

Inspection of Bartholomew School

Witney Road, Eynsham, Witney, Oxfordshire OX29 4AP

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2013.

The headteacher of this school is Craig Thomas. This school is part of Eynsham Partnership Academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Brown, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Julian Soanes.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this exceptional school. The shared ambition of supporting pupils to feel 'happy, safe and challenged' is realised fully. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and purposeful. This means that lessons are highly productive. A studious culture pervades the school.

Everyone benefits from carefully planned activities that build pupils' character. Students in the sixth form relish the numerous opportunities to be positive role models for younger pupils. For example, they run the school council and through this they contribute to the school's development plan. This teaches them crucial skills, such as project leadership and time management. The house system adds to pupils' sense of belonging. Many pupils take on leadership roles, such as becoming 'house representatives' and all pupils throw themselves into the inter-house competitions to earn much desired house points. Sixth-form students act as 'reading ambassadors' and 'numeracy ambassadors', providing vital support to younger pupils. These opportunities, and many more, characterise the strong sense of community in the school.

Pupils make excellent use of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. For example, lots attend musical theatre society, Mandarin club, medical society, chess club and many more. They undertake a wide range of trips, visits and competitions, including in art and mathematics, alongside a multitude of sporting activities.

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

The curriculum is meticulously planned. Staff are relentless in their pursuit of excellence for all pupils. The programmes of study in key stages 3 and 4 are broad and ambitious. Precise curriculum design ensures that new knowledge builds on pupils' prior learning. In the sixth form, students follow tailored programmes of study that support their needs and ambitions.

Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve very strongly. The school responds immediately when pupils' performance is not in line with its aspirational end points. Forensic analysis of outcomes helps teachers understand how to support pupils more effectively. The school is adamant that nothing should be a barrier to learning. As a result, staff provide extensive support in the classroom and beyond. Pupils with SEND are supported with care and the school's recent improvements for these pupils means that these pupils are now achieving really well.

Teachers are experts in their subjects and continually strive to enhance their own subject knowledge. All staff receive relevant and stimulating training. The school makes good use of links with local academia, for example an 'historian in residence' from a local university delivers additional professional development as well as lectures to students in the sixth form. This prepares students well for higher

education. Teachers present information clearly. Staff responsible for leading subjects provide teachers with specialist guidance about the best strategies to use to maximise pupils' learning. This is continually evaluated to ensure that staff use the most productive and highly tailored approaches. Teachers methodically review learning to check for gaps in pupils' knowledge or areas of misunderstanding. These are addressed swiftly. This means that pupils achieve consistently highly, particularly in the sixth form.

Everyone promotes reading. Pupils learn and use subject-specific vocabulary very effectively. Some pupils who have fallen behind in reading before they join the school receive specialist support, to quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to read well.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable because staff have clear and consistent expectations. They are punctual to lessons and move around the site sensibly. The school is relentless in ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and on time. There is a strong culture of care. Pastoral staff get to know families well. This enables them to take effective and timely actions if pupils' attendance begins to falter. The school works to remove barriers tirelessly.

The wider personal development of pupils is a shining strength. Through the 'Learning for Life' programme, pupils study a carefully crafted curriculum that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. They learn about tolerance and diversity. Assemblies and external speakers support this. Pupils learn to form balanced opinions, practise debating and some join the 'Big questions club' to extend these skills even further. Pupils receive purposeful careers information, education, advice and guidance. A wide range of education and training providers engage with pupils regularly. This provides valuable inspiration and insights into many possible careers and routes into further study. Students in the sixth form receive appropriate support with university applications. The school evaluates its provision systematically and continually seeks to strengthen it further.

Trustees, governors, leaders and staff all share the same ambitious and inclusive vision. Together, trustees and governors hold leaders to account intelligently, rigorously and effectively. 'Aspiration, collaboration and excellence' is at the heart of everything. Leaders continually seek ways to improve and share their considerable expertise. The school is outward facing and welcomes collaboration with other schools. Staff are justifiably proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137919
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10321947
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
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	1363
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	278
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julian Soanes
CEO of trust	David Brown
Headteacher	Craig Thomas
Website	www.bartholomew.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Eynsham Partnership Academy trust.
- There have been several changes to leadership positions since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2017. The chair of the board of governors is in her third year of office and the chair of the trust in his fourth.
- A small number of pupils currently access alternative provision. This provision comes from seven different providers, five of which are registered. Most of these pupils are accessing alternative provision on a part-time basis for a limited period. Most of their education is on site at school.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and

engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders. They met with a wide range of staff and pupils. They considered the responses to parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- A wide range of the school's documentation was taken into consideration, including policies and the school's development plan.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing board and some trustees, including both chairs. She also scrutinised minutes of their meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, history, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gemma Williamson	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Rees	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Morrison	Ofsted Inspector

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