and take good account of different levels of

ability within their class. However, while teachers set learning outcomes they do not always express them so that they are clear to all pupils.

Teachers keep outstanding records of pupils' assessment and tracking of progress is exceptional. This ensures that pupils know what levels they are working at. They could talk confidently and accurately about this part of their learning. However teachers do not consistently intervene with pupils so that they always know what they need to do to make further progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum that is particularly enhanced by the opportunities offered by its Visual Arts Specialism. It is constantly monitored and is evolving to meet the changing needs of its students. The school recognises that the provision of more vocational and applied courses would benefit a greater range of pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 and have proposed changes for the next academic year.

Provision is outstanding for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, although there are good learning opportunities for gifted and talented students these are not fully embedded in all areas. In the sixth form, a wide range of academic courses and the introduction of some vocational options result in good curricular provision for this age group. Provision for personal, social and health education includes citizenship and community service. These effectively prepare pupils for their role as responsible young adults. There is a comprehensive range of enrichment activities to meet the wide range of pupil interests including many extra-curricular clubs, societies, activities and trips. Take-up for these is very good.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school's quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. There are strong support systems that nurture, as well as monitor, pupils' academic achievement and personal development very effectively. Pupils are set challenging targets to reach their potential. There are clear expectations of progress from year to year and this is effectively monitored. The school's arrangements to help pupils make a smooth transition from primary to secondary schools are excellent and ensure barriers to learning are removed as early as possible. Strong, specialist provision in school and close links with various agencies ensures that vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities receive very effective support for their specific needs.

Pupils have access to excellent careers advice and guidance for the next stage of their education is tailored to their individual abilities and aspirations. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment in promoting the health and safety of pupils. The school's policies and procedures for risks assessment and child protection are securely in place and well understood by staff.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. Consistently high expectations of all who work in the school have contributed significantly to its success. The headteacher with the support of governors and senior leaders provides inspirational leadership. He has put in place very effective management structures that not only ensure the smooth running of the school but provides a clear framework for staff to operate efficiently. The leadership team has a strong collective sense of purpose. Together they have successfully prioritised raising the quality of learning and teaching to the best in order that pupils of all abilities reach their potential.

Senior and middle manager roles are well matched to the needs of the school. All are fully involved in the rigorous school improvement planning process, monitoring and evaluation. Self-evaluation at a whole-school level is accurate and uncompromising leading to very good improvement since the last inspection. The successful bid for improvements to the accommodation has enhanced the provision for sixth form students and other curriculum areas. Financial planning is very good and resources are used effectively so that the school successfully meets its aims including recent improvements to the accommodation.

The governing body brings much valuable expertise to the school. They have a very clear vision for the development of the school and whilst actively supporting this successful school, they hold senior managers to account constructively.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maiden Erlegh School, Reading, RG6 7HS

I am writing on behalf of the other inspectors and myself to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and valued the discussions we had with you. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

We think your school is outstanding. There are many reasons for this, but in particular I would like to highlight the following:

- your school provides you with a very good quality education, enabling you to progress well and achieve outstanding examination results in Year 11 and in the sixth form
- the quality of the teaching you receive is of a very high standard and you are keen to engage with this leading to very high levels of learning
- there is a wide range of experiences on offer to you, both inside and outside the classroom
- the staff work really hard to support and guide all of you and in particular those who have particular difficulties at any time
- your behaviour is very good and relationships between you and your teachers are excellent
- you develop into confident young people, readily take on responsibilities and make a very valuable contribution to the community
- the leadership of the school and in particular that of your headteacher and his senior leadership group is outstanding.

We were also very impressed by the stunning artwork around the school.

Maiden Erlegh strives for excellence and we agree that the curriculum needs to offer a wider range of vocational and applied options. Therefore we have asked the senior team to make sure they carefully implement and monitor the proposed changes from September.

You have a school to be proud of and I am sure you will continue to support staff in making any changes. The inspectors wish you and the school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes  
Her Majesty's Inspector