School report

The St Marylebone Church of England School

64 Marylebone High Street, London, W1U 5BA

Inspection dates	1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	**Outstanding**	**1**
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This school is an exceptional place, where students flourish both academically and personally within a strong spiritual ethos.
- The school's academic results have been sustained at a very high level since it became an academy; they are on track to be even better in 2014.
- It provides exceptionally well for its most able students through the level of challenge they receive in lessons and special activities.
- All groups of students make rapid and sustained progress through the school.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. Their positive attitudes, desire to learn and curiosity contribute in no small way to their excellent learning and progress.
- The school ensures that students are well cared for in a safe and harmonious environment where they feel valued and happy.
- The new headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of staff, students, parents and governors through her inclusive and collaborative approach. Staff feel valued and appreciate the opportunities to develop their teaching and leadership skills.
- School leaders are very effective in promoting high quality teaching and learning.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and they use their excellent subject knowledge to engage and motivate students.
- The sixth form is outstanding. AS- and A-level results are high, with well above average proportions of the top grades. Students follow a broad programme of study and receive excellent independent careers advice and guidance.
- Students in all year groups experience a wide range of subjects and an impressive variety of after-school clubs, educational trips and visiting speakers that make learning enjoyable. These also help to promote students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The performing arts contribute very well to the creative atmosphere that permeates the school.
- The governors have contributed significantly to the continuing success of the school. They have a wealth of expertise and experience. Their commitment is exemplary and they provide a very good balance of support and challenge to the school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, of which half were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors looked at students' work and talked with students in lessons, around the school and held three meetings with them.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and five other members, individual teachers and subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, a large group of subject leaders, and six newly qualified or trainee teachers.
- The inspectors took account of 151 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 100 questionnaires returned by school staff. They also considered the outcomes of the school's own questionnaires, including those for students.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school, read the school's website information and looked at many documents including the minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, performance management, planning, and monitoring and assessment information, school policies, and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious incident related to a former student of the school.

Inspection team

Helena McVeigh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ramesh Kapadia	Additional Inspector
Ann Sydney	Additional Inspector
Meena Wood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It converted to become an academy in September 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2007, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2014.
- The school is for girls in Years 7 to 11; boys are accepted into the sixth form.
- The largest ethnic group is White British. An above-average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is made up of small numbers of students from a wide range of ethnic groups. Nearly half of the students speak English as an additional language, although relatively few are at an early stage of learning English.
- Around 40% of students are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funds for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after, and those from service families), which is much higher than the national average.
- About 15 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average, whilst the proportion receiving additional support through school action plus and those with statements of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school has a small number of students who join part way through their secondary education.
- The school uses off-site provision for a very small number of Year 11 students at a local further education college.
- The school is a National Teaching School; it has been re-designated this year. It provides support to a number of other schools as well as training for teachers at all levels.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve arrangements in the sixth form by:
  - strengthening the induction of students into Year 12, especially for those who are new to the school, in order to prepare them even better for the challenges of life and academic study in the sixth form
  - reviewing students' progress earlier in Year 12, to identify those who are underachieving more quickly and, where necessary, revise their target grades for the end of year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the school with above average standards and make consistently excellent progress in most subjects in all years. By the end of Year 11, over 90% of students attain five GCSEs grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, which set them up extremely well for the next phase of their education.
- In addition, over half of all GCSEs in 2013 were graded A* or A with very high proportions in most subjects: over 60% in English literature and over 80% in science subjects and history. These excellent, well above average results have been sustained since the school became an academy.
- The school predicts slightly lower results in 2014 because of the lower attainment on entry of the current Year 11. Despite this, the predictions for English language, which dipped slightly last year, and mathematics are even better, with higher proportions of students exceeding the nationally expected progress from their starting points.
- The most able students do exceptionally well. The school identifies high achievers and those 'who ought to be' and, as well as ensuring that they receive a good level of challenge in lessons, provides a range of additional opportunities such as the 'Brilliant Club' where students work with PhD students on long-term projects and visits to universities and other schools. The school also takes part in a wide range of competitions across the country, which contributes to raising students' self-esteem, confidence and preparation for higher education and the world of work.
- Most students make excellent progress in the sixth form and results at AS and A level have been well above average. In 2013, AS results fell in biology and chemistry. The school responded rapidly and decisively by successfully tackling issues to do with teaching and by raising the entry requirement for these subjects. Predictions are much better for this year in these subjects.
- Students eligible for the extra pupil premium funding make outstanding progress and attain results that are well above those for non-eligible students nationally. Their attainment by the end of Year 11, although very high, has been below that of others and the gap in English and mathematics widened last year to around three quarters of a GCSE grade. As a result of judicious use of the extra funds and vigilant tracking and support, the school is narrowing this gap rapidly, particularly lower down the school.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make outstanding progress as a result of the well-targeted and effective support they receive throughout the school, including the sixth form. The school makes good use of catch-up funds so these students make rapid gains.
- The school provides very well for students who speak English as an additional language through sensitive and skilled induction and early support for their needs. These students make exceptional progress by the end of Year 11. Teachers are aware of these students' language difficulties; they promote literacy skills well for all students in most subjects.
- Students read widely and make very good use of the library. They are encouraged to give detailed answers in response to teachers' questions and have many opportunities to speak in front of their peers through presentations and participation in debates – all of which contribute to their very good progress in literacy.
- The excellent achievement of all groups of students can be attributed to both the quality of teaching, additional support and the students' own very positive attitudes to their studies.
- The school entered a small number of Year 11 students early for GCSE mathematics last year, with success, but will not be doing so this year.
- The very few students who attend some provision off site make very good progress and their attendance and behaviour are monitored carefully.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is typically outstanding across year groups and subjects. Teachers have high expectations for their students and this, coupled with their very good subject knowledge and general enthusiasm, leads to students enjoying their learning and achieving very well.
- Carefully planned teaching engages and motivate students and take into account their different strengths and prior attainment. Homework is used well to complement classwork.
- Teachers ask challenging questions and encourage students to think hard and share their ideas. Students respond well and quickly engage with the interesting range of work they are given. Year 13 physics students were asked to devise questions and mark schemes relating to nuclear fission or gas laws. They diligently drew on prior knowledge or referred to text books to devise and answer the questions, then marked each other's responses followed by a lively discussion of the concepts with the teacher.
- Sixth-form students participate in excellent 'meeting of minds' sessions, which entail very high level discussions about such topics as, 'is morality absolute or relative?', which provide very good preparation for higher education.
- Teachers check students work regularly and provide guidance on how to improve it, applying the school's approach to 'making marking meaningful'. Students know how well they are doing and what their target and current examination grades or levels are. They can usually explain what they need to do to improve further. Some AS- and A-level students are already working beyond their target grades.
- Students are given a great deal of help outside of lessons, through small group or one-to-one additional support, which are taught most effectively by teachers and learning support assistants. Sixth formers benefit from catch-up sessions where they are helped individually or in small groups during their free periods.
- The way that students behave, their eagerness to learn and their relationships with each other contribute to their positive learning and progress. They listen politely to each other and to the teacher and willingly share ideas. They ask questions out of interest and eagerly participate in practical work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding and often exemplary; parents, students and staff made overwhelmingly positive comments about behaviour. Students refer to the school as a community or family and really appreciate the friendly, but respectful, relationships they have with adults. They move around the school calmly despite the very limited space and narrow corridors in some places. Teachers manage students' behaviour consistently well and sensitively.
- Students' enthusiasm for learning is excellent and contributes in no small way to their excellent progress. Students are reflective, curious and mature. They often demonstrate their thirst for knowledge by asking teachers pertinent and challenging questions. They concentrate and persevere well.
- Students are respectful of each other's views, beliefs and feelings. Governors commented on how harmonious the school is and how students from the wide range of faiths and cultures get on well. This reflects the school's commitment to its spiritual ethos and values and to ensuring equality of opportunities for all.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students feel safe and well looked after. They explained that bullying is very rare and that they are taught about the different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying, and how to keep safe, through personal, social and health education lessons, Kidscape training, information and communication technology lessons, the anti-bullying week, and from visiting speakers. Staff know students well and quickly pick up when students have concerns or are unhappy.
- Students enjoy school, reflected in their well-above attendance levels. The school reports that punctuality is improving.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, who has only been in post for four months, has managed to secure the support of staff, students and parents. Her energy, drive and enthusiasm are contagious and she is an excellent role model for the young people at the school. She is well supported by a strong team of senior leaders, heads of subject and staff with pastoral or other responsibilities. There is a clear sense of consistency and common purpose, with high aspirations for all students. Despite the school's successes and reputation, there is no sense of complacency; there is a genuine desire to learn and improve.
- All staff feel trusted and valued. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to develop as individuals and leaders. Subject leaders, who are increasingly effective in maintaining high standards, referred to feeling empowered and that the support provided by senior staff is infectious, giving them the energy and enthusiasm to do the same for others.
- All staff have a good range of training opportunities in school and elsewhere that meets their individual needs as well as whole-school priorities. Good advantage is taken of the school's National Teaching School status to enable teachers to visit other schools and to develop as leaders.
- Leaders have focused effectively on improving teaching with a systematic approach to monitoring its quality, students' work and progress. Increasingly good use is made of students' performance information to track the progress of individuals and groups, with timely interventions planned for those underachieving. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on a thorough analysis of data.
- The sixth form is generally managed well although leaders recognise that some procedures could be improved still further. Some students suggested that they found the transition to the sixth form and different levels of expectation quite difficult. This was particularly the case for boys and girls who were new to the school. Whilst most students make excellent progress, some underperformance has not been picked up swiftly enough because the first review point does not take place early enough. Students receive outstanding guidance however about higher and further education and careers.
- In all years, students experience an exceptional breadth of subjects, after-school activities, trips, and visiting speakers that enable them to mature into well-balanced individuals. All students study a range of subjects, with many taking all five EBacc ones. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is integrated well into lessons and a key part of the school's ethos. The daily thought for the day, message and prayer, and Monday assembly in the local church are appreciated by students, one of whom said that they 'set me up in a positive mood for the day'.
- The school excels in performing arts and most students participate in lessons or in after-school activities such as orchestra, dance, choir and dramatic productions. The school exploits its London location to establish links with prestigious organisations such as the Royal Academy of Music. Students have performed at venues including the Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall and the BBC. Performing arts teachers, some of whom are specialist leaders of education (SLEs), run projects in the community and other schools.
- Teachers, governors and staff commented on the important contribution of the creative subjects, not only to students' personal development but also to their success in academic subjects. 'It (performing arts) permeates all aspects of the school' was said more than once. A teacher suggested that this focus on creativity had rubbed off on her own science teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body comprises a group of well-informed, enthusiastic and highly committed individuals who provide outstanding governance. They know the school well, through their own very regular visits and detailed information from the headteacher and other senior staff. The Chair and Vice-Chair, in particular, are providing excellent support to the newly appointed headteacher. Governors engage well with staff, students and parents. They hold school leaders to account based on their accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of

the school. They draw on their considerable expertise to ensure that all statutory obligations, including safeguarding, are met and that finances are managed effectively, including the use and impact of the pupil premium funds. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and are closely involved in decisions about teachers' status and pay. Governors interview staff who wish to move up key pay scales and ensure that promotions or pay increases are justified. This governing body has been instrumental in helping to ensure that the school provides an outstanding education for the all the young people who attend, and in securing a seamless transition from an outstanding, long-serving headteacher to a new headteacher.

What inspection judgements mean

School Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors. A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	117353
Local authority	London Borough of Westminster
Inspection number	441308

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,072
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr M Mountford
Headteacher	Ms Kathryn Pugh
Date of previous school inspection	NA
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