

# Marriotts School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117534
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326638
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Hewitt

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>	Secondary
<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 (total)	883
Sixth form	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Peary
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Patrick Marshall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Telford Avenue Stevenage Hertfordshire SG2 0AN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 351801
<b>Fax number</b>	01438 743548

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The overall effectiveness of the school was evaluated and the following issues were investigated: standards and achievement, attendance and the quality of the sixth form. The inspector gathered evidence from interviews with governors, staff and students, lesson observations, analysis of documentation and observations of the school during the working day.

## Description of the school

The Marriotts School is a smaller than average comprehensive school and numbers have increased steadily over the past three years. It was awarded Specialist Sports College Status in 2002. It has a small sixth form that is part of the 14-19 Stevenage Consortium. It is also working as an extended school. The proportion of students who find learning difficult is above the national average. The numbers of students who speak English as an additional language and those from an ethnic minority background are below average. The school is due to be re-built in 2012 as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme. The school gained the Investors in People Award in 1998, which was most recently re-designated in June 2008. The school has also been awarded the Artsmark Gold, the Healthy School Award, the International Schools Award, and is a Teaching Learning Academy through the General Teaching Council.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Marriotts School is a satisfactory school with some good features, most notably the personal development it secures for students in its care. The school is characterised by a strong team spirit in which individuals are valued and collaboration is encouraged. Breaking a cycle of deprivation is at the centre of the school's ethos. The school sets great store in equipping students to take their place in society as well-rounded citizens who can make a positive contribution to their community. The students' good personal development is supported by their good spiritual and cultural development. A significant number of students struggle to attend regularly, limiting their learning. The school takes robust and systematic action to help them improve. Attendance improved rapidly in 2007 because of the school's effectiveness in engaging students in difficult circumstances. The school is on course to meet a target set by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. However, attendance rates remain below average.

The school has made sound progress since the last inspection and some good work has been done to secure improvement in students' reading and writing skills, but this has yet to bear fruit in Key Stage 3 tests. Students enter the school with standards below national averages. They make steady progress during Key Stage 3 and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 many achieve five or more good GCSEs. However, the numbers achieving good grades in English and mathematics are below national averages. Students who find learning more difficult make good progress because of the effective support they receive. Students joining the sixth form make sound progress. The progress students make in Key Stage 4 has improved significantly in the last three years, however, this is not consistent across the school. The school is working hard to improve rates of progress, especially in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.

A good feature of the school is the way in which the curriculum engages and meets the needs of all learners by offering a wide range of additional activities extending beyond the school day. The out-of-hours learning programme includes a range of sporting provision, effectively promoting students' good personal and social development, and helping them to be fit and healthy. The school is rightly focused on improving students' reading and writing skills and the new curriculum is showing early signs of accelerating this. The success of the curriculum can be seen in the high number of students who are in employment, further education or training when they leave the school. The school responds quickly to students' changing circumstances by tailoring the curriculum to meet individual needs.

This warm and caring school is led by a dynamic headteacher who is determinedly focused on raising standards. Senior staff and governors ably support him. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders also play their role, sometimes very well but this is not always consistent. Consequently, teachers' ability to promote students' independent learning skills is not as strong as it could be. Senior staff have helped teachers to raise their expectations of students, however expectations are not yet high enough. As a result, the pace of students' learning is often too slow. The school's robust monitoring systems have been successful in identifying such weaknesses and the school has sound plans to address them. Students behave well in lessons and around school. A strong feature of the school is the climate of positive relationships among students and adults. Students feel very safe in school because of the good pastoral support. Bullying is rare and, when it does occur, teachers deal with incidents swiftly. Students enjoy their time in school and many access extra-curricular activities. The school works hard to engage the support of parents, for example, it has provided

workshops to assist parents in supporting students with mathematics and English. The school acknowledges that there is further work to be done in encouraging more parents to take an active role in supporting its work.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, students are provided with a range of interesting activities that promote problem-solving and independent learning. For example, a good science lesson provided students with the opportunity to experiment with ways of establishing a 'fair test'. However, in many lessons, the teacher dominates discussion and consequently the pace of learning is not rapid enough. The school is aware of this and there is a good programme of peer and senior support for teachers that has improved their skills since the last inspection.

The care and support offered by staff on a daily basis are good and youngsters speak warmly about their teachers and other adults in the school. Pastoral care is particularly strong and characterised by the collaboration between the support and pastoral staff. This results in a coordinated response to any difficulties students experience. The school uses its status as a specialist sports college well to support youngsters who are underachieving. For example, teachers of physical education act as academic mentors for identified students. Its specialist status has also been instrumental in supporting the school in fostering effective links with its many partnerships. The school provides good guidance to students at key transition times in ensuring the next steps they take in education, employment and training are appropriate. Academic guidance is an area that has improved and the feedback youngsters receive in lessons is timely and helps them to identify the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Raising achievement is a high priority for the school and this can be seen in the rapid improvement in recent years in Key Stage 4. Students enjoy their time at the school and one student commented, 'the school feels like a family to me, teachers are always ready to help'. Improvements that management has introduced have had sound impact, equipping the school with satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Students enter the sixth form with standards that are below the national averages. From these modest starting points, they make satisfactory progress. Examination results in 2008 were below national averages. In keeping with the ethos of the main school, the curriculum is responsive to the needs of the local community and has recently improved in breadth as a result of the work the school is doing with the Stevenage 14-19 Consortium.

The school acknowledges that there are gaps in the way that students' progress is monitored. As a result, underachievement is not identified early enough for the school to intervene effectively. The school is now implementing a sound system of regular assessment and target setting.

The number of students attending the sixth form is increasing and this is reducing the incidence of classes with very small numbers. The school acknowledges that there is much work to be done in helping students to become more independent and to provide more lessons that include opportunities for students to collaborate. The guidance students receive is good and this is reflected in the improved numbers of students who continue into Year 13. Students' personal development is sound and they take an active role in contributing to the school community and beyond. For example, they act as mentors for younger students and are positive role models.

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

- Use the opportunities created by the new curriculum to promote independent learning and increase the pace of students' progress.
- Improve standards and achievement, especially in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form.
- Raise attendance in line with the national average.

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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	<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>	3	3
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	3
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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Marriotts School Stevenage SG2 0AN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. You were all very friendly and helpful. I was pleased to see how well you behave and how much you help each other. I can understand why you like your school and I agree that your school is caring. Staff ensure you develop well personally and make sound academic progress.

The way that teachers and other adults care for you and support you is good and this is why you develop good personal skills. You spoke with affection about your teachers and told me how hard they work and how they offer you extra help. You learn best when teachers help you to be independent and solve problems for yourself, but many of your lessons do not give you the chance to do this. I have asked Mr Marshall to make sure all of your lessons are planned so that you can be responsible for your own learning.

Mr Marshall and your teachers make sure the curriculum is right for you and this is especially true for those of you who find coming to school difficult. All of your teachers help you to improve your reading and writing skills. These will help you to make better progress in Key Stage 3. There are lots of clubs and activities for you to take part in and I was impressed with how many of you attend them.

Those of you in the sixth form told me how much you enjoy sixth form life and how your teachers guide and help you. Mr Marshall and the teachers know that you could do better and I have asked them to make sure that they check the progress you are making more regularly and help you if you are not meeting your targets.

You can play your role in making sure Marriott School provides you with the best education by attending regularly and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt

Lead Inspector