

# Inspection of Barnwell School

Barnwell, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 9SW

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Inspection dates: 24 and 25 November 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Barnwell is a warm, welcoming, and friendly school. Pupils are well-mannered, they hold doors open for each other. Pupils behave well around the school. Pupils say that they enjoy school and that on the rare occasions when bullying happens, staff deal with it quickly. They want to do well in lessons, contributing well to class discussions and showing curiosity in the questions they ask. Pupils listen closely to their teachers in lessons.

Even though the school is based on two sites, it feels like one school. Pupils benefit from consistent routines and a strong induction programme. They move sensibly when they need to change.

Sixth-form students play a full part in the life of the school and the community. All students undertake voluntary work, such as charitable work with people with dementia. They are well prepared for the next stage after school. Students have the opportunity to complete pre-apprenticeship programmes, work placements and workshops with universities. Students are enthusiastic about school and say they are 'well-looked after'.

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

Despite the pandemic, leaders have made significant improvements with leadership, the curriculum and teaching. Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. Teachers deliver the well-designed curriculum confidently. Since the previous inspection, weaknesses with the science curriculum and its delivery have been addressed.

Leaders have carefully considered what pupils need to know and be able to do to secure their next stage of education, employment, or training. This includes ensuring more pupils study the subjects for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The take up of modern foreign languages is increasing.

Pupils enjoy their learning in a range of subjects. Curriculum planning is strong, and teachers consistently use teaching methods to help pupils remember key learning over time. For example, Year 8 pupils spoke eloquently about their prior learning of the gothic conventions of 'Dracula' in English. Year 12 law students easily recall key acts, dates, and technical elements of the legal aid process.

Sixth-form students develop good study skills. For example, they appreciate watching 'Ted Talks' to complement their learning. They read regularly and widely. Younger pupils also avidly read a wide range of texts. However, the studying and reading habits of pupils in Years 9 to 11 are not as well-established. Leaders have plans in place to address this.

Pupils who struggle to read, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well-supported. Leaders carefully check pupils' reading ability and alter their reading programmes to suit. Pupils improve their reading quickly. Leaders also check pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding and take immediate action to address these. To illustrate, Year 11 pupils can stay longer at school to revisit aspects taught during the pandemic.

Pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. The special educational needs coordinator and her team know the pupils well. Teachers regularly contribute to pupils' support plans so that adjustments can be made if needed. Staff are knowledgeable about suitable therapeutic approaches to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who need these. The number of exclusions has significantly reduced over time.

Leaders prioritise the wider development of pupils. Through the curriculum, pupils learn the school values of PRIDE (to be passionate, respectful, innovative, determined, and empathetic). This learning is interwoven with a well-considered curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, receive effective careers education. Career advice, discussions with employers and other opportunities continued virtually during the national lockdowns. Pupils also have a broad offer of extra-curricular activities. However, a significant minority of pupils who responded to the Ofsted pupil survey, state that they rarely or never take part.

Over time, governors have effectively held leaders to account for the quality of provision. Staff are particularly appreciative of their and leaders' support with staff well-being and workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils well and are alert to the local risks that face the pupils at Barnwell. Staff access training with other external agencies, including the police. Leaders ensure staff remain up to date with information about online safety, sexual harassment, and county lines. Staff know how to report concerns and do so quickly. Leaders liaise effectively with other external services to make sure vulnerable pupils get the help they need.

Pupils learn about staying safe through assemblies, form time and the PSHE curriculum.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Studying habits, such as reading widely about a topic, and reading for pleasure are not well-established in Years 9 to 11. Some pupils are not developing a deep

and rich body of knowledge and vocabulary over time. Leaders should continue to drive forward their plans for improvement so that pupils cultivate a love for reading.

- While the school provides a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests, there is a significant minority of pupils who do not make use of these opportunities. This limits some pupils' wider development. Leaders should raise the profile of enrichment so that more pupils make the most of what is on offer.

## 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.

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117518
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200518
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,154
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	109
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jo Lawson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anthony Fitzpatrick
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.barnwellschool.co.uk">www.barnwellschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 and 18 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school has two sites. One is used mostly for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the other is used for Years 10 to 13.
- The school uses one unregistered and two registered providers of alternative provision. A small number of pupils attend one of these.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, design technology, history, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the provision for reading, PSHE, relationships, sex and health education and religious education. Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans, visited assembly, visited tutor time, spoke with pupils and leaders.
- Inspectors met with the leader in charge of SEND and scrutinised documentation for SEND. Inspectors observed support for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's information on behaviour, bullying and attendance. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with governors, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered the 63 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and the 34 free-text comments. Inspectors considered the 95 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 247 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Liz Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Marc White	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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