

Inspection of The Marsh Academy

Station Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8BB

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very well cared for. Leaders have high ambitions for pupils and make sure that their individual needs are met. There is a determination that no pupil, whatever difficulty they face, is left behind. This culture continues into the sixth form. Here, students can choose from a variety of options designed to meet their future goals. Staff take care to ensure that the sixth form can be a destination for everyone.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, there is a calm and focused environment throughout the school. Pupils are respectful of each other and of the adults that work with them. Pupils understand and appreciate the high standards that staff require of them.

Pupils are happy in school. They benefit from a programme of clubs and wider opportunities. Staff ensure that as many pupils as possible can take advantage of these activities. Leaders support the mental health of pupils effectively. Bullying at the school is rare but when it occurs it is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils take advantage of a wide range of opportunities to talk about any problems they are facing. They know where to seek support and this helps to keep them safe.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is well designed and taught. Subject leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to know and how best to support them to learn it. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They are effective at checking what pupils have learned, and making sure that they provide the right support to help pupils catch up when necessary. However, the curriculum does not reflect leaders' aspirations fully. For example, pupils do not currently study all aspects of design technology. Also, the proportions of pupils studying languages as part of the English Baccalaureate are low, although rising slightly. Leaders are rightly taking action to address these issues. Students in the sixth form have a wide range of options to select from, including the ability to mix academic and vocational qualifications. Teachers prepare them well for the increased demands of these courses.

Leaders prioritise improving pupils' literacy. Pupils gain confidence in using key words and speaking publicly. Some pupils arrive at the school struggling to read. While leaders make sure that these pupils receive additional help, this help is not as frequent as it could be and so does not enable pupils to catch up as quickly as they could.

Leaders are ambitious about what pupils can achieve. Pupils are generally set challenging work by their teachers and acquire a wide range of knowledge. Overall, pupils in all year groups achieve well, including in the sixth form. Staff have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils' needs are identified precisely and met effectively. Those pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, specifically with autistic spectrum disorder, receive expert support and are included fully in the life of the school.

Where necessary, leaders seek help from external agencies to make sure that all pupils can succeed.

Leaders have set up their own on-site centre for pupils who would otherwise be at risk of exclusion. This means that leaders have been able to keep pupils at the school so that they continue to learn and receive targeted support. This support is working well. Pupils behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. Where pupils are sanctioned, leaders ensure the same issue does not arise again. Although the attendance of most pupils is good, some do not attend often enough. While leaders are already addressing this issue, too many pupils are still missing too much time in school.

There is a well-planned programme of personal development. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. They are also taught to respect different cultures and the importance of tolerance. Pupils get effective guidance about careers and the next steps in education. This includes helping pupils to decide between a wide range of different options for the future. This useful support continues into the sixth form. However, more thought could be given to the way that the careers advice programme is structured for these students.

The school is led and managed effectively. Governors are aware of the strengths and challenges of the school and the sponsor helps by providing support to school leaders. Leaders consider the well-being of staff and manage their workload well. This means that staff can focus on what will be of most benefit to the pupils. Leaders work closely with parents. Most parents are very supportive of the school. The work that leaders do puts the school very much at the heart of the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in identifying pupils who are at risk, and this training includes an awareness of the local context of the school. Leaders are quick to ensure that pupils get the help that they need, and they are proactive in seeking support from other agencies. The systems that have been put in place mean that risks are managed well.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, and pupils are taught not only how to keep themselves safe but how to talk about any concerns that they have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although reducing, rates of persistent absence remain relatively high. As a result, too many pupils are missing out on their education. Leaders need to continue

their work to ensure these pupils attend school more regularly.

- The curriculum is not as ambitious as it could be. Pupils have not always had the breadth of curriculum that would serve them best and enable them to learn widely. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum fully reflects the aspirations that they have for pupils.
- Support for the weakest readers is not as effective as it could be. They do not catch up as quickly as they need to in order to access learning across the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the knowledge to support pupils and that actions are implemented as leaders intend, with the frequency that pupils need.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135290
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10226928
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,080
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	166
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Hitchins
Principal	Shaun Simmons
Website	www.marshacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Marsh Academy is a single-academy trust, sponsored by The Skinners' Company.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 20 pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision
- There is an off-site unit run by the school for a small number of pupils with high needs and who would otherwise be at risk of exclusion.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the leadership team, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and head of the sixth form. The lead inspector met with trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: art, English, geography, history, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine their knowledge and their practices. During these meetings, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. A team inspector examined the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff.
- The views of parents were taken into account by considering the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the accompanying comments, as well as an email sent by a parent during the inspection.
- The views of staff were considered by talking to a wide range of people, including early careers teachers, and through an online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, in groups and around the school, as well as gathering their views through an online pupil questionnaire.
- The inspection team received a number of emails from other agencies that the school had worked with and these were taken into account.

Inspection team

Mark Enser, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Marian Feeley	His Majesty's Inspector
Ed Mather	His Majesty's Inspector
Maria Roberts	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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