

The Marlowe Education Unit

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	916/6072
Unique Reference Number	115809
Inspection number	329550
Inspection dates	14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Frances Gander

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Marlowe Education Unit is a small independent day school catering for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties who are in the care of The Marlowe Child and Family Services. The pupils come from local authorities across the whole of the country. Many pupils, when they are placed at the school, are already nearing the end of compulsory education. Almost all have not attended education for up to three years and have difficulties in literacy and numeracy as well as gaps in their learning. This, combined with their emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, means that many are reluctant learners with aggressive attitudes towards authority, who have low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. The focus of the school is to provide a high quality therapeutic environment and a balanced and relevant education. The school aims to help pupils manage their own behaviour to an acceptable standard. Currently there are eight pupils between the ages of twelve and sixteen attending the school. All are from white British backgrounds and the majority are boys. The school was last inspected in October 2004.

Evaluation of the school

The Marlowe Education Unit meets its aims and provides a good quality of education for its pupils. It helps them to develop more positive attitudes about themselves, about others and about learning. The school improves their ability to manage their behaviour. The strong leadership focuses on high expectations for teaching, learning, behaviour and the safety and well-being of pupils. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The curriculum, teaching and assessment are good. Pupils make good progress overall.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. There is full-time education for all pupils and most subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, along with drama and social and independence skills. The content of the subjects is appropriate for the ages, abilities and interests of the pupils and is based on national guidance. The subject plans are used well by teachers to plan their individual lessons. Literacy and numeracy are given very high priority with individual 'catch up' programmes and one-to-one

sessions for all pupils. These programmes link very well with pupil's individual education plan (IEP) and their statement of educational needs. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection with the development of careers education, work experience placements and college links courses. There is good support from the local Connexions service for these areas of learning. Citizenship has been introduced and contains modules of work that are relevant to the pupils' future needs. This preparation for adulthood is very well supported by the work of the therapy team in the school who help pupils develop a more positive picture of themselves. The curriculum for some subjects is now based on externally accredited courses. Some pupils have opportunities to achieve GCSE Entry Level Certificates (ELC) in a small number of subjects. The school has also introduced the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) scheme to support vocational skills and learning. However, the range of external accreditation is still very narrow and could include more subjects or experiences.

The quality of teaching is good and on the inspection pupils behaved well and made good progress in lessons. Individual academic progress varies depending on the amount of time pupils have been in the school. It takes them a while to settle into the ethos of the school and to overcome their initial reluctance to engage in lessons and learning, but eventually pupils overcome this to make good progress. All pupils make good progress in personal development and become more confident as they realise that their efforts and achievements are valued by staff. The school has well-qualified and experienced teachers who have developed a good knowledge of their subjects. They use a wide range of teaching methods and activities to ensure that pupils remain engaged and interested. Along with the teaching assistants, they manage any disruptive behaviour very well through a non-confrontational approach. Most teachers have good questioning techniques and are able to encourage the (often reluctant) pupils to discuss and put forward their thoughts and ideas and to apply previously acquired knowledge. Teachers plan lessons with objectives but they do not always show in their planning what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. The expected learning is not always shared with pupils at the beginning of a lesson and this means that they are not always aware of what they have to achieve. Sometimes this has an impact on pupils' motivation and behaviour.

Assessment is good. Pupils often come into the school with scant records of previous achievement, mainly because they have not attended school for a long time. The school carries out an initial assessment of academic attainment and learning styles. This provides teachers with a starting point for planning work at the right level and for setting and sharing targets with pupils. There is regular whole-school assessment of pupils' work and their progress in subjects is recorded and monitored. New target levels are then set by staff based on this information.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Support for pupils' personal development is good. There are appropriate opportunities throughout the day for pupils to reflect on events and on their own achievements. There is consistent management of behaviour throughout the school and the liaison and partnerships that the staff have with the therapists and the residential units are very good. This has a positive affect on pupils' personal

development and, subsequently, their academic progress. Pupils are understood, valued and sensitively helped by all staff to come through difficult and sometimes distressing times. Pupils' attendance at school, in relation to their past educational history, shows dramatic improvement; they re-engage in learning and begin to take pride in their achievements. Pupils' behaviour is good, and although there are times when they show anger or resentment, they show respect for their surroundings, for the adults who work with them and for visitors.

The whole ethos of the school supports the promotion of self-awareness and self-esteem and this is very well supported by the work of therapists. The pupils' moral development is strongly supported through the setting of good examples for respect and showing concern for others. The behaviour plans for each pupil and the school's monitoring of responses to the targets set, provide good information on progress and on any problems. This enables the staff to set clear guidelines on how to respond to individual difficulties. The school tries very hard to show pupils how they can make a positive contribution to both the school and the outside community. High priority is given to developing the skills of relating to others positively, including the tolerance of those who may be perceived as different. The school has regular weekly themes that focus, for example on children's rights, the changing role of women and fund raising for national events. There is an active school council who have taken on their roles and responsibilities maturely.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. All staff undertake their responsibilities thoroughly in relation to this. There is a good range of safeguarding policies that are consistently implemented. All the required safeguarding checks are made and health and safety training is up-to-date. There is a very good ratio of staff to pupils and pupils are very well supervised at all times. On occasions, for the most disruptive pupil, this is helped by the presence of the pupil's care worker from the residence. High emphasis is placed on 'Every Child Matters', with health, safety and enjoyment being paramount. Communication between the school and the residences is very good. There is a very structured approach to the sharing of information about pupils before school starts, and high expectations for attendance, arrival times and appropriate dress. Smoking and the use of mobile phones are not tolerated and rules are consistently applied in school and upheld by the pupils' residences.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- continue to extend the range of external accreditation, as planned
- improve lesson planning by identifying more clearly the expected learning outcomes for individual pupils and consistently share these with the pupils.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

Name of school	The Marlowe Education Unit		
DCSF number	916/6072		
Unique reference number	115809		
Type of school	Day special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2000		
Age range of pupils	11-16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 6	Girls: 2	Total: 8
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 6	Girls: 2	Total: 8
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,000		
Address of school	Hartpury Old School Gloucester Road Hartpury Gloucester Gloucestershire GL19 3BG		
Telephone number	01452 700855		
Fax number	01452 541600		
Email address	school@the-marlowe.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs D McQueen		
Proprietor	Mr Steve Miller		
Reporting inspector	Frances Gander		
Dates of inspection	14 October 2008		