

Inspection of Barton Court Grammar School

Longport, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1PH

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in March 2014 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for nearly six years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a harmonious community. Pupils respect the rights of others. They mix together well and have no concerns about bullying. Pupils understand the importance of helping others to keep safe and keeping themselves safe. They know who to go to if they are worried about something.

Pupils are very keen to learn. Attendance is above national levels. In lessons, pupils are often inspired by the passion for the subject shown by their teachers. Pupils work hard, think for themselves and enjoy grappling with problems together. They sustain concentration well. There is rarely any low-level disruption to interrupt their learning.

Leaders and teachers have very high expectations of pupils. Most pupils meet this challenge and achieve very well across the curriculum. Some pupils need more help in order to reach the high targets set for them.

Pupils benefit from a vast array of opportunities to enrich their education. Pupils take part in local and national activities such as mathematics and science competitions and theatre festivals. Many pupils also enjoy a wide range of clubs and sports teams. Many pupils willingly take on responsibilities in school.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for an ambitious, academic curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects in depth in both key stages 3 and 4. Virtually all pupils study the GCSE subjects that make up the EBacc. Pupils study for GCSEs in three sciences, at least one foreign language, religious studies, humanities and creative subjects as well as English and mathematics. Pupils' attainment at GCSE is well above the national average.

Capable subject leaders use their subject expertise to plan what pupils need to know, remember and understand. Curriculum plans set out logically how pupils will be taught new knowledge to build on what they covered before.

During lessons, teachers expect pupils to work hard. The vast majority of pupils are engaged and diligent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and pupils are curious to learn. This leads to interesting discussions, which deepen pupils' learning. Teachers use assessment systematically to check for gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils are very willing to do corrections to improve their work. Sometimes, however, teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils have remembered and fully understood what they have learned before moving on. This means that occasionally some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are left behind or continue to make similar mistakes as before. Teachers do not consistently adapt their teaching to meet the specific learning needs of pupils with SEND well enough.

Leaders have made sure that personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is expertly planned. Pupils develop their understanding of cultural and social issues very well. PSHE topics link with other subjects so that pupils connect their learning. Well-developed careers education is an important part of the curriculum.

Leaders plan a wide range of enrichment activities for pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised. Much of the enrichment comes through lessons, as well as through pupils' high participation in extra-curricular activities. Highly committed staff enable pupils to benefit from experiences beyond that necessary for exam success. This promotes pupils' personal development very well. Many pupils hold leadership roles. They successfully organise events to raise money for local charities.

Leaders have improved the range of courses available to students in the sixth form. These are better suited to students' interests and starting points than in the past. Teaching in the sixth form is very strong, which has led to improved results and very high attainment. Students have many opportunities beyond lessons to help them develop skills and characteristics to prepare them for their next steps. However, leaders do not check who has taken up which opportunity. This limits the effectiveness of the opportunities made available to students. Some sixth form students, and a few younger pupils, do not feel fully involved in school life.

Governors, senior and subject leaders act decisively to address relative weaknesses. For example, leadership and teaching in mathematics has been strengthened. Younger pupils are learning French with gusto due to a new approach to teaching languages.

Staff feel that leaders support their well-being and workload well. Leaders provide staff with extensive training opportunities. Teachers particularly value the guidance they receive from curriculum leaders, and the way staff share expertise to improve each other's subject teaching.

The large majority of parents have a positive view of the school and many are delighted by the academic and enrichment opportunities provided for their children. A few parents have some concerns about leaders' emphasis on pupils' academic achievements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have taken effective steps to strengthen their systems for safeguarding. Records of those that work at the school are well organised. Staff have been well trained and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Members of the safeguarding team use their expertise and knowledge about individual pupils well when deciding on appropriate next steps. Leaders provide support for pupils in school and also work tirelessly to help pupils and families get the support they need

from other agencies. Leaders place a high priority on support for the mental health of pupils and staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are determined that all pupils follow an ambitious, academic curriculum and leaders set challenging targets. Most pupils thrive and achieve very well. Other pupils, including some with SEND, struggle to remember what they have been taught. Some cannot apply their knowledge when faced with unfamiliar contexts. Teaching needs to adapt to ensure that the right knowledge is always embedded in long-term memory to enable pupils to perform more complex tasks.
- Sixth-form leaders do not systematically promote students' non-qualification activities. This constrains students' personal development and preparation for their next steps. Leaders should enable all students to participate in meaningful activities to develop confidence, character and resilience, and other desirable skills for future study and employment

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137474
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10123541
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	968
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	239
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dr W Speed
Headteacher	Jonathan Hopkins
Website	www.bartoncourt.org
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- One pupil carries out their learning at The Canterbury Inclusion Service City & Coastal College provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in March 2014 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for nearly six years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made most outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers and other leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of English, mathematics, science, history, French, art and design and PSHE. Inspectors discussed curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited about the curriculum.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. The school's single central record was reviewed.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, and two trustees, including the chair of the trust. The chair of the local governing body joined the meeting by telephone.
- Inspectors considered the views of 68 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the 254 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and parents' free-text responses.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school. Inspectors took account of the 173 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Yasmin Maskatiya	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Swan	Ofsted Inspector
Keith Pailthorpe	Ofsted Inspector

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