



Barton Court Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118916
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280434
Inspection dates 26 April 2006 to 27 April 2006
Reporting inspector David Butler HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Longport
School category	Foundation		Canterbury
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		CT1 1PH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01227 464600
Number on roll	885	Fax number	01227 781399
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs B Heap
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2000	Headteacher	Dr S Manning

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Barton Court Grammar is a co-educational selective school for students aged 11–18. It draws most of its students from the town of Canterbury and surrounding villages. The overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage. A small number of students have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school was designated as a specialist language college from September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of education and care for its students. This is also the school's own view. Learning takes place in a very safe, friendly and happy environment. Students achieve well and enjoy their education. They develop as confident and well-rounded individuals. Parents are very supportive of the school and the overwhelming majority feel it is doing a good job.

Students feel well cared for and supported but would benefit from more regular contact with their tutors. Students' behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and they are very caring towards each other. They adopt safe practices and know how to develop healthy lifestyles. Incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare and quickly dealt with. Teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes to learning but higher attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged by the tasks they are set in lessons. Systems are in place to identify students who are underachieving but students and their parents are not informed about how well they are doing compared to national standards in all subjects.

Students are offered a wide choice of GCSEs and GCE A levels and a good range of extra-curricular activities. The impact of the school's specialist status is reflected in the strong provision for languages and the many opportunities students have to take part in foreign visits and engage in cultural activities.

The school is well led and managed. Senior managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are capable of building on the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection. They are well supported by governors. Middle managers are generally effective but there is variation in the quality of their evaluation of teaching and learning and their skills in identifying key areas for improvement. The school works effectively with outside agencies and other partners to promote students' education and well-being. Resources are managed efficiently and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision in the sixth form is good. Students make good progress relative to their prior attainment and the overwhelming majority go on to university. In a few subjects students' achievement is below what it should be, reflecting variation in the quality of teaching. However, teaching overall is good. Students are offered a wide choice of subjects and extra-curricular activities. Students are generally well supported but there is inconsistency in the quality of assessment and reporting of progress across subjects. Students praise the good relationships they enjoy with staff but would welcome more regular contact with their tutors and better quality advice on careers and higher education. They play an active role in the life of the school and in supporting younger students. The sixth form is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

• Ensure higher attaining students are sufficiently challenged in lessons. • Inform students and their parents of how well they are doing compared to national expectations in all subjects. • Increase the amount of timetabled contact between tutors and students. • Improve the skills of heads of subject and faculty leaders in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and identifying key areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are high and students achieve well.

Students enter the school with standards that are well above national averages and, as would be expected, GCSE and GCE A level results are high in relation to national figures. A more significant measure of the school's effectiveness is the progress students make in comparison with similar students in other schools. This is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. There is some variation in students' achievement in different subjects and the proportion of students attaining grades A*/A in GCSE is not as high as it should be. Evidence presented by the school on the performance of students currently in Year 11 indicates GCSE results will show further improvement, including better achievement at the highest grades. The small number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well. Almost nine out of ten students stay on into the sixth form and the overwhelming majority of these go on to university. The targets set for students are challenging and most are being met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good.

Students are friendly, considerate and very supportive of each other. They have a strong sense of moral and social responsibility. Their cultural development is very good, helped by the many opportunities they have for visits and contact with people from other countries. Their spirituality is less well developed because of the limited opportunities they have to take part in collective acts of worship and for personal reflection.

Students feel very safe in school and incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare. Attendance is well above average. They are well aware of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Their excellent attitudes to learning, attendance and behaviour help them gain maximum benefit from their education. They enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities where they can join students from other years. The mixed aged tutor groups also enable older students to act as role models for younger ones. However, due to the constraints of the accommodation, there are only rare opportunities for the school to come together as a community.

Students benefit from the individual counselling sessions they have with their tutors but, because tutor groups meet infrequently, they do not have many timetabled opportunities to discuss common concerns and issues. Older students can apply to be prefects. Students' views are sought through questionnaires and discussions. A new school council has been established but its impact in representing the student voice has so far been limited. Year 10 students benefit from enterprise activities and their week of work experience. Sixth form students develop team building skills and are helped to prepare for university, for example by a course in money management. Students have the opportunity to support work in primary schools in physical education and performing arts. Students also sponsor a child in Africa. However, there are relatively few opportunities for younger students to take responsibility, engage with employers and the local community or develop their financial capability.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Activities are usually carefully planned to make the best use of the hundred-minute lessons, developing students' knowledge and skills systematically. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and of course requirements, enabling them to prepare students well for GCSE and A level examinations. Students are keen to be successful, and work confidently in lessons. Relationships in lessons are very good. Some effective use of computers to enrich teaching and learning was observed. Students feel well supported by their teachers because they readily provide additional help and further explanations. Written work is marked regularly, sometimes with detailed feedback on its quality. Students are aware of their targets but are not always clear about the precise steps they need to take to reach them. In lessons, higher attaining students are not always challenged enough because teachers make insufficient use of information from assessments to help set really stretching tasks.

Newly qualified teachers are well supported. There is a good programme of professional development for all staff, including teachers sharing good practice through joint lesson observations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided for students of all ages is good. Students in Years 7 to 9 study all the National Curriculum subjects, with the addition of Latin, drama and an introductory course in Chinese. Students' needs are met through a wide range of GCSE and GCE A level options and extra-curricular activities. The school's specialist college status has led it to the introduction of an extensive range of modern foreign languages. A very wide variety of trips, visits and extra-curricular activities is provided. Citizenship is taught as part of religious education and personal, social and health education.

There is a well-planned programme of topics but the time allocated for these subjects is low, limiting the range and depth of what can be covered. The school is addressing this through doubling the time allocated to this area of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good. The school provides a very safe environment. Child protection and health and safety procedures are rigorous and well understood. The canteen provides a range of healthy eating options and students are otherwise encouraged to live healthy lifestyles. The rare incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are dealt with promptly. There are very good procedures in place to ensure the smooth transfer of students from their primary schools. The few students with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported. The provision for students with medical needs is excellent. A system is in place for identifying and supporting students who are underachieving or showing poor attitudes to learning. Parents receive three reports each year. However, students and their parents are not kept sufficiently informed about how the standards they reach compare to those nationally in all subjects. There are some temporary shortcomings in the support for careers education and guidance which the school is taking appropriate steps to address.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. Managers have a clear sense of direction which focuses on raising achievement and improving the well-being of all students. Senior managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school based on a range of data, observations of lessons and parent and student questionnaires. However, an important minority of both parents and students feel that insufficient efforts are made to take account of their views and concerns. The school is aware of this and is seeking ways of improving consultation.

Senior managers have demonstrated their capacity to bring about improvement. Since the last inspection, standards have improved, the curriculum has been broadened to better meet the needs of learners and the school has been awarded specialist status for modern languages. Radical changes have been made to the structure of the school day to ensure more efficient use of time.

Governors know the school well and provide good support. They are closely involved in developments and are prepared to ask challenging questions about the school's performance. They discharge their statutory duties well, although the requirement to hold a daily collective act of worship is not met. Faculty and subject leaders have been made more accountable for the performance of the subjects they are responsible for. Some good practice is emerging but there is more work to do in improving middle managers' skills in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and identifying areas for improvement.

The school works effectively with other providers and agencies to promote the education and well-being of its students. The school benefits from the good links it has developed with local universities and initial teacher training providers. Resources are used efficiently and good use is being made of the additional funding the school has received from its specialist status. The school provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
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	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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	2	
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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

We were pleased to meet many of you when we inspected your school recently. Your contributions were very helpful in giving us a better understanding of your school and we greatly appreciated the friendly and courteous way you received us.

We agree with the view of many of you that your school provides a good quality of education and that you are well cared for and supported. We were particularly impressed by your positive attitudes towards learning, your excellent behaviour and the way you care for each other. You generally make good progress in your learning and achieve well but more of you should be attaining the highest grades at GCSE. The overwhelming majority of you told us that you enjoy school.

What could be improved:

- Teachers need to ensure you are all sufficiently challenged by the tasks they set.
- You and your parents need to be given a clearer idea of how well you are doing in terms of national standards in all your subjects.
- You should have more timetabled contact with your tutors.
- Checking on the quality of teaching and learning needs to be improved in some subjects.

We are confident that the school will be able to make these improvements and hope you will help make your school even better in the future.