

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Barton Court Grammar School

Longport, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1PH

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

Outcome

Barton Court Grammar School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Jonathan Hopkins. This school is part of the Barton Court 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, Kirstin Cardus, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robert Waterson

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this inclusive and caring community. All staff have high expectations for pupils to succeed and grow in every aspect of school life. Pupils are keen to learn and most are successful in public examinations. As one parent commented, 'My child thrives at Barton Court and teachers have a genuine interest in my child's education and future.'

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are courteous, respectful and supportive of each other. They share the high expectations that leaders and staff have of them and appreciate their support. The school is a happy and harmonious community, where diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Pupils feel safe. They know that they have many staff they can speak to if they have any worries.

There is an abundance of high-quality opportunities for pupils to develop their character, talents and interests. For example, high numbers of pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. There is a plethora of clubs such as poetry writing club and crochet club. Trips, both national and international, abound. Pupils are trained as well-being mentors to help others. Sixth-form students organise school events and are excellent role models to younger pupils.

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

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. In key stage 4, all pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects alongside others chosen from a wide range. In the sixth form, the curriculum offers a choice of academic and vocational subjects, thereby, catering for a wide range of students' interests and potential career pathways. Throughout the school, staff are skilled in ensuring learning meets pupils' individual needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are quick to identify the needs of pupils with SEND and to provide extra support if it is needed.

Pupils arrive at the school with high levels of literacy, which is enhanced through the school's focus on developing oracy and reading. For those pupils who need a little extra help with reading, prompt and effective support is provided. This enables those pupils to quickly become more confident and fluent readers.

The school has thought carefully about the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. Teachers formally assess pupils' learning regularly. Teachers then provide clear feedback that helps pupils to improve their work. Pupils are assiduous in making these improvements because they are highly motivated to succeed.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. New learning is explained clearly and linked to what pupils already know. For example, in a Year 13 biology class, students applied their knowledge of mitochondria to a genetic disease affecting the eyes. Teachers provide lots of opportunities for pupils to recap previous learning. In the classroom, many teachers use skilful questioning to ensure pupils have understood new concepts. However, on occasions, some teachers do not thoroughly check that all pupils have grasped new material before moving on. This means that misconceptions are not always addressed and learning is not as secure as it could be.

The school has carefully designed a high-quality programme for pupils' broader development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to be safe online and in the community. They have many opportunities to learn about different careers. For example, there is an annual careers fair and a variety of speakers give talks on employment opportunities and apprenticeships. The school provides meaningful activities for pupils to learn about fundamental British values and equality. As a result, pupils have a solid understanding of why these are important. The personal development programme prepares pupils well for life beyond school. Most pupils go on to prestigious universities or high-quality apprenticeships.

The school has strong systems in place to promote attendance. Attendance levels are high because most pupils value their education and enjoy coming to school. Where any difficulties arise with pupils attending school, staff work closely with families to resolve them.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They receive ongoing, high-quality training, including those new to teaching. They particularly appreciate the opportunities to work

collaboratively with other colleagues across the trust. Staff feel valued and supported by leaders in managing their workload. The trust and those responsible for governance are loyal and committed. They provide very effective support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not consistently check pupils' learning in the classroom. This means that, sometimes, pupils' misconceptions are missed and not addressed. Consequently, pupils' learning is not as secure as it could be. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding so that they are secure in what they know and understand before learning moves on.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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	137474
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10362398
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	1008
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	267
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Waterson
CEO of the trust	Kirstin Cardus
Headteacher	Jonathan Hopkins
Website	www.bartoncourt.org
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Barton Court Academy Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers of educational provision.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector held a meeting with the CEO of the trust, the finance officer of the trust and the vice-chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: English, geography and modern foreign languages; and art, mathematics and religious studies. For each group of subjects, inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential online staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential online pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nicky Archer

Ofsted Inspector

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