

Inspection of Marathon Science School

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

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The quality of education is too variable. The curriculum lacks rigour and breadth. Leaders do not ensure that pupils build up knowledge and skills securely in all subjects. Leaders do not provide a suitable programme of creative education. Too many pupils achieve poorly, including at GCSE.

Leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes unrealistic. Where pupils are not capable of achieving GCSE qualifications, there is no additional support or alternative study routes. Leaders and staff are not trained to identify, support or teach pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or those at an early stage of learning to read.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. They have organised very few extra-curricular experiences. Arrangements to provide pupils with impartial careers education, advice and guidance are weak. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is especially poor. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of fundamental British values is limited. They are unprepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They behave sensibly, work hard and have positive attitudes. They attend well. Staff deal with any incidents of bullying appropriately.

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

Leaders' curriculum thinking is confused. Teachers work in isolation. As a result, curriculum plans are inconsistent, and in some cases are only lists of topics or activities. They do not identify coherently what pupils need to learn and when, so that pupils build up knowledge and skills cumulatively. Some teachers are experienced and have subject-specific expertise. Others are at a very early stage of learning to teach, sometimes with responsibility for teaching more than one subject. Although staff raised no concerns about their workload, they do not receive any useful professional training. This means some lack understanding of curriculum design and teaching methods. Checks made by staff on pupils' learning are variable. Some staff do not check precisely what pupils know, understand and can do.

Pupils do not experience all the required areas of learning. This is because creative education is provided in Years 7 and 8 only, and leaders have not put in place a suitable curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge and skills. Creative education is not taught at all when pupils move into Years 9 to 11. Pupils currently study English language, English literature, mathematics, statistics, science, computer science, business studies and geography up to GCSE. Although some pupils do well, pupils typically do not attain the qualifications they need to go on to the next stage of education, training or employment.

Pupils are attentive in lessons and eager to learn. They are ambitious for their futures. Pupils are encouraged to read widely. They said that they particularly

enjoyed their study of whole texts in English literature. However, there is no phonics programme in place in readiness for any pupils who may join the school at the early stages of learning to read.

Leaders and staff lack the required knowledge and skills to identify and support pupils with SEND. At the time of the inspection, leaders' published guidance about admitting pupils with SEND on the school's website that was inappropriate, and was changed during the inspection. Leaders have not written guidance, or identified in curriculum plans, how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, including those who may arrive or need to be assessed for an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Through Islamic studies, pupils are encouraged to develop strong moral characters. However, PSHE education is currently taught only occasionally in a few lessons in designated weeks three times each year. This is too limited. As a result, pupils have a very poor knowledge of even basic information including about other faiths and cultures, the main political parties in England, and the different characteristics that people have.

The relationships and sex education (RSE) requirements are not met. The school's RSE policy was not published on the school's website at the time of the inspection. Leaders have not consulted parents' and carers' views on the policy. The required content is not being taught. Leaders have not organised suitable, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance.

Leaders organise very limited after-school clubs, including in sports. The current sparse provision significantly limits pupils' social and cultural development.

Leaders and proprietors demonstrate a lack of capacity to improve the school. They do not know the independent school standards. There are no systems in place to check the work of leaders, or the school's compliance with the independent school standards. Many independent school standards are not met, as listed in the annex to this report.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act, although at the time of the inspection the lift in the four-storey main premises was out of order.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They ensure staff are suitably trained, and that pupils have trusted adults they can go to for support. There is an appropriate system in place to follow up any concerns.

The recruitment process is suitable. Pre-employment checks on adults are completed in line with requirements.

The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest guidance. It is available on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Curriculum thinking and planning, and arrangements for assessment, are too variable. Pupils do not receive education in all the required areas of learning. Leaders do not provide professional training to help staff to plan and deliver an effective curriculum. The curriculum does not meet all pupils' needs. All these weaknesses have a negative impact on pupils' overall academic outcomes. Leaders should thoroughly review the curriculum, assessment, and professional training arrangements. They should ensure that the curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. Leaders should ensure that a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum is effective in meeting pupils' needs and abilities. The curriculum should enable all pupils, including those with SEND, to learn and achieve well in all subjects and support them to progress to their next stages of education, training or employment.
- The provision for pupils' personal development is weak. Leaders organise too few experiences to encourage pupils to explore and develop their various interests and talents. The school's poor PSHE education and RSE programmes significantly limit pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain. Leaders need to significantly improve their work to support pupils' personal development. This includes introducing suitable PSHE education and RSE curriculums which include teaching pupils about fundamental British values, the protected characteristics, the faiths, beliefs and cultures of others, and public institutions and services in England. Leaders should also ensure that pupils receive a wide, rich set of curricular and extra-curricular experiences.
- Leaders have not fully considered the RSE statutory requirements. They have not consulted parents. Leaders should therefore review their RSE policy in consultation with parents.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils receive suitable and impartial careers advice and guidance. This limits pupils' understanding and ability to plan for their next steps. Leaders should realise their plans to ensure that pupils receive regular, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance.
- Leaders have not written guidance on, or trained staff in, identifying and supporting pupils with SEND, including those with EHC plans. This means that the needs of pupils with SEND may not be identified in order to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the support they need. Leaders should write and publish information on the school's educational and welfare provision for pupils with SEND, including pupils who have EHC plans. They should ensure staff are trained in order to be ready and able to identify and support pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have not put a phonics programme in place for any pupils who are weaker readers or who join the school at the early stages of learning to read.

Leaders should ensure that arrangements are made to implement a phonics programme.

- The four-storey building's floors are not easily accessible to any users with disabilities, including those with temporary injuries. This is because the lift is out of use. Leaders should realise their plans to bring the lift back into operation.
- The proprietor body has not put systems in place to check the effectiveness of leaders' work or compliance with the independent school standards, many of which the proprietor body does not know about or meet. The proprietor body should ensure that systems are put in place to hold leaders to account. They should ensure that they know the independent school standards well enough to be able to meet them and take action to ensure that they are all met consistently.

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	10267650
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Other independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Seven Hills Educational Trust
Chair	Kamil Canbay
Headteacher	Mehmet Yilmaz
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,500 to £12,000
Telephone number	020 7231 3232
Website	www.marathonschool.com
Email address	info@marathonschool.com
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 January 2019

Information about this school

- Marathon Science School is an independent boarding school with an Islamic ethos.
- The school is registered for boys aged 10 to 19 years. In practice, pupils on roll are aged 11 to 16. At the time of this inspection there were no boys under 11 or over 16 on roll. Many pupils are of Turkish background and speak English as an additional language.
- Almost all pupils are boarders. From September 2022, the boarding provision for most boys has been located within the school's main premises in Surrey Quays. There continues to also be boarding provision in Hackney.
- The proprietors include a group of five trustees, who comprise the Seven Hills Educational Trust. The name of the proprietor body is missing from Get Information about Schools, the Department for Education's register of educational establishments in England and Wales.
- The school's last inspection was a standard inspection in January 2019, when the school was judged to be good.
- The school's headteacher took up his position in September 2022.
- The school makes no current use of 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This graded inspection was conducted with one day of notice. The inspection considered the day school provision of this boarding school only.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas: science, English, physical education, and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons (where available), spoke to teachers and pupils, and considered evidence of pupils' learning. Inspectors also considered curriculum plans and pupils' work in mathematics, geography and music.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher throughout the inspection. They also met with several groups of pupils. The lead inspector met with four members of the proprietor body, including the chair.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey of parent views, Ofsted Parent View, as well as the staff and pupil responses to online surveys.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jo Jones

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.

- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e).

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught

- 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
- 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(b) particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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