



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Marlborough House School

Full Name of School	Marlborough House School		
DCSF Number	886/6005		
EYFS Number	EY297507		
Registered Charity Number	307793		
Address	Marlborough House School Hawkhurst Cranbrook Kent TN18 4PY		
Telephone Number	01580 753555		
Fax Number	01580 754281		
Email Address	head@marlboroughhouse.kent.sch.uk		
Head	Mr D N Hopkins		
Chairman of Governors	Mr John Hawkins		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	332		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (184 boys; 148 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	5-11:	211
	3-5 (EYFS):	11-13:	72
Number of Day Pupils	332	Capacity for flexi-boarding:	57
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Kate Nash		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	01 Dec 2009 to 02 Dec 2009		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care, in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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INSPECTION EVIDENCE

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in 1874, Marlborough House School moved in 1930 from its original site in Hove, Sussex to its present extensive site in Hawkhurst, Kent. The school is a charitable trust administered by a Board of Governors. The aims of the school are to provide a safe, healthy and caring environment for children to live and grow in, to maintain a happy community based on mutual respect and consideration, to strive for excellence in everything they do, to discover and develop the gifts within every child, to recognise and meet individual needs and to prepare children for the future stages of their education.
- 1.2 Since the last inspection, the school has changed to a five day week, appointed a head of Middle School and adopted a formal cycle of academic review in all subjects.
- 1.3 Marlborough House School is a non-selective, co-educational, independent day and flexi-boarding school for pupils aged from three to thirteen. The size of the school has increased since the last inspection. There are 332 pupils on roll. The pre-preparatory department includes 49 children in the Foundation Stage and 66 in Years 1 and 2. The preparatory department has 145 pupils in Years 3 to 6 and 72 pupils in Years 7 and 8. Pupils largely come from families with a business, professional or farming background, and most live within a radius of fifteen miles. The results of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profiles over the last two years and standardised tests across the school indicate that the range of pupils' abilities is above average, although the ability range is wide. If pupils perform according to their abilities, their results will be above those for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.4 The school considers the pastoral care and personal development of its pupils to be high priorities. It operates a popular 'flexi-boarding' system for pupils aged eight and over, where most pupils board for only one night at a time and can choose from four nights of the week. This enables the school to encourage pupils' independence and responsibility for themselves and others, within a boarding community.
- 1.5 Of the pupils identified as needing learning support, fifteen are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), nineteen are in the pre-preparatory department and fifty-one are in the preparatory department. None has a statement of special educational needs. The most usual needs which require support are speech and language difficulties, basic literacy and numeracy skills and dyslexia. No pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- 1.6 Most pupils remain at the school until the age of thirteen. Over recent years, almost all pupils have gained places at the secondary schools of their parents' choice. Most continue their education in an independent senior school, either day or boarding, or move to the local state grammar schools at 11+ or 13+.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups within the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 Marlborough House successfully achieves its aims, particularly that of helping every pupil to experience a wide variety of academic and other activities. Pupils, who have a wide range of ability, achieve good and often high academic standards. Literacy and numeracy skills are well developed. Pupils write fluently and show good mathematical understanding, with information and communication technology (ICT) skills being used increasingly in cross-curricular activities. Good preparation for entry at the age of 11+, or mainly 13+, to a variety of independent and maintained selective schools, enables almost all to enter their first choice school with a significant number winning awards. Provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) facilitates good, and often excellent progress. Pupils commented on the dedicated additional help they receive from teachers. Pupils with LDD benefit from comprehensive and closely monitored individual education plans.
- 2.2 Pupils are offered a wide and varied curriculum which contributes positively to learning in all areas within the National Curriculum subjects, and additionally includes religious studies, personal, social, cultural and health education as well as French, Latin and Spanish, with excellent provision for creative and physical activities. The comprehensive monitoring and tracking system is having a positive impact on curriculum planning aiding pupils' learning and achievement
- 2.3 An outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities is offered including philosophy, sports and knitting. Pupils and parents commented enthusiastically on the extra experiences provided. The school is proud of the number of pupils who excel in areas such as art, music and sports at local, regional and national level.
- 2.4 In the sample of lessons observed teaching was generally good and some outstanding, contributing to pupils' individual academic development as well as making a positive contribution to the school as a whole. In most lessons, teachers' planning takes account of the need for differentiated activities, and tasks are matched to pupils' ability, particularly for the less able. Less successful lessons showed a lack of direction and slower pace. In some lessons, where ability was mixed, more able pupils were not fully stretched. Marking in most subjects is thorough and gives pupils targets for improvement. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; they listen well and are responsive to the views of others.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils behave courteously towards adults and each other, and a calm, purposeful air pervades the school. They show respect for others and their surroundings with an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life. Knowledge of other world faiths helps pupils to develop understanding and awareness of other cultures. The school's Values for Living code, prominently displayed around the school, makes a significant contribution to pupils' excellent moral awareness. Social development is outstanding. Pupils feel cared for and valued at school, which many see as an extension of home. They feel that the school's philosophy and practices make them more responsible, leading to excellent social development. They are encouraged to think of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves, by supporting charities. Flexi-boarding encourages

mutual support and personal responsibility. Cultural opportunities offered as part of the curriculum, visits abroad, and the link with a school in Uganda have all made a great contribution to pupils' awareness of different cultures.

- 2.6 Welfare, health and safety are outstanding throughout the school. Comprehensive policies are clearly understood by staff and pupils. All necessary policies are in place, which enable both pupils and staff to feel well cared for. Meals are tasty and nutritious and eaten in a quiet atmosphere. Pupils are aware of the need for acceptable behaviour and that bullying is not tolerated in school. Pastoral arrangements are clear and visibly translated into outstanding practice. Pupils and parents overwhelmingly believe the school provides excellent pastoral care in a caring and supportive environment. They particularly commented on the warm and friendly yet respectful relations between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves. Pupils understand the rationale underpinning the discipline policy and agree that sanctions are fair.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.7 Governance of the school is excellent. Governors share a broad range of expertise and are committed to the good of the school community. They meet regularly and attendance is excellent. Committees and individuals with special responsibilities, such as child protection and health and safety, ensure successful oversight of the work of the school. They are actively involved in school development and regularly review appropriate policies.
- 2.8 The school is extremely well led by the headmaster, the senior management team and heads of departments. They have an excellent understanding of the requirements for monitoring, assessment, tracking and appraisal. All staff are dedicated to the care and education of the pupils and the development of the school. Child protection and safeguarding policies including safe staff recruitment are up to date and thorough. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained. Accommodation, including that for flexi-boarders is generous and attractive. The extensive grounds are extremely well-maintained.
- 2.9 Links with parents are outstanding. Parents are provided with a comprehensive range of information including regular newsletters and email access. Reports are detailed and usually give information on how to improve. The complaints policy is robust and in line with requirements. Administration of the school is thorough and efficient. Parents commented on the welcoming office staff. Over half the parents returned the questionnaire and were overwhelmingly supportive of the school with very positive comments for all aspects of their children's education. Their highest praise was for the worthwhile attitudes and views the school instils.

3. MAIN SCHOOL: ACTION POINTS

(a) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

(b) Recommended action

3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

1. ensure that all teaching and marking is as good as the best.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

- 4.1 The effectiveness of the EYFS is good with outstanding features. Equality of opportunity for all children underpins its nurturing ethos. Parents commend the setting highly. A high priority is given to children's personal, development, reinforced through the school's Values for Living code. Children of all abilities thrive in the caring and positive atmosphere. They receive sensitive and constructive support with their learning, enabling them to make good progress. Self-evaluation is effective so the school knows what it does well and takes positive action to bring about any improvements. Good progress has been made since the time of the last inspection. The setting is highly inclusive and the strong partnership that exists between the EYFS, parents and other agencies is at the heart of its success.
- 4.2 The EYFS is very well led and managed, with clear educational direction. All adults share the school's aim of providing the best opportunities for all children. Systems and procedures for monitoring the school's work and children's progress are clear and effective. Planning is thorough and detailed. Senior managers, however, recognise that a unified approach is not fully in place between the Nursery and Reception class. Measures to safeguard children are robust; risk assessments are undertaken regularly, and medical procedures are carried out with care. Resources are used exceptionally well for the benefit of children's welfare and development.
- 4.3 High quality provision contributes significantly to the children's good, and in some instances, excellent levels of achievement. Children thoroughly enjoy the rich curriculum, which helps them to become active learners. Activities are carefully balanced between free choice and directed learning, contributing successfully to developing their independence and confidence. However, opportunities are not consistently planned for pupils to investigate and develop an activity both indoors and out. Information from observation and assessment is effectively used to plan activities suited to the needs and abilities of individuals. Innovative 'learning journey' profiles completed by staff and parents in conjunction with children form excellent records of progress. The development of the role of the key person is instrumental in promoting the welfare of individual children.
- 4.4 Children make good and often rapid progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Consequently, they make significant gains in all areas of their learning with many reaching the expected goals by the time they leave Reception. Progress is outstanding in the children's personal, social and emotional development. Children settle readily and quickly become confident, independent and motivated learners. They are inquisitive and creative and are given opportunities to work independently in all areas of learning. They enjoy working co-operatively to try out new activities. All children develop an excellent awareness of how to stay healthy and safe; they know how to handle a variety of equipment safely, and confidently talk about which foods they should eat.

5. EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE: ACTION POINTS

(a) Compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements

- 5.1 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and no action is required.

(b) Recommended action

The Early Years Foundation Stage setting should take the following action to improve:

1. strengthen links between the Nursery and Reception settings to ensure a cohesive approach to planning for the EYFS;
2. provide children with more opportunities to work on the same activity both indoors and out.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Margaret Smallwood	Reporting inspector
Mrs Ann McDonnell	Former head of department IAPS school
Mrs Gail Purt	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Sara Robinson	Early Years Team Inspector (Head of School (Pre-prep), IAPS)