

# School inspection report

5 to 7 March 2024

## **The Marist School**

Kings Road

Sunninghill

Ascot

Berkshire

SL5 7PS

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and governors collaborate to promote the school's aims of providing high-quality teaching, learning and care. School leaders proactively monitor and evaluate provision and are ambitious for its on-going development. Development strategies include rapid improvement plans for phonics, reading and mathematics in the prep school. In the senior school, leaders have recently introduced a software programme that analyses pupil progress to inform the school's intervention processes.
2. Well-planned lessons by knowledgeable teachers result in pupils throughout the school making good progress and older pupils being successful in public exams. Suitable support is provided to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), so that they too make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive additional support for the development of their spoken and written English and other curriculum areas as required so that their progress is also good and they are able to fulfil their potential.
3. Leaders effectively assess pupil progress and intervene where necessary. While the majority of marking is regular and helpful, some is infrequent, particularly in the sixth form and does not help pupils to understand how to improve. In the prep school, the use of two different marking systems causes confusion for some pupils.
4. Leaders prioritise pupils' safety and systematically oversee the assessment of risk and the taking of suitable mitigation measures. Safeguarding is effectively managed throughout the school with leaders and staff suitably trained.
5. Teachers and leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing through the effective pastoral care system which focuses upon developing the 'Marist family' to support pupils' wellbeing and happiness. Leaders have developed a caring and nurturing environment where kindness and mutual support are evident throughout the school.
6. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum in the senior school includes all necessary content, but its delivery does not always meet pupils' needs as some topics are taught after some pupils have independently sought out the knowledge they require.
7. Pupils are well behaved and show understanding and respect for others. Service to others is a key tenet of the school's vision and pupils make a valuable contribution to the school and local community by volunteering and raising money for charities.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that marking and feedback is consistent across all subjects, especially in the prep school and the sixth form so that pupils know how to improve their work
- review the delivery of the RSE curriculum so that teaching more closely meets pupils' needs.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They draw on their understanding of the school's vision to provide effective support for leaders as they implement the ethos and aims of the school. Governors have ensured that leaders have the necessary skills for their roles. They appropriately support and challenge leaders so that the school consistently meets the Standards.
9. Governors were instrumental in the development of the '*Marist Diploma*'. To be awarded this, pupils complete a learning journal documenting their participation in a range of extra-curricular activities and complete a research project.
10. Leaders have a good understanding of risk, including contextual and physical risk, and ensure that suitable mitigation procedures are in place, and that risk assessments are regularly reviewed. Pupil wellbeing is central to leaders. Staff are appropriately trained so that pupils are effectively supported and due safeguarding processes followed. Leaders have established effective links with outside agencies and follow correct reporting procedures when there are concerns.
11. Leaders regularly review their practice and evaluate their performance. They produce an annual school development plan which focuses on improving outcomes for pupils.
12. Leaders have ensured that all required information is available on the website or from the school office. Parents receive regular reports with details of their child's attainment and progress and staff are available to talk to parents at parent-teacher meetings and at other times.
13. Leaders have produced the necessary policies which follow requirements and guidelines and establish effective procedures to promote the wellbeing of pupils. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met. Governors perform an annual review of safeguarding and oversee all recruitment checks.
14. The school has a suitable complaints policy, and procedures are closely followed. Timeframes are adhered to, and detailed notes kept of any concerns.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which covers all required areas of learning. Pupils develop effective linguistic skills through a school focus on reading, writing and speaking. They speak confidently and fluently on a range of topics. For example, in an English lesson, pupils articulated how the author of *Just William* humorously describes the protagonist offering typical 'William presents' to the family at Christmas. In music, older pupils were fully engaged when studying the music of a pop group in the context of the lead singer's boyhood classical music training. The school has a wide-ranging science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programme. In the sixth form, many pupils take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) which enhances their learning and develops their research and presentation skills. Leaders also offer a wide range of recreational activities, including sports, crafts and intellectual pursuits. These develop both pupils' skills and their confidence.
17. Pupils make good progress across the full range of subjects on offer. Results in public examinations, including GCSEs, A Levels and the EPQ, are consistently high.
18. Pupils who have SEND are appropriately identified and suitably supported both within the classroom and by specialist teachers. They make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' needs are carefully assessed, and appropriate support plans put in place. This may include one-to-one sessions or small group work. Teachers understand the needs of pupils who have SEND and support them appropriately in class, for example by breaking work down into manageable chunks or through the use of coloured overlays.
19. Pupils who speak EAL are equally well supported. Teachers know what help they require in order to access the curriculum and ensure that they are not disadvantaged. For example, they may read questions aloud and ensure comprehension of the task being set. Pupils who speak EAL also make good progress.
20. Leaders ensure that the early years curriculum meets the needs of the children. As a result of effective planning, children develop a range of skills across their areas of learning. There are a range of activities on offer appropriate to the children's age. These provide opportunities to develop their skills, including in communication and language. For example, after having read the story *Fox's Socks*, Nursery children developed their learning by helping to place and then number socks on a washing line. Early years children make good progress and by the time they leave Reception have achieved a good level of development. A wide range of activities helps them develop both gross and fine motor skills, for example when weaving a spider's web with wool or hitting a ball with a bat. Phonics lessons develop children's understanding of the sounds letters make which is then reinforced during other lessons.
21. Teachers know their subjects well and lessons are effectively planned so that pupils know the learning objectives and clearly understand what they need to do. Lessons build upon pupils' prior knowledge so that pupils steadily improve and develop new skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson on Pythagoras, work became increasingly complex as pupils' understanding of the topic deepened. Pupils' attitudes to their academic studies are positive. They are well behaved and highly motivated, enthusiastically participating in lessons and confidently exploring ideas with their peers and teachers. Pupils' thinking and reasoning skills are further developed through the school's 'Aim Higher' programme, a series of talks by pupils and guest speakers.

22. Leaders use an assessment framework that tracks pupils' skills and knowledge against a framework for each subject. They use this to set targets and monitor progress, and to introduce intervention measures where necessary. Leaders have recently introduced a software programme that tracks pupil progress and feeds directly into line management meetings in departments. This contributes to effective monitoring of pupil progress and aids lesson planning.
23. Day-to-day marking is through a 'feedback, action and response' system that encourages pupils to reflect on how they can improve their work and act upon the advice of the teacher. This contributes to pupils' progress and understanding. However, the quality of this feedback varies, with the marking of some subjects being completed less promptly and constructively, particularly in the sixth form. Pupils find it less helpful when this is the case. In the prep school, two different marking systems are in operation and pupils are confused by this and unsure how they are doing in some subjects.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

**24. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

25. Mutual respect is a key element of the school's ethos. Pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics such as race and gender evolves through their time at the school. In religious studies (RS) lessons pupils learn about a number of different religions and develop their understanding of and respect for different cultures. This enriching curriculum broadens pupils' perspectives and encourages them to reflect on their place in society. Pupils appreciate the school's provision of a multi-faith prayer room.
26. Leaders develop pupils' spiritual understanding through the Catholic ethos of the school which is at the forefront of school life. The school mission of 'living life in all its fullness' is prominently displayed throughout the school and leaders, staff and pupils reflect on how to put this into practice in different situations. RS is a compulsory subject up to GCSE and through the curriculum pupils develop an understanding of both Christianity and other faiths. The chapel provides a quiet space for prayer and contemplation, while retreats and the Bible journaling programme provide opportunities for reflection and development of self-awareness.
27. Pupils develop their self-esteem as they progress through the school. They have many opportunities to take on roles of responsibility and through these they develop confidence and self-belief. Individualised feedback in lessons helps pupils to develop their self-knowledge and the support that teachers provide fosters progress and a consequent growth in self-confidence.
28. Children in the early years are given activities that promote their self-confidence, such as when they join in with the words and actions of the story book *Room on the Broom*. They learn about living a healthy lifestyle, including good oral health. Outdoor learning, especially in the woodland environment, provides opportunities to use different materials such as sticks and clay while developing their teamworking and problem-solving skills.
29. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum meets the needs of pupils and develops their understanding of a range of matters to equip them to take their place in modern British society. From a young age, pupils are encouraged to consider their feelings and the feelings of others, and to share their thoughts respectfully. The school places considerable emphasis upon pupils' mental wellbeing and has recently launched its *Wellbeing 2.0* programme. This provides a network of support via the pastoral system and trained pupils and staff. There is a pupil wellbeing committee and regular wellbeing surveys which the school analyses and uses to inform changes to provision, such as the training of pupil wellbeing ambassadors.
30. The extensive physical education and games provision gives pupils many opportunities to keep fit and enjoy physical exercise as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. School lunches are healthy and nutritious with fresh fruit and vegetables freely available.
31. The content of the RSE curriculum is in line with requirements, but its delivery does not always meet the needs of pupils, some of whom say that some topics are taught after they have learnt about them by themselves.
32. Pupils and staff understand the value that leaders place on good behaviour, courtesy and kindness, reflecting the school's ethos. As a result, poor behaviour is rare and the school deals with any



incidents firmly but with compassion. Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable. There are few bullying incidents and staff deal swiftly and firmly with any such behaviour. Leaders' aim is to support pupils as they mature and so, where possible, discussion and reflection upon actions is used in place of sanctions.

33. Pupils are well supervised, including in the early years where there are an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff on duty. Prefects have well defined roles and are themselves supervised when performing their duties.
34. Health and safety procedures are implemented effectively, and the premises and accommodation are well maintained. Suitable measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire, including regular drills. Training for staff, including in fire safety and first aid, is thorough, up-to-date and appropriately recorded.
35. Admissions and attendance registers are correctly maintained, and any absences are followed up. The local authority is duly informed about pupil transfers or if there are any prolonged unauthorised absences.
36. First aid is administered in a timely manner and staff are appropriately trained. Early years staff have suitable training in paediatric first aid, records are kept of illness or injury and parents are informed appropriately. There are suitable arrangements for pupils who become unwell.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

**37. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

38. Through both the PSHE programme and the teaching of other subjects, pupils learn about British values such as the rule of law and democracy. For example, in history pupils consider how people have influenced government decisions from Magna Carta to the women's suffrage movement. They learn about the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination through studies of the slave trade and the Holocaust.
39. Pupils learn about democracy and then practise it when electing fellow pupils to positions of responsibility. Candidates for Head Pupil address the whole school to articulate their vision and goals. Pupils then vote for their preferred candidate.
40. Leaders have provided pupils with many opportunities to contribute to both the school community and the wider world. Within the school, pupils can contribute through roles such as being prefects, mentors for younger pupils, anti-bullying ambassadors or serving on the school or wellbeing councils. Community service is a key element in the school's vision to champion empathy and support others. Pupils visit a local day care centre and sing carols at a retirement home. Sixth formers volunteer in a range of charity shops, local junior schools, hospitals and for Scouting and Girlguiding groups.
41. The school supports a range of local, national and international charities, including a food bank. Prep school pupils donate toys and books for the children of prisoners. Pupils raise money through a range of initiatives including the £5 challenge where they try to make a profit from their investment to benefit a school in Ethiopia.
42. The range of activities in the early years promotes children's social development. Staff encourage children to work collaboratively, communicate effectively and to take turns and share, for example, in the café set up by children in Reception.
43. The school council meets regularly and discusses matters of importance to pupils. A number of their suggestions have been taken forward by the school, including the provision of a pasta bar at lunch. However, feedback is not always given to pupils, especially where requests have not been granted.
44. The careers programme provides pupils with the information they need in order to make informed choices about their choices of subjects, universities and future careers. The programme is mapped against Gatsby benchmarks. As well as one-to-one sessions, there are talks about the various routes open to pupils, including apprenticeships. External speakers share their career experiences and an informative termly careers newsletter keeps pupils up to date with detailed information. Pupils are encouraged to attend careers fairs and to visit universities. A number of in-school specialist societies such as MedSoc, and LawSoc provide targeted advice for those considering these subjects. The school uses various online programmes to support pupils as they make career and study choices.
45. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of finance. In the early years children learn about money, while prep school pupils are taught about bank balances and debt so that they develop an understanding of financial responsibility. The £5 challenge consolidates this understanding while also teaching pupils about generosity and social responsibility. Sixth formers learn about student finance and can take part in an enterprise competition. This involves creating a business model that

encourages critical thinking and innovation. Pupils' creativity and entrepreneurial spirit were manifest in this year's chosen venture, a personalised bag. Once the loan was approved, pupils successfully manufactured the bags and sold them to parents, friends and the local community.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

**46. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

47. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Leaders have established a culture within the school in which safeguarding is of the highest importance. The warm and trusting relationships which exist between staff and pupils contribute to an environment in which pupils feel safe at school and able to approach staff if they are worried about anything. Pupils may also report concerns via an online system. In the prep school there is a 'worry box' which is regularly checked by the school counsellor. Prep school pupils also use an 'ask it basket' if they do not wish to share their concerns directly.
48. All staff and volunteers receive suitable safeguarding training on induction, including in relation to risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. All staff also receive regular updates so that they know and understand the latest guidance. Staff regularly attend local authority training sessions on specific aspects of safeguarding such as anorexia and self-harm. Staff are trained to use the school's online reporting system and know how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern. This system is used consistently across the school and leaders monitor these entries so that they can identify patterns and act quickly to support pupils.
49. Safeguarding leaders are actively involved in all staff recruitment and proactively suggest improvements, such as amendments to the application form to facilitate understanding of applicants' employment history. Safer recruitment checks are carried out for all staff and volunteers, and a suitable central record of appointments is kept. The safeguarding governor scrutinises all pre-employment checks on a termly basis.
50. The school's safeguarding policy is written in accordance with the most recent guidance. Governors carry out an annual review of this and all safeguarding procedures, providing robust and effective oversight of safeguarding matters.
51. When concerns arise, external agencies are consulted appropriately, and the school liaises effectively with them so that incidents are well managed. Detailed records are kept of all such events. Leaders have a good understanding of risk and take robust mitigation measures as appropriate. Leaders produce comprehensive plans to support vulnerable pupils.
52. Pupils are taught and understand how to stay safe, including online, and the school's internet system has suitable filtering and monitoring systems in place.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 53. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	The Marist School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	868/6013
<b>Address</b>	The Marist School Kings Road Sunninghill Ascot Berkshire SL5 7PS
<b>Phone number</b>	01344 624291
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@themarist.com
<b>Website</b>	www.themarist.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Marist School (Sunninghill) Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Martin Stephen
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Jo Smith
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	466
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 November to 3 December 2021

## Information about the school

54. The Marist School is an independent Catholic day school for female pupils aged between 4 and 18, and a co-educational nursery for children between the ages of 2 and 4. It was founded in 1870 by the religious order of the Society of Mary. In May 2022, the school was acquired by Concept Education, which owns the school through its subsidiary company The Marist School (Sunninghill) Ltd.
55. The early years setting takes children from the age of two and comprises three Nursery classes and one Reception class.
56. The school has identified 55 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for 26 pupils.
58. The school states that its aims are to promote a culture of aspiration, intellectual curiosity and academic excellence. It seeks to create an environment in which students combine the confidence and belief that they can overcome any challenge with a strong set of moral values.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

5 to 7 March 2024

59. A team of 5 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and tutor periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the principal, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

61. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
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**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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