

The Marlowe Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	128340
Inspection number	320573
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	739
6th form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Principal	Ian Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stirling Way Ramsgate CT12 6NB
Telephone number	01843 593326
Fax number	01843 593356

Age group	11-19
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2008
Inspection number	320573

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Marlowe Academy opened in September 2005 in the former building of The Ramsgate School and transferred to new buildings in 2006. The academy has dual specialism in performing arts and in business enterprise; it operates an extended day and is developing a range of extended services to meet the needs of students, their families and the wider community.

Most students are of White British heritage, with many coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is in line with the national average. A high proportion, just over half of students, have a learning difficulty and/or disability, including a broadly average number who have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory and improving academy is establishing a place for itself at the heart of its community. The development of extended services and strong partnerships with other agencies is benefiting students and their families. The academy rightly describes itself as 'a work in progress', but it is gaining ground with its declared aims of 'providing opportunities, raising aspirations and getting results'. A legacy of underachievement is being tackled, with more work to do in raising standards in English and mathematics.

Standards remain well below average at the end of Year 11, but students make at least satisfactory progress from their starting points in Year 7. The good curriculum offers older students choices that capture their interest and enable them to experience success. Students also enjoy and benefit from the rich range of extra-curricular opportunities available. The academy's specialisms add breadth to the curriculum and help develop students' social skills, confidence and motivation. The development of the curriculum is helping to improve some students' attendance but, overall, it remains well below the average for secondary schools.

Most students develop into thoughtful citizens who care about the wider community and the environment. There are extensive opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the community and the keen interest taken by many is testament to their good personal development. Students are encouraged to express opinions about their academy and be aware of the contribution they make to its improvement. Supportive relationships are an important factor in students' positive attitudes. Behaviour is good and students value learning. These significant achievements confirm the impact of good leadership and management.

Care, guidance and support are good. The academy provides students with a caring environment, successfully developing individuality and a sense of belonging. There is an extensive menu of support for students with additional needs, but it is not always sufficiently coordinated and evaluated in terms of its impact. Students receive valuable guidance and help from learning mentors. However, assessment procedures are not effective enough in helping students to understand how to improve their work in all subjects.

Overall, in Years 7 to 11, teaching is satisfactory. There is variation across the academy with some good and outstanding practice most evident in the delivery of vocational courses. Teaching methods are not securing the rapid development of students' literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in Years 7 and 8, and the monitoring of teaching has not given enough emphasis to learning and progress.

The strong leadership of the principal stems from a clear vision of success that is being realised in the development of the curriculum and in establishing an ethos that ensures students are ready to learn and enjoy learning. Self-evaluation, which identifies strengths and areas for development accurately, has not given enough weight to students' achievement. Consequently, some judgements have been overgenerous. Good capacity for further improvement is demonstrated in the distance the academy has travelled to achieve a cohesive community where adults, children and young people care about each other and believe that, together, they can succeed.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Good, resourceful leadership has been successful in increasing the number of students in the sixth form, where they benefit from the continuity of supportive relationships. Students' achievement is good, a reflection of the good teaching. At its best, well pitched, enthusiastic teaching engages students and the detailed assessment of their work highlights points for improvement. Sometimes, students are not appropriately challenged, particularly the most able, because teachers are not sufficiently 'tuned into' the range of ability in groups. Students are very appreciative of the time given by staff to help them resolve problems, improve their work, and organise their studies.

The curriculum provides a variety of choice that attracts and retains students. There is a good range of vocational courses and plans to introduce more opportunities to pursue A level courses. The quality of relationships, combined with provision that is increasingly responsive to students' needs, has been powerful in improving retention and encouraging students to enter higher education. Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students feel well looked after, have a strong sense of their place within the school community, and are effective ambassadors for the academy. They rise to the challenge of leading initiatives within the academy and are good role models for younger learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards by monitoring teaching more rigorously to ensure it focuses on how well students learn and is consistently good.
- Develop an effective whole school approach to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve students' attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students join the academy with well below average attainment particularly in literacy, and achieve standards that remain well below the national average at the end of Year 9. This represents relatively slow progress. However, whilst standards remain well below average at the end of Year 11, from Year 9 the students make better progress, particularly in vocational subjects. Consequently, given their starting points, students make at least satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 11 with no groups underachieving significantly. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates.

In 2007, good improvement was achieved in Year 11 examination results. However, standards in core subjects remained low and there was some unevenness in students' performance across subjects at the end of Key Stage 4.

Current assessment information suggests the academy is on track to achieve adequately challenging targets for the proportion of students gaining five higher GCSE grades in 2008. The target for students including English and mathematics amongst those grades, whilst

reflecting students' underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the academy, is low. The academy is yet to implement effective strategies to improve these skills rapidly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are positive about life at Marlowe Academy, and are developing many personal qualities that will serve them well in the future. They talk enthusiastically about the many opportunities that are on offer and appreciate the excellent resources and accommodation. In particular, many spoke of the academy's culture of achievement that enables them to celebrate things they have done well. Warm and supportive relationships underpin the significant improvement in attitudes to learning since the academy opened.

The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. The academy community is harmonious; incidents of bullying or racism are rare and dealt with effectively. Students make a positive contribution to the development of the academy and the wider community. For example, the student council has recently designed and debated a new rewards system and the flourishing academy magazine 'OI' has a distribution of over 50,000. The academy prepares students for the world of work very well. There are excellent opportunities for work experience and work related learning. However, the underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills of some students could limit future prospects.

Improving students' understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle has been a priority for the academy and it has been successful in doing this. Good sporting and enrichment activities support students' fitness well. Older students develop a good understanding of the dangers of smoking and drug abuse and rates of exclusion due to smoking related incidents have decreased.

Effective monitoring of attendance and robust efforts to improve it have had some success since the academy opened. However, attendance remains well below the average for secondary schools, due mainly to a small minority of persistent absentees.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The academy has been successful in creating an environment where students enjoy learning. The quality of teaching across the academy varies. Overall, in Years 7 to 11 it is satisfactory. Where good or outstanding teaching occurs, staff and students have high expectations. In these lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of where students are in their learning. Consequently, learning objectives are appropriate, and well sequenced tasks enable students to succeed; lesson activities require independent and collaborative working, and a brisk pace and tight use of time concentrate thinking. Students demonstrate a clear interest in the subject and the teachers actively engage students in assessing their own and others' learning. Not all teaching is of this quality. In lessons where students' progress is only satisfactory, teachers are too focused on the activity of teaching rather than

how well students are learning. Lessons are over directed and lack pace. Planning identifies students' specific needs, but learning objectives and activities are not tailored to those needs.

The quality of marking is variable. Some gives students a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their subject skills, but too frequently feedback is restricted to general comments like 'good work' that do not identify the next learning steps for students. Support for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties in lessons is usually good, but sometimes shortcomings in the teamwork between teachers and support assistants result in missed opportunities to accelerate students' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The majority of students enjoy their education because the curriculum captures their interest. Regular monitoring and review of provision ensures a close match with the needs and aspirations of students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Those responsible for leading and managing the academy recognise that further improvements are required in Key Stage 3. Specifically, the integrated studies programme in Years 7 and 8 is not addressing students' literacy needs rapidly enough.

Progression routes are clear and Year 9 students have good opportunities to develop an understanding of the broad range of vocational options that are available to them in Year 10. Students' positive experience of learning is resulting in increasing numbers participating in further and higher education. Many extra-curricular activities, trips and outings take place to broaden students' horizons and develop social and learning skills. The academy's specialism in performing arts and business enterprise is having a positive impact on both students' achievement and attitudes to learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The academy provides a caring and supportive environment where students feel safe and valued. Many parents express their appreciation of this with one commenting, 'The Marlowe Academy is rich in guidance and support for both parents and students.'

There is an expansive multi-agency team of key workers to support students and their families. The academy's vision of wrapping services and support around individuals to ensure they fulfil their potential is absolutely right, but structures for coordinating and evaluating this work are still developing. Provision for ensuring health and safety is strong. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities.

The academy provides excellent support at times of transition. There are very clear and effective arrangements for prospective Year 7 students and their families. Good detailed guidance is given to students about options in Key Stage 4, the sixth form and beyond.

The academy has effective procedures for the regular assessment of students and the tracking of their progress against targets. Learning mentors provide good support to students, particularly during study times and mentoring sessions. However, specific guidance to help students improve in subjects is at an early stage of development and not all subjects use assessment information well to accelerate students' learning in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership of the academy has successfully focused on promoting the personal development and well-being of students. This is evident in the transformation of students' attitudes, the inclusiveness of the academy, and in the tireless commitment of staff to supporting students. These achievements, secured through leaders' adherence to the values of trust, fairness and partnership, are the backbone of the academy's strong and distinctive ethos.

The leadership team gives clear direction to the work of the academy and shares a realistic understanding of strengths and areas for development. However, in judging their effectiveness, they did not give enough emphasis to the impact of their actions on students' achievement. Nevertheless, solid foundations are in place with significant challenges overcome. The pace of improvement is increasing as management systems and procedures embed in the smooth day to day running of the academy.

Good governance provides an effective balance of challenge and support. Governors have a clear view of the priorities for improvement and are actively involved in monitoring progress with improvement plans.

The academy is developing a good reputation in the local community and has gained the high regard of parents.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
---	----------------	-------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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 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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

31 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate CT12 6NB

My colleagues and I really enjoyed meeting you during the inspection this week. Thank you for talking to us so honestly about the academy and the progress you are making. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection. Your parents or carers will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it.

The academy is well led and provides a satisfactory and improving education; you contribute by being positive about learning and being determined to succeed. Most of you enjoy school and appreciate the wide range of extra activities and excellent facilities available to you. You have a good choice of subjects to study in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This has helped to keep you interested in learning.

Your behaviour is good. We appreciated your polite and thoughtful responses to our questions. You told us you feel safe and very well looked after. You greatly value the supportive relationships you have with each other and with staff. Whilst attendance is improving, some of you are still finding it very difficult to break bad habits and sustain regular attendance. This is a pity because you are likely to miss the opportunities offered by academy life.

Examination results in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are improving. Together with you, the principal, governors and staff, have brought the academy a long way since it opened. Everyone is determined to keep on improving and we have said the following things must be at the top of the list.

- Raise achievement and standards by monitoring teaching more rigorously to ensure it focuses on how well you learn and is consistently good.
- Help you to develop your literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve your attendance.

With very best wishes for the future. Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White Her Majesty's Inspector

31 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate CT12 6NB

My colleagues and I really enjoyed meeting you during the inspection this week. Thank you for talking to us so honestly about the academy and the progress you are making. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection. Your parents or carers will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it.

The academy is well led and provides a satisfactory and improving education; you contribute by being positive about learning and being determined to succeed. Most of you enjoy school and appreciate the wide range of extra activities and excellent facilities available to you. You have a good choice of subjects to study in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This has helped to keep you interested in learning.

Your behaviour is good. We appreciated your polite and thoughtful responses to our questions. You told us you feel safe and very well looked after. You greatly value the supportive relationships you have with each other and with staff. Whilst attendance is improving, some of you are still finding it very difficult to break bad habits and sustain regular attendance. This is a pity because you are likely to miss the opportunities offered by academy life.

Examination results in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are improving. Together with you, the principal, governors and staff, have brought the academy a long way since it opened. Everyone is determined to keep on improving and we have said the following things must be at the top of the list.

- Raise achievement and standards by monitoring teaching more rigorously to ensure it focuses on how well you learn and is consistently good.
- Help you to develop your literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve your attendance.

With very best wishes for the future.
Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector