

Inspection of Marathon Science School

1-9 Evelyn Street, Surrey Quays, London SE8 5RQ

Inspection dates:

25 to 27 February 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils make a strong contribution to the calm and respectful environment that exists in the school. They are polite and well mannered. Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with staff, who care for them well. Pupils are happy. They enjoy the opportunities to be with their friends, in school and in the boarding facilities. Pupils behave well. During social times, pupils play well together. For example, they enjoy playing football and basketball games.

Since the last inspection, the school has taken swift, decisive action. This has led to improvement in many aspects of the school's provision. Despite these efforts, the quality of education that pupils receive is not consistently high. For example, some teaching is not routinely adapted to reflect the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 4.

Pupils enjoy the enrichment opportunities the school provides. These include visits to museums, places of worship and sporting activity centres. Pupils highly value the annual visit to Turkey that is closely linked to their Islamic studies.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has identified appropriate actions to improve the quality of education. However, some of these actions have not been taken in a timely way. For example, the school is still in the early stages of strengthening the breadth of subjects on offer to pupils, including in creative subjects.

The school identifies the important information that pupils should learn in all the subjects taught. Staff have suitable subject knowledge. However, the school has not ensured that some staff have the expertise needed to deliver the curriculum effectively. For example, some staff do not design appropriate activities to enable pupils to learn the intended curriculum well. In addition, staff do not routinely check pupils' understanding before moving on to new subject content. This means that pupils do not build or deepen their knowledge and skills coherently over time.

Some curriculum decisions, resourcing and staff arrangements for the teaching of English language, literature and reading are in their early stages of implementation. This includes how the school identifies and supports those pupils who struggle to read. This means that some pupils do not build their vocabulary and comprehension skills as well as they should do.

Pupils have suitable opportunities to read and enjoy a range of different texts and genres. Staff expose pupils to a selection of traditional and contemporary works. For example, pupils in Year 7 explore the function of dramatic techniques in a drama text. Pupils in Year 8 learn how characters are developed through dramatic literary devices, such as dialogue, stage directions, interaction and the use of 'aside'.

The school is in the early stages of developing effective systems for identifying and providing useful information about the different needs of pupils. Staff lack the expertise to adapt their teaching well enough to cater for the full range of pupils' learning needs. This is particularly the case for pupils with lower prior attainment and those with SEND. As a result, some pupils are not supported appropriately to access the curriculum and build a rich body of knowledge. The school is taking appropriate action to address this.

Almost all pupils are boarders and attend regularly. Staff check pupils' attendance daily. This helps to ensure that there are no persistent absentees. Pupils are generally motivated to learn. On occasion, pupils lose focus during lessons. Staff manage any low-level disruptions appropriately.

The programme for personal, social and health education has recently been introduced. It provides pupils with opportunities to learn about fundamental British values and ways to become effective citizens in society. The programme is supported by themed assemblies and presentations from carefully selected external visitors and providers. Pupils receive suitable, impartial careers information, advice and guidance. They are motivated to learn about further education, training and employment opportunities. The information that pupils access helps to inform them of future career pathways and possibilities.

The school ensures that relationship and sex education (RSE) and health education take full account of statutory guidance. This is delivered in an age-appropriate way while respectfully reflecting the school's religious ethos. For example, pupils in Year 9 are taught about the importance of consent, personal space and boundaries. The RSE curriculum includes the legal rights and responsibilities regarding all the protected characteristics. Pupils speak confidently about human rights and how these apply to daily life, including the right to be in a healthy relationship. They learn to understand what discrimination is and why it might occur. Pupils explain how this can be influenced by people's negative perceptions of others, including stereotypes and prejudice. They are prepared well for life in modern society. Pupils value the occasions provided to share their views, for example, through the school council. The school is considering how staff can provide further opportunities to develop pupils' interests, talents and leadership roles and responsibilities.

The proprietor has made crucial decisions to change the school's senior leadership arrangements. This has led to the improved capacity to ensure continued school improvement. The school has taken appropriate measures to improve the school since the last inspection, although some actions are in the early stages. The proprietor ensures that there is close oversight of the school's compliance with the independent school standards (the standards). The school and those responsible for governance have worked together to ensure that previously unmet standards are now met. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Staff value the approachable and supportive nature of leaders. The school ensures that the management of staff's well-being and workload is well considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum offer for pupils to learn is not as broad as it should be, including in creative subjects. This means that pupils do not have opportunities across the curriculum to deepen their knowledge and skills fully. The school should ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn in depth across a broad range of subjects.
- Teaching does not deliver the curriculum consistently well. Sometimes, the checking of pupils' knowledge and understanding is not precise. Occasionally, learning activities do not enable pupils to learn the ambitions of the curriculum deeply. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding over time. The school should continue to support teachers to gain the pedagogical expertise they need to deliver all subjects consistently well, so that pupils are fully prepared for future learning.
- The school's systems for identifying and adapting the curriculum for lower attaining pupils and those with SEND are not secure. Sufficient adaptations to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve as well as they should are sometimes not effective. The school needs to ensure that teachers know how to adapt and support pupils appropriately, so that lower attaining pupils and those with SEND can access subject content successfully.
- Sometimes, structured opportunities for pupils to develop their reading across the curriculum are not securely in place. This means occasionally some pupils are not appropriately supported in strengthening their comprehension skills and vocabulary development. The school should continue to develop the whole school literacy strategy and implement the planned structured approach to reading across the curriculum.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	135901
DfE registration number	209/6409
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10342957
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Seven Hills Education Trust
Chair of the proprietor body	Kamil Canbay
Headteacher	Uzeyir Onur and Salih Ezer (co-headteachers)
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £4,500
Annual fees (boarders)	Up to £12,000
Telephone number	02072313232
Website	www.marathonschool.com
Email address	info@marathonschool.com
Dates of previous inspections	10 to 12 May 2023 (education) 29 to 31 January 2024 (boarding)

Information about this school

- Marathon Science School is an independent boarding school with an Islamic ethos. It is situated in 1-9 Evelyn Street, Surrey Quays, London, SE8 5RQ.
- The school is registered to admit up to 120 boys aged 10 to 19 years. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils aged under 11 or over 16 on roll.
- One of the current co-headteachers, who was the founding headteacher, has returned to the school and is working alongside another co-headteacher, who has been working in the school since their appointment in January 2024.
- The last standard inspection was conducted from 10 to 12 May 2023 and was judged as inadequate. Following this, additional inspections were conducted on 28 February and 15 and 16 October 2024.
- The school's last social care inspection was a full boarding inspection in January 2024. The inspection found the boarding provision did not meet some of the national minimum standards. An inspection of boarding provision in October 2024 judged that the school met the national minimum standards assessed during that inspection.
- Parents have been consulted in relation to the school's sex and relationships education. The school has an opt-out arrangement for those who do not wish to have their children study sex education.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards, for example a check of the premises. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the chair, the vice-chair and other members of the proprietary body, the co-headteachers, senior leaders and a range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with leaders, spoke to some pupils about their learning and considered pupils' work.

- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff, through discussions and responses in the Ofsted's survey for parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Lascelles Haughton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Maureen Okoye	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Neary	Ofsted Inspector

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