

The St Marylebone CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101152
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	307605
Inspection date	7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Lynes HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	914
6th form	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Mountford
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	64 Marylebone High Street London W1U 5BA
Telephone number	020 7935 4704
Fax number	020 7935 4005

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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: leadership and management, achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, the curriculum and the sixth form, gathering evidence from lesson observations, discussions with key staff and students, and scrutiny of documents provided by the school. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Marylebone is an oversubscribed girls' school that accepts boys into the sixth form. It serves a community that is subject to significant social deprivation, for example, entitlement to free school meals is about three times the national average. Most students start Year 7 with academic standards that are well above the national average.

About half of students speak English as an additional language (EAL); very few of them at the early stages. There are fewer students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) than found nationally. Students come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds: about a third of students are of White British origin, a tenth are of Asian background, and a tenth of Black heritage.

The school has specialised in the performing arts since 1998; in 2006 it was awarded a second specialism in mathematics and computing in recognition of its status as a high performing specialist school. The school was also awarded healthy schools status in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Marylebone is an extraordinary school because not only do students feel a profound sense of security and well-being and achieve exceptionally high academic standards, but staff also flourish as well. Its sense of community is deeply felt by everyone connected with the school. This creates an atmosphere where both students and adults feel that they really belong, and where everyone can be successful.

The school is outstanding in every respect. This is due in no small part to an exceptionally talented head teacher who is driven by a strong sense of Christian duty to ensure that nobody is left behind, either in their academic or personal development. She has ensured that the high standards apparent across all areas of the schools' work at the last inspection have continued to improve. She has a keen sense of the strategic direction of the school, and high expectations of herself and everyone else in the school community. Students rightly regard her extremely highly. They report that she knows all their names and that when she talks to them it is a 'personalised conversation'. She is exceptionally well supported by a deputy who has his 'finger on the pulse' of all aspects of the day-to-day running of the school. He has an acute understanding of the progress of students, which he analyses with rigour and honesty. Together they make a formidable team. The wider senior leadership team have a clear grip on the quality of teaching and learning and of the innovative Key Stage 3 curriculum developments. They are enthusiastic, committed and very able. Specialist status in the performing arts is very well led, and its impact is evident in all aspects of the school.

There is outstanding capacity for the school to take on the challenges of the next few years with the confidence that it can continue to improve. One of the key elements of the school's capacity is its exceptional ability to nurture and develop beginning teachers. They are both carefully supported and rigorously monitored so that they quickly develop into confident, enthusiastic practitioners. A significant number go on to achieve advanced skills teacher status. This school's ability to sustain improvement is reinforced by the way in which a highly intrusive three-year building programme has just been completed; during which time standards improved and the students' strong sense of community was maintained. The new building itself provides superb arts and physical education teaching accommodation that students really appreciate.

Results in examinations are high throughout the school, but particularly at Key Stage 4 where students make exceptional progress from their starting points in Year 7. Progress is slower at Key Stage 3, but students still achieve good examination results in national tests that they take one year earlier than is usual. The school's own tracking indicates that this good progress is at least maintained in Year 9. Achievement in mathematics, whilst still good, is not as good as in the other core subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4. Results in the sixth form, across a wide range of subjects, are good and improving and the 2007 results demonstrate outstanding progress. All students, no matter their ethnic background, specific needs or academic ability make at least good progress during their time at the school and many make outstanding progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. This is because lessons are planned rigorously having genuine regard to students' prior learning and interests. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and they are enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects. Teaching is clearly focused on examination requirements but also develops the enjoyment of learning. Assessment is very good, and there are good examples of students engaged in assessing their

own, and others', work across the school. Academic guidance is based on exemplary systems, which rigorously and helpfully track students' progress throughout the school. This means that they are fully aware of their strengths, and how to improve their weaknesses. Teachers challenge students to do their very best, but in a way that is supportive and engages them in their own learning. As a result, students really challenge themselves; in a Year 9 mathematics lesson students were seen driving themselves forward in a flat out intellectual effort to complete work of the highest standard.

Students thrive in a culture of praise so they feel empowered to be adventurous in the way they learn, and are confident enough to make mistakes. For example, specialist status in the performing arts has led to them developing exceptional levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Students acknowledge the impact of specialist status; one commented that the 'Performing arts has given us confidence, that's why we can speak out'. They feel that there is a lot of positive recognition for academic excellence and that they are given every opportunity to succeed. They are also highly complimentary about the Year 9 creative curriculum. They are enthusiastic about the loosening of the curriculum and the wide range of extra opportunities that this year gives them. This is an undoubtedly successful curriculum innovation.

Behaviour is excellent because not only do students feel a real commitment to the school community, but they also understand that the rules are firmly, consistently and fairly applied. They recognise and highly value staff commitment to them and respond enthusiastically. As a consequence, attendance is significantly above the national average, exclusions are extremely low and attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive.

The school council is active and has made an impact on improving the quality of food in the school. Some students report that they would like the council to be even more active and have a stronger voice. There is a wide range of additional activities available at lunchtime and after school that are extremely well attended and many reflect the performing arts specialism. There are instances of bullying but they are resolved quickly and very effectively. Year 11 report that racism and bullying '...just would not be tolerated' by the students themselves, and they were able to give examples of where the school had allowed them to successfully resolve difficult interpersonal issues. There are many examples of students being actively involved with not only the local community but also the global one. For example, sixth formers saved for two years to finance a trip to Zambia to help local children.

Parents and carers report an extremely high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the school. They find it is very responsive to both their and their children's views. It is difficult to summarise the large numbers of highly complimentary comments received but two in particular stand out: '...my daughter is happy, eager and loving the experience' and '...my girls belong here; they are very proud of their school'. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the lack of space, and facilities for personal storage. The school is aware of, and sympathetic to these views, and is doing all it can to address them.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form has made clear improvements over the past three years and, as a result, achievement is now outstanding. This is a tribute to excellent leadership during a time when numbers in the sixth form have doubled. Teachers are committed to the academic development of all the students and consequently they have the clear understanding that only their best is good enough. Students, including those boys who join in Year 12, fully sign up to the ethos of

the sixth form. It is clearly integrated into both the ethos and academic rigour of the main school; it is a seamless extension of it.

All students are given very effective guidance on how to use their study time effectively, and they are highly appreciative of this. The managers of the sixth form monitor students' progress in an exemplary manner. Any underachieving students are identified early and receive excellent support to ensure that they get back on track. There is a wide range of courses available, including vocational options with a strong emphasis on the school's specialisms.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is greater progress in mathematics, especially at Key Stage 4.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The St Marylebone CofE School, London, W1U 5BA

Thank you very much to all of you and particularly those of you who talked to us during the recent inspection. You made us feel very welcome, and spoke to us articulately, intelligently and with great passion for your school. We really enjoyed our day and meeting you. I am writing to summarise our findings, but you can read the whole report at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

I do not think that it will come as much of a surprise that we judged your school to be outstanding in every respect. Not only are your examination results of the highest calibre, but the way in which you develop and mature in all ways is exceptional. You told us how highly you respect and value the teachers, who you know want you to do your very best. You told us very clearly that this was not only about getting good examination results, but also about caring and supporting you as individuals.

The inspection confirmed one aspect for improvement that you also told us about: teaching in mathematics, which is a good department, could be even better, particularly at Key Stage 4. The school is aware of this and will be working to improve it. I am sure that you will be supportive and helpful.

Well done and I wish you the very best for your future,

Michael Lynes

Her Majesty's Inspector