

Barton Court Grammar School

Longport, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1PH

Inspection dates

27–28 March 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.

- Students of all abilities, including those supported by the pupil premium, make excellent progress and, as a result, achievement in all subjects, including English and mathematics, is exceptionally high.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, plan their lessons well, mark books conscientiously and are keen for their students to succeed. They are committed to their professional development and act as excellent role models to the students. As a result, teaching is outstanding.
- Students are proud of their school and their behaviour is exemplary. Around the school they are courteous and polite and they arrive at their lessons on time and ready to learn. They confirm that the school is a very safe place where learning can flourish.
- The headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision for the school based on high standards and secured through a drive for consistent and high-quality teaching. Her relentless and determined drive for improvement has resulted in excellent academic outcomes for all.
- The curriculum provides students with numerous opportunities to excel. It is well matched to the needs and interests of the students with a strong focus on the English and International Baccalaureate. A variety of enrichment days and extra-curricular clubs and activities help to make a positive contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The sixth form is outstanding. As a result of excellent teaching and exemplary attitudes to learning, students achieve high levels of attainment. Through their leadership roles, they make a significant contribution to the rest of the school.
- School leaders at all levels, including the governors, have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve still further. They are passionate in their commitment to the school's future success.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 32 lessons, over half of which were observed jointly with members of the senior team.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students to discuss their experience of school, and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors met with three members of the governing body and a number of groups of school leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including: minutes of the meetings of the governing body; health and safety procedures; behaviour and attendance records; documents relating to the school's self-review and improvements; and the school's records of performance management and teaching and learning.
- In carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of the 245 responses to the online Parent View survey and 15 individual letters and emails that were provided by parents and carers. Further information was also obtained through a Kirkland Rowell Survey completed by over 50% of parents and carers in the summer of 2013 and a discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- In addition, inspectors took account of the 51 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Graham Tuck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jones	Additional Inspector
David Lewis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy school in September, 2011. When its predecessor school, also Barton Court Grammar School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- Barton Court is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with 205 students in the sixth form.
- The school selects from the top 25% of students.
- The proportion of the school's population eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care, children of service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is about a quarter of the national average.
- There are no students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme, which supports those students who have not previously reached the expected levels in English and mathematics.
- Approximately one in seven students are from a minority ethnic group: a little under one in 10 speak English as an additional language. These proportions are below national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action and the proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs are both below national averages.
- There are no students attending an alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide students with more opportunities to read, question and then act upon their teachers' marking so that all marking helps students to develop their knowledge and skills more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students join the school with attainment that is above the national average. At the end of Year 11, standards are particularly high. For example, for the last two years, almost half the grades awarded have been at A* or A. This is because students make exceptional progress from their starting points as a result of high-quality teaching. Rates of progress in English and mathematics are well above national averages with over one in five students in English and one in three in mathematics making five levels of progress from when they join the school.
- Approximately a fifth of students join the school with results that are in line with the national average for their age group. In 2013, these students made particularly strong progress and all achieved an A* to C grade in English and mathematics. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well by the school, which enables them to make excellent progress. Last year, all of these students made at least expected progress in English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations.
- The small number of students supported by the pupil premium make outstanding progress. In 2013, their attainment was similar to other students' in English but approximately a third of a grade below that of all other students in mathematics. However, their rates of progress were similar to those for all other students in the school and much higher than those for similar students nationally. As a consequence, any gaps in attainment between these students and their peers are narrowing rapidly.
- Students from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, make excellent progress which enables them to reach high levels of attainment that are at least in line with those of all other students in the school.
- Last year, about half of the GCSE cohort sat their mathematics examination in the summer term of Year 10; this was to enable them to move on to more advanced mathematics courses in Year 11 or to follow another area of GCSE or advanced level study. Students who failed to attain their target grade were required to continue with their GCSE studies and retake the examination in the summer of Year 11.
- Students are encouraged to read across a wide range of subjects and this reading is often supplemented by homework tasks. In lessons, students are encouraged to be precise and accurate when they answer questions and this helps them to develop their thinking more clearly.
- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Inspired by knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed teachers, students make excellent progress and as a result achieve high levels of attainment. For example, last year almost all students passed the International Baccalaureate examination or attained an A* to C grade at A level.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey felt that their child made good progress in the school.
- There are no students attending an alternative provision or following courses in another school or college.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The excellent relationship between students and their teachers lies at the heart of the school's success. Teachers expect the very best of their students both in terms of their work and behaviour. For their part, teachers are conscientious and committed in planning their lessons, marking books and setting homework. As a result, students make outstanding progress throughout the school, including in English and mathematics.
- Students have confidence in staff. In the words of one Key Stage 4 student: 'Teachers are always prepared to put in more time for us.' Another student told us: 'Teachers teach the way that we learn, rather than us having to learn the way that they teach.' This high-quality planning based on a clear awareness of the strengths of their students is a characteristic of much of the

teaching in the school. This was apparent in a Year 10 physical education lesson on the climbing wall where students were encouraged to tackle climbs of varying difficulty based on the teacher's knowledge of his students' abilities.

- All teachers provide students with regular, helpful and detailed comments on their work so that students have a clear awareness of what it is that they need to do to improve. However, students are not always given sufficient time or opportunity to act upon this advice and on these occasions the impact of the teachers' marking on students' progress is more limited.
- Teachers are extremely knowledgeable about the subject that they teach and this encourages students to engage enthusiastically with their learning. In a Year 8 Spanish lesson, the teacher's highly skilled use of the target language and insistence that all students respond with an accurate accent meant that rapid progress was made.
- Teachers have a good understanding of students' comprehension throughout a lesson because they use questions well to develop the students' knowledge and understanding and to assess the progress that students are making. When it is apparent from their answers that students have not understood, teachers are adept at adjusting the lesson accordingly so that all can make excellent progress. In a Year 10 geography lesson the teacher's questioning allowed students to reflect on their work and consider how it could be improved.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding with students keen to do well and fully involved in their learning. In a Year 13 English lesson, students demonstrated in their discussions a detailed and perceptive understanding of Gothic fiction which they had developed over time thanks to their teacher's expertise. They were then able to test and clarify that understanding through skilfully planned group work activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They wear their uniform with pride, are courteous when moving between lessons and treat the school buildings with the utmost respect. The atmosphere at breaks and lunchtimes is calm and friendly and at the end of break times the school is free of any litter.
- In lessons, students are keen to support each other's learning. For example, when they are asked to discuss a topic in pairs or in small groups they do so enthusiastically which helps them to make outstanding progress. Teachers provide students with excellent role models.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students confirm that they feel very safe and have a good understanding of potential hazards such as cyber bullying.
- Bullying is extremely rare and, if it does occur, is dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey agreed that their children felt safe in school.
- The school uses fixed-term exclusion as a last resort and as a consequence the number of exclusions is low at a little over half the national average. Very few students are excluded more than once in an academic year.
- The school has in place excellent systems for supporting students' attendance. Rates of absence are comfortably below the national average while persistent absence is less than half the national rate. Students arrive at their lessons on time, with the right equipment and ready to learn. As a result, lessons get off to a prompt start and students' learning can move at pace.
- Students in the sixth form behave exceptionally well and make a positive contribution to the rest of the school. For example, as trained mentors they provide highly valued support for some of the younger students in the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Supported by her leadership team, the headteacher has put teaching at the forefront of her drive for school improvement. As a result, students make excellent progress in lessons and over time.
- Highly effective monitoring systems are now in place to track students' progress and to enable school leaders to decide where extra support is needed. This has helped to ensure that disabled students, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium achieve as well as other students in the school. Middle leaders play an increasingly important role in checking the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
- School leaders at all levels, including the governors and subject leaders, have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve still further. This is underpinned by a rigorous system of subject review that gauges the quality of teaching and helps to inform the programme of professional development for teachers. There are clear links between the setting of achievement targets, the management of teachers' performance and their pay.
- From the parents and carers that responded to the online Parent View survey, a significant minority disagreed that the school was well led and managed. This is contradicted by the achievement of the students, their behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors received emailed and written correspondence from some parents and carers raising concerns about the possible relocation of the school and the consultation exercise being undertaken by governors. Governors, the headteacher and the local authority were able to reassure inspectors that the consultation process was an open and inclusive one.
- The school's curriculum provides rich opportunities for students at different stages of learning to be appropriately challenged. The school's thorough systems for advice and guidance enable students to select subjects that are relevant to their aptitudes and interests. A three year curriculum at Key Stage 4 means that students can combine traditional academic courses with enrichment options in subjects such as psychology and film studies. Detailed planning and excellent systems of monitoring have helped to develop an excellent programme for the students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural education. This is supplemented by a wide range of clubs, trips and sporting activities.
- The school effectively allocates its resources to ensure that all students have equality of access and opportunity. As a result, all groups make excellent progress.
- The leadership of the sixth form is clear and purposeful and this has helped to ensure outstanding teaching with exceptionally high levels of student achievement.
- As part of a Teaching Schools' Alliance, school leaders provide additional support to other local schools.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors are ambitious for the school and its future success. They bring to their roles a wealth of expertise which they supplement with additional training based on a recently conducted audit of their skills. For example, by developing their understanding of national data systems they have been able to base their decisions on a sharper awareness of the school's strengths and of what it needs to do to improve still further. Governors know about the impact of teaching on students' achievement and monitor carefully the relationship between teachers' salaries and the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. Through their scrutiny of such documents as the data dashboard and regular updates from the leadership team, governors are able to compare the school's performance with that of similar schools and schools nationally. Governors are highly skilled in their oversight of school finances and ensure that resources, including pupil premium funding, are allocated effectively. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory duties including those relating to safeguarding.

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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137474
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	441130

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	883
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Klappa
Headteacher	Kirstin Cardus
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01227 464600
Fax number	01227 781399
Email address	headteacher@bartoncourt.org

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