ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

5 to 7 December 2023

Marlborough College

Bath Road

Marlborough

SN8 1PA

Contents

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders foster pupils' ambitions by providing a wide curriculum, an extensive extra-curricular programme and individualised careers advice. As a result, pupils develop into mature individuals who are well prepared for the next stages of their lives. Pupils are keen to serve others and they take advantage of the numerous opportunities available, both at the school and in the local community.

2. Governors have effective oversight of all aspects of the school. They scrutinise policies and procedures effectively and hold leaders to account. Governors have appropriate expertise, undertake suitable training and ensure that the school actively promotes pupils' wellbeing.

3. Boarders appreciate the strong sense of community and the support available within the boarding houses. Boarding accommodation is well maintained, and boarders' health and wellbeing needs are met effectively. However, there is inconsistency in the implementation of some whole school policies across boarding houses. As a result, there is a lack of clarity amongst boarders about some of the school rules.

4. The curriculum is delivered fully and effectively. Teachers are well qualified and teach their subjects with enthusiasm. They motivate pupils and encourage them to do their best. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning, work hard and achieve well.

5. Leaders use data effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who have SEND are identified and supported well by the learning support department. However, the strategies the department identifies to help individual pupils succeed in lessons are not always adopted fully. Where this is the case, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

6. The school is active in promoting mutual respect. Pupils accept and celebrate the differences between people. They are polite and considerate in their day-to-day interactions with other people.

7. Leaders prioritise the safety and wellbeing of pupils and safeguarding is effective. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are robust. The school consults external agencies promptly for safeguarding advice. Staff have had suitable safeguarding training and are confident to report any concerns that may arise about other adults.

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:

- teaching and learning strategies identified to support individual pupils who have SEND are adopted fully by all teachers

- whole school policies are implemented consistently across all boarding houses.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors have ensured that all leaders and managers have the skills necessary for their particular roles in the school. Governors provide effective oversight of the school's policies and procedures and offer suitable challenge and support to leaders.

9. Leaders' approach to school development is focused on its impact on pupils, including their wellbeing. For example, new systems have been introduced to enable pupils to report anonymously any concerns that they may have if they feel unable to speak to a member of staff. As a result, pupils feel confident that they are listened to.

10. Leaders hold events to raise awareness of and celebrate lesbian, gay and bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights and Black history. Talks delivered by leaders, pupils and external speakers enable pupils to experience the diversity of modern British society. The impact of these events is evident in pupils' understanding and appreciation of diversity.

11. Leaders are readily available to discuss and resolve any concerns that parents may have. Complaints are dealt with in line with the complaints policy. Parents receive regular reports with details of pupils' attainment and progress, and of the steps pupils should take to make further progress. Leaders have established effective links with local safeguarding partners and follow correct reporting procedures to external agencies when there are concerns.

12. Appropriate action is taken to mitigate any risks from harm as far as is possible. Governors ensure that leaders and managers carry out and review risk assessments regularly covering, for example, trips, the boarding houses, site safety and staff recruitment. Leaders ensure that incident reporting is used proactively to amend risk assessments and to implement improvements to keep pupils safe.

13. Boarding staff are suitably trained to ensure that the boarders in their houses receive the care and attention necessary to support their wellbeing. The boarding houses have a strong sense of community, which boarders speak warmly about. Pupils' health needs are met effectively by suitably qualified staff in the school medical centre and by access to local healthcare professionals.

14. There is a lack of consistency in the implementation of whole school policies across boarding houses. For example, in some boarding houses pupils are allowed to use their mobile phones more freely during weekends. This causes some disquiet amongst pupils who, rightly, identify a lack of parity between houses in how they are treated.

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 designed a suitable curriculum that covers all the key educational areas of learning and that meets pupils' needs. Strategic decisions are made to improve pupils' experience of the curriculum, such as increasing the range of complementary studies on offer. For example, the extended project qualification (EPQ) and the apprenticeship in fine arts (AFA) are available for sixth-form pupils, which offer additional academic challenge for pupils who choose to study them.

17. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to develop speaking, listening and literacy skills across a wide range of subjects. For example, teachers encourage pupils to hone their communication skills while assessing each other's work in art. Pupils' strong mathematical skills are evident, not only in mathematics lessons, but also in subjects such as the sciences, geography and economics. Pupils have the opportunity to sample a wide range of modern foreign languages before they focus on the languages that they like most. As a result, pupils enjoy studying languages and develop strong linguistic skills.

18. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported with extra lessons to improve their English and to enable them to access the full curriculum. With this additional support, and through being fully integrated in the boarding houses, pupils swiftly develop their speaking and literacy skills.

19. An extensive programme of activities is provided which is accessible to pupils across all year groups, both during the week and at weekends. Pupils achieve high standards in music with opportunities to perform in a range of orchestras and choirs. Pupils strengthen their resilience and develop their self-confidence as members of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Leaders facilitate activities which include those that pupils request. This has led to new activities being introduced, such as bagpipes, fly fishing and engineering. Sixth-form pupils appreciate the wealth of extra-curricular opportunities available to them but recognise the importance of balancing these elective commitments with their academic studies and leadership roles.

20. Leaders track pupils' attainment and progress. They use their findings to improve pupils' outcomes using a range of interventions and by reviewing the curriculum. For example, pupils are supported in their academic studies during boarding time by academic staff and sixth-form boarders. Pupils, including those who have SEND, make good progress and achieve grades at GCSE and A level that are in line with or above those expected from their starting points.

21. Provision for pupils who have SEND is effective. Pupils are identified promptly and they are assisted well by the learning support department. Tailored strategies to address pupils' individual learning needs are put in place. This helps pupils who have SEND make stronger progress. However, use of these strategies is not fully consistent. At times, pupils are not supported in lessons in the ways that have been agreed. Where this is the case, pupils who have SEND achieve less well.

22. Subject departments are staffed with well-qualified teachers who are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. Well-planned teaching and individualised feedback help pupils make good progress. Senior leaders' evaluation of pupils' learning has led them to develop the 'Marlborough mindset'. This programme supports pupils in being productive and independent learners. Teachers plan a range of activities which stimulate higher-order thinking and discussion. As a result, pupils are engaged and focused, able to collaborate and also to think for themselves.

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

23. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

24. The school provides a nurturing community for pupils. Leaders ensure that boarding houses provide a safe space where pupils feel at home. Staff know pupils well and encourage them to form positive relationships with each other.

25. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect, both amongst pupils and between pupils and staff. Leaders encourage pupils to develop positive relationships with each other by providing opportunities for them to work together. For example, in lessons and activities pupils are given opportunities to collaborate and support one another. Leaders instil a culture of mutual respect in boarding houses through induction and a range of social events.

26. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and to become committed to serving others. Pupils strive to be the best that they can be, both academically and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are keen to take on leadership roles in the school and to volunteer in the local community. As a result, pupils increase their self-confidence and develop their empathy for others.

27. The behaviour policy is well understood and applied consistently and, as a result, pupils behave well. The policy is reviewed and revised regularly, following reflection by leaders after behavioural incidents and in response to feedback from pupils. Teachers respond promptly and effectively to any incidents of bullying that occur.

28. Leaders provide a suitable programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, which includes the required provision for relationship and sex education. The PSHE curriculum adopts a teaching and learning approach which links a healthy body to a healthy mind. It helps pupils to develop strategies to manage setbacks and to develop resilience.

29. Leaders support both excellence in sport through elite pathways and variety through the provision of three sporting opportunities per week for all pupils. As a result, sport and recreation are central to the lives of pupils. Pupils recognise that discovering sports and activities that they enjoy will support their wellbeing both now and in the future. Pupils gain in self-confidence and self-esteem as they learn new sports, achieve success and improve their physical fitness.

30. Pupils develop an awareness of spirituality through the curriculum in religious studies and philosophy. This was demonstrated during the inspection when older pupils engaged in an academic discussion, regarding spirituality and meaning, through the lens of Aquinas and natural moral law. Younger pupils value the peaceful and beautiful environment that they experience in chapel services, which enables them to develop and appreciate their own spirituality.

31. The school premises, including boarding houses, are well maintained and safe. Effective precautions are taken to reduce the risk of fire. Staff receive appropriate fire training and fire equipment is tested regularly. Fire evacuation drills take place regularly, including during weekends and at night. Appropriate health and safety procedures are implemented effectively.

32. Leaders prioritise the safety of pupils and suitable procedures are in place for supervising pupils. There are effective systems for signing in and out of boarding accommodation. Boarders are

required to carry a mobile phone when they are not in the boarding house so that staff can contact them easily, if necessary.

33. Pupils have access to medical care in a well-resourced medical centre. Suitably trained staff are available at all times during the day and night, with robust back-up arrangements in case of staff absence. As a result, pupils have appropriate support for their medical and therapy needs, including access to the school counsellor.

34. The attendance and admissions registers are kept as required. Any pupil absences are quickly followed up by staff.

35. The boarding staff know the boarders well and play a vital part in supporting boarders' personal development and wellbeing. Boarders have a strong sense of community and enjoy spending time together. They are able to be purposeful with their academic work, as well as being able to socialise and relax in facilities which feel like a home from home.

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

36. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

37. Teachers plan opportunities within the curriculum to develop pupils' cultural awareness. For example, in economics, pupils gather and analyse data from countries they have selected, including some developing countries. As a result, pupils gain an understanding of the implications of a low standard of living. Pupils are exposed to other cultures through their language studies and through learning about different art and music genres. Boarding leaders create a cohesive house environment which is paramount to boarders' social development. Pupils develop an understanding of how co-operation and compromise lead to a settled community living happily alongside each other.

38. Leaders have developed a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop and hone their leadership skills. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school through positions of responsibility, such as prefects, wellbeing ambassadors and mindset ambassadors.

39. Leaders encourage pupils to contribute positively to those living in the local community through, for example, the teaching of sports and internet safety to pupils in local primary schools. Through volunteering, pupils develop an understanding of the different challenges faced by some members of the local community. Pupils recognise the difference they can make to others in the school community. Pupils have numerous opportunities to improve their own interpersonal skills whilst making a positive difference to the wellbeing of others.

40. Pupils are given the information they need to make decisions about their choice of subjects and career paths. An extensive careers advice programme is in place which provides pupils with strong guidance on future pathways. Pupils benefit from talks by recent school leavers about the careers previous pupils are following. Pupils engage in relevant work experience during their holidays and are successful in their applications to a wide range of courses at universities in the UK and overseas.

41. Pupils have opportunities to develop an understanding of financial responsibility, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. These range from appreciating the financial significance of dependency on imported food, to considering the advisability of displaying warnings about the dangers of gambling on relevant websites.

42. Pupils have a firm understanding of the importance of the law and a strong personal sense of right and wrong behaviours. Leaders in the CCF ensure that pupils develop an appreciation of the value of the military in modern society. In politics, pupils gain an understanding of fundamental British values through studying legislation concerning human rights, equalities and freedom of information.

43. The PSHE curriculum is well designed and helps pupils develop an understanding of the ways that people can be different to each other, such as race, religious beliefs and sexual orientation. Diversity is accepted and celebrated within the school community. Warm and encouraging relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that the environment is supportive and non-threatening. Occasionally, younger pupils make inappropriate comments about their peers. Leaders and teachers react swiftly and make it clear that these comments are unkind and will not be tolerated.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Suitable arrangements are made by leaders to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Leaders recognise the particular vulnerabilities of boarders and ensure that pupils know who to make contact with if they have a concern. Pupils know that they will be listened to and that action will be taken to follow-up any concerns they may have.

46. Governors have in-depth discussions about the safeguarding policy and its implementation. They conduct an annual safeguarding audit to ensure that safeguarding procedures are secure. Governors offer appropriate challenge to leaders about procedures that help to ensure pupils are kept safe.

47. All staff and governors receive suitable safeguarding training. They know how to listen to pupils and report any concerns that they have, including those relating to child-on-child abuse. There are sufficient staff with specific safeguarding responsibilities, all of whom have received training at the required level.

48. Child protection records are detailed and kept confidentially. Staff recognise and report promptly any safeguarding concerns that arise. Safeguarding leaders take immediate action as soon as issues are brought to their attention, consulting and working with external agencies when necessary.

49. Leaders are fully aware of the particular risks to wellbeing faced by pupils for whom there are safeguarding concerns. Suitable risk assessments, which are understood by staff, are put in place for these pupils. Staff recognise the vulnerabilities of pupils with poor mental health and for those who have SEND.

50. Leaders and staff demonstrate appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct. Staff are confident to report any allegation or low-level concerns they may have about other adults' behaviour. Detailed records show that the school seeks prompt advice about any potential staff misconduct from the designated officer for allegations. Concerns are referred to relevant regulatory bodies where appropriate.

51. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online. There is a suitable system in place to filter and monitor the use of technology.

52. Suitable safer recruitment checks are in place for all staff, agency staff and governors. Leaders and governors check the single central record of appointments regularly and ensure that any anomalies are followed up swiftly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Marlborough College
Department for Education number	865/6013
Registered charity number	309486
Address	Marlborough College Bath Road Marlborough Wiltshire SN8 1PA
Phone number	01672 892400
Email address	enquiries@marlboroughcollege.org
Website	www.marlboroughcollege.org
Proprietor	Marlborough College
Chair	Mrs Penelope Cameron Watt
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Moelwyn-Hughes
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	1013
Number of boarding pupils	1013
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2022

Information about the school

54. Marlborough College is an independent co-educational boarding school located in Marlborough, Wiltshire. Founded in 1843, it is an educational charity governed by a board of trustees. Since the previous inspection, an acting chair of governors was appointed in September 2023.

55. Boarders are accommodated in sixteen houses of which six are for male pupils and six for female pupils. Four houses accommodate male pupils in all years and female pupils in Years 12 and 13.

56. The school has identified 384 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

57. English is an additional language for 43 pupils.

58. The school states its aims are to foster ambition in all its pupils, to provide a safe, inclusive and nurturing community for all, to develop initiative and to instil a commitment to service.

Inspection details

Inspection dates   5 to 7 December 2023

59. A team of 10 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons

- observation of chapel and a sample of extra-curricular activities

- discussions with a group of governors, including the chair

- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff

- discussions with pupils and examination of samples of pupils' work, some in conjunction with department leaders

- visits to the boarding houses, learning support area, library and facilities for physical education

- examination 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.

- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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