



# Barnwell School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117518  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280105  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Martin Cragg LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Barnwell
<b>School category</b>	Community		SG2 9SW
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 222500
<b>Number on roll</b>	915	<b>Fax number</b>	01438 222501
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs. Julie Ashley-Wren
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Richard Westergreen-Thorne

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280105
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Barnwell School is a mixed 11-18 community comprehensive school. The school has grown since the last inspection and is oversubscribed. With 915 pupils it is of average size. The 97 pupils in the sixth form have access to a range of courses through the new Stevenage 14-19 consortium of schools and colleges. There are two bases at the school, for pupils with visual impairment and for pupils with specific learning difficulties. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, with special educational needs (SEN) and with an SEN statement are broadly in line with the average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupils mainly come from Stevenage, from wards where there is a lower proportion of adults with higher education than nationally. The school has specialist Business and Enterprise status and is part of an Enterprise Pathfinder project. It is also the main centre for a consortium of extended school provision. The school's facilities are extensively used by the community each week.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The school is providing satisfactory education overall and some features of its work are good. There have been substantial improvements in the last three years. Overall, standards are below the national average but there is a strong trend of improvement. Increasingly, pupils make progress in line with national expectations. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well and enjoy their learning. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The strong focus on these aspects of the school in its development plan and professional development activity has improved the range of teaching styles in lessons. As yet these improvements have not been fully realised in the standards that pupils achieve but are an important factor in their increasing progress. The curriculum for pupils in the main school is good. Particular strengths are the flexible choices available in the pathways at Key Stage 4 and the impact of the school's Business and Enterprise specialist status. Care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The various aspects of the school council provide good opportunities for pupils to raise issues and to manage the action to be taken. Leadership and management of the school are good. A clear vision for the development of the school is shared by staff and governors. It provides a good foundation for improvement. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. Inspectors generally agree with the school's evaluation of its performance and this confirms the rigour of the school's systems for monitoring and evaluation. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has addressed most of the key issues. There is good capacity for further improvement and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Most students make satisfactory progress but a few fail to achieve at expected levels. This is partly due to students studying courses for which their prior attainment is low. The school has recently introduced a course to cater for pupils with less academic qualifications. However, the provision of alternative routes to higher education is limited. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory and the school has identified these as areas for development. The wider opportunities available to students assist their personal development and help to prepare them for a productive working life. Students are appreciative of the good standard of personal care and support they receive. The leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory but the impact of the new 14-19 consortium arrangements is not yet clear.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of pupils' learning in lessons to match the recent improvements made in the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that the quality of teachers' marking matches the standard of the best seen in the school so that pupils are clear what they must do to improve their work.
- Provide more courses in the sixth form which are appropriate

for the lower starting point of some students and which provide alternative routes to higher education.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The overall achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with attainment which is below the national average. There are generally fewer high-achieving pupils than might be expected. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach standards that are just below the national average. Results in all three core subjects have improved steadily in the last five years. By the end of Year 11, standards are below the national average but there has been significant improvement in the last two years, especially in the proportion achieving five or more higher grades at GCSE. Pupils make progress in line with the national average from Year 7 to Year 9 and from Year 9 to Year 11. In 2004, the progress of pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 was significantly below the national average although it was broadly average in English and mathematics. However, some pupils attained qualifications in vocational and work related courses which were not recognised in the 2004 evaluation of progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory progress. The school sets challenging targets for achievement which will bring pupils in line with or above the national average. These targets have almost been attained and there has been steady improvement towards them. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Pupils join the sixth form with attainment which is generally below average. In 2004, standards were well below average but improved in 2005, although they remain below average. However, pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils mature steadily as they progress through the school. They have clear views on school life and are confident to express them. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and are considerate of others. They are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons and other activities. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of life. There are good opportunities for them to meet and work with local business and community representatives. When given opportunities to take responsibility, they rise to the task. The school council is a vital and active group which has made a real difference to the life of the school. For example, its representatives have devised a charter of behaviour to achieve greater consistency across the school. Attendance levels are satisfactory and improving. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good but there are too few opportunities to develop their spirituality. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles, enjoy physical activities and actively involve themselves in a range of extra-curricular sports and games. They are clear on how to keep safe and about safety issues in general, and are well guided by the school in this respect.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory both in the main school and in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good and the progress of pupils overall is satisfactory. The schools' analysis of the quality of teaching matches that seen on the inspection. In almost all lessons pupils are well behaved, attentive and enjoy the work. Teachers have developed effective classroom management routines and most of the teaching has good pace and variety. There are a small number of lessons where pupils are not sufficiently challenged and where pace is slow. Overall, recent training has improved the quality of teaching; there is now a need to focus more on the quality of pupils' learning. Resources are used well to aid teaching. Support assistants provide very good help to pupils enabling them to make satisfactory progress. All pupils are aware of their target levels and grades. Their progress is well monitored by teachers and pastoral staff. Pupils' exercise books are well presented. In the best examples, teachers mark pupils' work well, with clear guidance on how they may improve. However, there is inconsistency and some marking is cursory and provides little guidance for pupils. In the sixth form, some work is too teacher-directed and there is insufficient emphasis on developing independent learning skills

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of the curriculum is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form where the range of courses does not fully meet the needs of all students. Statutory requirements are met. The main school curriculum provides good opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties, to progress and perform well. Learners are well served through the curriculum because work is matched to individual need by a variety of academic and vocational courses and through effective target setting. The flexible choices provided at Key Stage 4 give pupils appropriate access to vocational and work-related courses. The school's Business and Enterprise status is used effectively to provide a range of opportunities within school and in the wider community. Sporting, cultural and health opportunities are very good but provision in other subjects is more limited. The school's Business and Enterprise status also supports a strong work experience programme.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. In the sixth form it is satisfactory, although the quality of pastoral care is valued by students. The school provides a

caring and supportive environment. Teachers know the pupils well and work hard to provide a good level of guidance and support. Pupils are familiar with their targets and this helps them to improve their performance. Pupils are confident that they can turn to adults in school who will listen to them sympathetically and help them if they have problems. Arrangements for older pupils to mentor younger pupils are good as is the mentoring of older pupils by teachers. The provision for health, safety and well-being is good. Child protection procedures are securely in place and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties is good, with good levels of support both in school and through the school's effective links with outside agencies. Provision for careers guidance is good and pupils particularly value their work experience placements.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The vision and commitment of the head, fully supported by his senior and middle managers, have resulted in improved standards throughout the main school over the last three years. The head has successfully created a staff team which has the confidence to take action to improve the performance of pupils. The school is aware of its weaknesses and has rigorous systems in place to monitor and evaluate its progress. The school has many initiatives supported by a good programme of training and staff development. The focus on improving teaching is having a demonstrable effect on improving pupil progress. Planning is soundly based on the schools' three principles of 'Achievement, Community and Environment'. The development plan does not yet relate closely enough to the school's financial plan. Staff and resources are generally deployed well, with the clear aim of raising pupil achievement. The school has a strong and effective agenda to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion. There is regular contact with parents to discuss pupils' progress and many parents commented on the prompt response made by teachers to their concerns. The school works well with local partners and other agencies. Governors are committed to the school. They successfully hold the school to account and have a key influence in determining its future.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your co-operation and honest comments during our visit. We found your opinions about the school helpful and were very impressed with your maturity and positive attitude to school. The inspection found that your school is satisfactory overall but that it has some good features. It has improved significantly in the last three years. Results have improved steadily and you make progress which is very close to the national average. You generally behave well in lessons and around the school and get on well with each other. Your attendance is improving and is now average for the country. Teaching is generally good and you are given opportunities to learn in different ways. You have a good idea of your target levels and grades. Some teachers mark your work very well and give you advice on how to improve further. There is a good range of courses for you to choose from, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, the range is not as good. You benefit from good links with local businesses and a good range of sports and other activities. Teachers provide good guidance and care for you. The school council gives you good opportunities to take on issues and come up with solutions, which you have responded to successfully. There are some aspects of the school's work that need to improve. We feel that teaching has improved in the school and that the focus should now be on the way that you learn - perhaps giving you more responsibility for your own learning. We also want all the teachers' marking to be like the best that we saw, so that you know exactly what to improve and how to do so. We want the school to look at a wider range of courses in the sixth form, particularly for those students who may not achieve the highest results in Year 11. We are confident that your school can continue to improve. We wish you well in the future.