

Inspection of a good school: Great Marlow School

Bobmore Lane, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 1JE

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2022

Outcome

Great Marlow School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school delivers on its vision to create opportunities that enable all pupils to fulfil their potential. Pupils gain a good all-round education, where academic success and well-being are equally valued. They enjoy learning across a broad range of subjects and take part in an impressive range of clubs and activities. The opportunity for all pupils to take part in Olympic sports such as rowing is a very distinctive feature of this school.

Pupils are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour. They conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. There is a studious atmosphere in many classrooms. Pupils move promptly to lessons at the end of breaktimes without the need for bells. Pupils are respectful to their peers and the adults who they work with. Bullying is rare and is dealt with promptly if it does occur. Pupils appreciate the help and support they receive from staff. They trust the school's student support officers to keep them safe and help them if they have any problems.

Pupils are extremely proud to attend their friendly and inclusive school. Pupils from different backgrounds, including many Ukrainian pupils, are warmly welcomed. Staff make great efforts to ensure that these pupils are fully involved in school life and access the whole curriculum.

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

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), learn well across the school. They remember the knowledge that they need to be successful in subjects and develop a broad range of skills. Staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. They encourage and challenge pupils to achieve 'their personal best'. Staff know their subjects well. They plan activities that build on what pupils have been taught before and check carefully that important knowledge has been learned. Pupils with SEND receive good support. Staff know the needs of these pupils well. They adapt teaching skilfully to help these pupils to keep up with others in their learning. Staff make good use of mobile technology to help pupils with SEND access the curriculum.

Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education. The broad and ambitious key stage 3 curriculum provides a strong foundation. Pupils are able to choose from a wide range of GCSE option subjects. Students achieve well in a broad range of subjects in the sixth form. After sixth form, high proportions of students enter further education, employment or training successfully. However, there is a low take-up of subjects needed to achieve the English Baccalaureate because small numbers of pupils choose to continue to study modern foreign languages in key stage 4. Leaders are prioritising improving the curriculum so that more pupils are confident to take up languages as a GCSE option.

The school is doing much to promote and develop a love of reading. Pupils enjoy reading together with their teachers during tutor time. These sessions help pupils to appreciate an ambitious and diverse range of literature. During the inspection, a Year 8 class was enthusiastically discussing issues of prejudice that they were exploring in the book that they were reading together. Leaders carefully identify the pupils who are struggling with reading. Specialist teaching for the weakest readers ensures that these pupils are catching up quickly.

The school's work to ensure that pupils become active and confident citizens is a significant strength. For instance, pupils' and staff's enthusiasm for improving the school environment has led to the school receiving a national eco award. Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND, take part in extra-curricular activities. The physical education department organises many activities for pupils who are not involved in sporting activities out of school. Sixth-form students make a useful contribution to the rest of the school. All Year 12 students help younger pupils with their learning in lessons. Pupils regularly debate ethical issues and celebrate the diversity of other cultures. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is taught in all year groups. However, pupils sometimes struggle to remember what they have been taught in these lessons as well as they do in other subjects.

The school is very well led and managed. Leaders and governors have integrity and are determined to ensure that pupils receive the very best opportunities. This strong vision is shared by the whole school community. Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders. They appreciate that leaders take their well-being seriously. Leaders are always available if they have any concerns. Parents express great confidence in the school. As one parent commented when they wrote via the Ofsted Parent View survey, 'The school has been amazing. They ensure pupils not only make progress academically but they also make sure that your child grows in confidence and widens their social skills.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a well-established safeguarding culture. All staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil because they receive regular training and guidance. The safeguarding team is experienced and is knowledgeable about risks in the local area. Leaders ensure that all systems and records are organised meticulously so that nothing is missed. Leaders work relentlessly to ensure that pupils and their families get the support

they need from other agencies. As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have strengthened the pastoral support available for pupils. This includes the promotion of mental health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The number of pupils taking a modern foreign language is well below national averages and well below the government's national ambition. This means that too few pupils gain the qualifications to achieve the English Baccalaureate. Leaders should continue their efforts to promote languages, to ensure that more pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate and benefit from the future opportunities that studying a language provides.
- Leaders do not have a sufficiently precise understanding of what they want pupils to know and remember in PSHE lessons. This means that pupils do not have a secure understanding of some aspects of this curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for PSHE is of the same high quality as that in other subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2013.

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	136964
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10227051
Type of school	Secondary Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1442
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	253
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jean-Henri Beukes
Headteacher	Kevin Ford
Website	www.gms.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses two registered and two unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with a range of leaders, including the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with subject leaders, pastoral leaders, teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed curriculum design with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised

pupils' work, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils from the lessons visited about their learning. In addition, the inspectors visited lessons in some other subjects.

- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited lessons and small-group reading support sessions.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. They reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss case studies of safeguarding referrals.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the board of trustees.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey. The views of parents were taken into account from responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and parents' free-text responses. Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally and informally to discuss their views on the school and considered their responses to the Ofsted survey.

Inspection team

Mark Bagust, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Summerfield

Ofsted Inspector

Owen McColgan

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022