

# Barnwell School

Barnwell, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 9SW

## Inspection dates

17–18 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the progress of pupils taking GCSEs has been below national averages and has not improved.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities did not make enough progress from their starting points over the past two years.
- Too many pupils, especially the disadvantaged, left the school in recent years without the qualifications they needed to progress to further education courses.
- The quality of teaching in science is too varied and pupils have not achieved as well as they should in 2016 and 2017.
- Staffing and recruitment difficulties have hampered leaders' ability to bring about consistent improvements in teaching.
- The curriculum has not been well organised in the past, which has hampered pupils from achieving well by the end of key stage 4.
- While attendance has improved, persistent absence remains above national averages.
- Leaders' self-evaluation has not been critical enough to identify key priorities and drive improvements rapidly.

### The school has the following strengths

- Although not yet sufficiently consistent, the quality of teaching continues to improve. Leaders provide high-quality training for teachers, and pupils are starting to make better progress as a result.
- Leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching in English. Progress of current pupils in English is accelerating.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and respectful and have positive relationships with adults and each other.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of care and collaboration within the school.
- Leaders have improved the range of subjects on offer to students in the sixth form, and the quality of teaching is good. This leads to better outcomes for 16- to 19-year-olds over time.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes and ensure consistency in the quality of teaching, both in subjects, particularly science, and across year groups, by:
  - consistent application of the school's agreed assessment procedures
  - eliminating low-level disruption
  - providing good opportunities to challenge pupils to do the best they can.
- Improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities by:
  - targeting support more precisely for individuals to overcome the specific barriers they have to achievement
  - ensuring that teachers use information effectively to plan learning that meets the specific needs of individual pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - preparing pupils well for the demands of the curriculum earlier in the school so they can make better progress from their starting points
  - ensuring that pupils have the appropriate skills to do well in the examination years
- Further reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school
- Leaders need to establish robust processes for identifying and acting upon the most important priorities for school improvement by ensuring that:
  - their self-evaluation is accurate and based on raising pupils' achievement
  - they rigorously use the information from the school's monitoring to ensure school improvement is rapid.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium (additional government funding) should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the impact of leaders and governors on improving pupils' outcomes has been too slow. As a result, too few pupils have achieved the qualifications they should. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 was significantly below the national average. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Although leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, they do not yet use this information precisely enough to improve teaching and learning rapidly. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains too inconsistent and is not yet good, especially when pupils are taught by temporary staff. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- Leaders did not put effective plans in place to anticipate the changes to the curriculum at key stage 4. As a result, in 2017, pupils were not equipped with the skills they needed to do well in examinations, especially in GCSE English.
- Senior and middle leaders have now developed more-robust systems for monitoring the current provision and outcomes across the school. They strategically plan and implement improvements through staff training and encouraging higher levels of accountability.
- Teachers value and benefit from the continuous professional development leaders provide. There is strong evidence of training improving teaching and learning. For example, teachers are beginning to use effective questioning that is extending and deepening pupils' thinking.
- The use of assessment was a recent training priority and improvements are more evident in many lessons. The induction of new staff and the mentoring of newly qualified teachers are effective.
- Support from the local authority has been effective. Advisers provide external checking of leaders' monitoring and this is successfully helping leaders to re-focus the school's priorities. Additionally, subject advisers work with the leaders of English, mathematics and science to bring about better curriculum planning and more accurate assessment of pupils' progress. As a result of this support, and the actions of a strengthened and skilled team of middle leaders, progress of current pupils in English, mathematics and science is now improving.
- Leaders have developed a wider curriculum which is broad and balanced. It provides pupils with a range of opportunities to learn in all subjects. When the curriculum is taught well, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment and training, such as successfully progressing into the school's sixth form to follow a range of academic and vocational courses.
- The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop and enjoy artistic, musical and sporting skills. A high proportion of pupils, including the disadvantaged, participate in the extensive extra-curricular activities available. Pupils

and parents and carers commented on the school's commitment to developing individual pupils' talents and interests.

## **Governance of the school**

- Despite governors' regular monitoring of performance information and involvement in strategic improvement planning, pupils' outcomes have not improved rapidly enough since the previous inspection.
- Governors have not ensured that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve outcomes rapidly for disadvantaged pupils as highlighted as an area for improvement in the previous inspection report. Governors have planned for an external review so this aspect of their leadership can improve more rapidly.
- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school and are able to identify the current priorities for improvement. However, they have not challenged leaders' overly positive self-evaluation or made sure that strategic planning is sharply focused.
- Governors are successful in their monitoring of the use of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding. They have ensured that pupils do not fall further behind in the development of their skills.
- Governors have ensured sound financial management and effectively monitor health and safety.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding culture at Barnwell School is well developed and underpins all that staff do. Consequently, pupils are well looked after and feel safe.
- Policies and processes are securely in place to protect and support vulnerable pupils. The school works closely with families and liaises effectively with external agencies.
- Staff are trained regularly in aspects such as how to identify and respond quickly to safeguarding concerns. The training ensures that staff are vigilant and act appropriately.
- Governors systematically review risk assessments and monitor the procedures for checking the suitability of adults working with pupils. However, inspectors identified minor administrative errors in these checks which were rectified during the course of the inspection. Safer recruitment practices were otherwise found to be effective.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement**

- While leaders continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, it is not yet consistently good. This is because some of the improvements are more recent and have not had enough impact on accelerating the progress pupils have made since the previous inspection.
- Inspection evidence supported the school's view that teaching is becoming increasingly effective over time. However, there is still too much inconsistency and some poorer

teaching leads to slower progress from pupils' starting points.

- Leaders' drive to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons has been mainly successful. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Although established staff skilfully apply the school's behaviour management policy, there is still some low-level disruption in lessons taught by temporary teachers, which slows pupils' progress.
- While the provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving, their progress is still slower than that of their peers from similar starting points. Pupils' individual barriers to learning are not systematically identified and addressed: therefore, teaching does not fully meet their needs.
- At times, stronger teaching includes:
  - well-planned learning which engages pupils, and precise assessments which inform the planning
  - questioning which stretches and challenges pupils' thinking
  - structured homework activities
  - literacy and numeracy skills developed explicitly across other subject areas
  - positive relationships between teachers and pupils.

However, teachers do not apply these features consistently and when this happens progress is slow. In science for example, the level of challenge is not consistently well judged.

- Mathematics teaching is engaging and fun. The most able pupils are supported effectively through extension tasks. Pupils of all abilities make expected progress as a result of teachers' clear explanations, which are adapted appropriately for individuals.
- Using support from the local authority, teaching in English is now improving swiftly. Key stage 4 pupils described English as among their most effective subjects. Collaborative planning, in-depth preparation of lessons, more consistent use of the school's feedback policy and individual support are now improving outcomes for current pupils.
- Pupils and parents are positive about the teaching in the school. They described how teachers are committed to the progress of pupils and how they 'go above and beyond' to support them. However, pupils described the inconsistencies they experience between teachers, and cited weaker areas where they have had a high turnover of teachers within the year.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are respectful and warm. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors.
- Pupils work well together and help each other. In a Year 8 dance lesson, for example, groups of pupils collaborated in a sophisticated way to choreograph a routine. In

another example of collaboration, Year 10 pupils successfully worked in groups to solve a challenging numeracy task in a science lesson.

- Pupils take advantage of the many opportunities to develop leadership skills, which prepare them well for their future adult lives. For example, pupil ambassadors influence school-improvement planning and are consulted over a range of strategic decisions.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe. Pupils and their parents reported that bullying is very rare. Pupils know about different forms of bullying, and staff respond quickly and effectively when incidents arise.
- When asked about any use of derogatory language or discrimination, pupils responded, 'That wouldn't happen here, it wouldn't be tolerated.' The school has a strong culture of equality.
- Many parents described the highly effective care and support the school provides to their children and families. Parents are appreciative of staff's effective communication, timely responses to issues raised and tenacious approach to resolving difficult situations. For example, a parent said, 'I cannot thank them enough for the support and care provided to me and my child.'
- The vast majority of pupils secure places in either higher education, training or employment when they leave the school, as a result of the effective careers information and guidance they receive from the school.
- Staff liaise closely with the alternative provider to monitor the progress, attendance, behaviour and welfare of pupils who access courses at North Herts. Education Support Centre.
- Most aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are effectively delivered through discrete lessons, assemblies and tutor time. However, some pupils' understanding of key issues relevant to life in modern Britain, specifically radicalisation and extremism, is limited.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In and out of lessons, pupils' conduct is calm, orderly and mature.
- Leaders of the school have transformed pupils' attitudes towards learning. In the majority of lessons pupils are focused and eager to learn. Most teachers consistently apply the well-structured behaviour management policy and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen in line with the national average and the actions of leaders have also reduced the number of repeat exclusions to below average. There have been no permanent exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Pupils take pride in their school, in their work and in themselves. They respect their environment. There is no litter or graffiti in the school. Pupils wear their smart uniform with pride, without reminders from staff. Their books are well organised and well presented.
- Most pupils attend school regularly, but the proportion who are persistently absent

from school, though falling, remains above the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- At key stage 4, the overall progress that pupils made from their different starting points has been well below national averages for the past two years. Improvements in pupils' outcomes have not been rapid enough since the previous inspection. Too many pupils have left the school without the qualifications they needed to make a good start to higher education.
- Over the past two years, the overall progress of disadvantaged pupils has been significantly below national averages.
- In 2016 and 2017, the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was significantly below average when compared to pupils nationally from similar starting points.
- Pupils have underachieved in a range of subjects, including English, science and other key subjects, over the past two years.
- The achievement of pupils in mathematics has continued to be stronger than in English and has remained in line with national averages over the past two years.
- The school's performance information and evidence gathered from lessons and pupils' work indicate improvements in the progress of current pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils, especially at key stage 3, are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects.
- The progress pupils are making in English has improved this year. Different groups of pupils are making better progress than they did previously. The local authority has externally verified performance information for current pupils and supports the school's view that outcomes in English are no longer inadequate.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a range of strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Pupils of all abilities are reading more often, with greater fluency and comprehension, which is securing better achievement for pupils across many subjects.
- The vast majority of pupils move into either further education or employment with training.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Good

- The leadership and management of the sixth form is a strength of the school. Leaders look continually for ways to improve the curriculum. As a result, students are offered a range of academic and vocational courses working with other centres across the 'Stevenage Sixth' consortium. Additionally, the school introduced an innovative programme for level 2 students who might have otherwise been vulnerable to unemployment.
- All study programmes include an opportunity for students to develop work-related skills and carry out work experience. Time in these work placements is extended for the

level 2 programme where students also gain qualifications in employable skills.

- Staff provide strong and impartial careers information, advice and guidance, ensuring that students are placed on the right post-16 courses and, as a result, retention to the end of Year 13 is high.
- Entry requirements onto academic courses have been raised to ensure that a higher proportion of students have the basic skills needed to succeed.
- Students achieve well after sixth form, many gaining places on university courses or apprenticeship schemes in employment.
- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are strong in vocational subjects, where students' progress is consistently above national averages.
- Achievement in academic subjects is broadly average and has not improved significantly since the previous inspection. In 2017, there were some disappointing results in a number of subjects, including mathematics, chemistry, history and psychology. Leaders have acted with speed and vigour to improve the provision in these subjects for students currently on roll.
- More teaching is consistently good in the sixth form than in the rest of the school, which accounts for the better progress which students make from their starting points. Teachers have high expectations of students and plan lessons which support the development of essential skills such as essay writing. Teachers use questioning effectively to challenge students' thinking and provide precise feedback to improve work.
- The school's procedures to support students' personal development and welfare are as strong as in the rest of the school.
- Arrangements to safeguard students are effective.
- Students' attendance and punctuality are good.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They participate in a range of enrichment opportunities, including exercising leadership, which make a strong contribution to the life of the school.



## School details

Unique reference number	117518
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10041764

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,039
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Lawson
Headteacher	Anthony Fitzpatrick
Telephone number	01438 222 500
Website	<a href="http://www.barnwellschool.co.uk">www.barnwellschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@barnwell.herts.sch.uk">head@barnwell.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	19–20 January 2016

## Information about this school

- Barnwell School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school has two sites, one mostly for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and one for Years 10 to 13.
- The sixth form is part of the 'Stevenage Sixth' consortium, sharing provision with four local schools. A small proportion of key stage 4 pupils receive some of their education at the North Herts. Education Support Centre.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. A small proportion of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. There is an average proportion of pupils who

speaking English as an additional language.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, and those pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has become a Foundation School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school, based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Four inspectors carried out the inspection over two days.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 46 classes, covering a wide range of subjects. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed group sessions, tutor periods, assemblies, extra-curricular activities, lunchtime and breaktimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other school leaders, governors, the local authority's school improvement partner and staff. A telephone conversation took place with staff from the alternative provider attended by pupils in the school.
- Discussions took place with various groups of pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors considered the views of 60 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 56 free-text responses. Inspectors analysed parent surveys gathered by the school over the past year. Inspectors took account of the 135 pupil-survey responses and the 71 from staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and analysed performance information for past and current pupils.
- The school's website and a wide range of documentation were reviewed, including: policies; minutes of governors' meetings; the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; and behaviour and attendance records.

## Inspection team

Vivien Corrie-Wing, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Copping	Ofsted Inspector
Carole Herman	Ofsted Inspector
John Mitcheson	Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018