



# Bartholomew School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 123239  
**LEA** Oxfordshire LEA  
**Inspection number** 281439  
**Inspection dates** 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jennifer Smith

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Witney Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Eynsham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Witney OX29 4AP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 881430
<b>Number on roll</b>	1010	<b>Fax number</b>	01865 883973
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr A Blakeborough
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr A S Hamilton

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	281439

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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

Bartholomew School is a six form entry mixed rural comprehensive school, with a moderately sized sixth form, serving the area around the village of Eynsham. The students come from a relatively advantaged catchment area and their attainment on entry is slightly above the national average. The number of students identified as having learning difficulties is below average, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Few students have English as an additional language. The school achieved specialist technology status in 2003 and also holds the Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards.

The school role has been steadily growing for a number of years and few students leave or join the school during the first five years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of strong features, providing good value for money. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and his senior team who share a common vision for the school's future direction. The senior leadership team know the strengths of the school well and have identified an appropriate agenda for future developments. They are determined to do even better. The governance of the school is good. The school was last inspected in 2000; the areas identified for development at that time have all been addressed. The school has good capacity to improve still further.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4, in Year 11 are significantly above the national average. Similarly, results at the end of Year 9 are above the national average and have improved over the last 3 years.

Students' behaviour in class and around the school is almost always good and their attitude to learning is invariably positive, which ensures that they make the most of their opportunities in the school. However, a few students, usually boys, are less well focused in a small minority of lessons, so they do not make as much progress as they might.

Students enjoy coming to school and they reported that they feel safe. They are encouraged to lead healthy life styles and contribute well to the school community and that of the local and wider world. Very effective partnership work has taken place with local primary schools ensuring that students' transition to secondary school is successful. This, together with the work that Bartholomew School undertakes as part of the technology initiative has helped to ensure the school is held in high regard by other schools. Students are given every encouragement to do well and the care, guidance and support given to students is very good.

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning is predominantly good, with some very good features. However, opportunities are not always made for pupils to learn with sufficient independence and to make full use of the school's 'virtual learning environment'. Although considerable progress has been made in assessment strategies, inconsistencies still exist across departments, of which the school is aware.

The curriculum offered is satisfactory and all students in Years 10 and 11 study information and communication technology (ICT) and have good access to languages and technology. However, the school has not yet sufficiently exploited the flexibility of providing vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 or the sixth form. The specialist status in technology has led to much improved resources and enabled very effective links with the local primary schools. In addition, a number of enrichment activities have taken place in mathematics, ICT, technology and science.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Sixth form effectiveness and efficiency are good although the school judges these as satisfactory. Overall, standards in examination courses in the sixth form are above the national average with a high number of students achieving the top grades. Teaching is good and teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Relationships are good and students are highly motivated. There is a wide range of academic courses on offer but the vocational provision is narrow and links with other providers are insufficiently developed. Standards are above average with a clear upward trend in pass rates including those at higher grades. About half of Year 11 typically stays on and retention rates are very high. There is a shortage of space for students. Tutors are well led and provide good support for students, for example in monitoring progress. Students are very positive about their experiences and they make a strong contribution to the life of the school for example in supporting younger students and organising events.

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

- increase the range of vocational courses in the curriculum for 14-19 years olds
- create more opportunities for independent learning, including the use of the 'virtual learning environment'
- ensure greater consistency across departments in relation to assessment for learning

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' attainment on entering the school in Year 7 is slightly above average. Achievement and standards are good overall and targets are suitably challenging. Standards are significantly higher than the national average by the end of Year 11. Over two thirds of students attained five or more A\*-C grades over the past three years with a strong upward trend in results in the past four years.

Girls perform better than boys throughout the school, although this is partly explained by the significantly higher attainment of girls on entry to the school. Apart from this dissimilarity there are no significant differences between other groups of students; those with learning difficulties making good progress throughout their time in the school. Achievement overall is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9.

Standards in the core subjects at the end of Year 9 have been significantly above average over the past five years with improvement year on year in the past three years. Students' achievement in relation to their prior attainment has varied, with achievement in science the strongest and that in mathematics the weakest in 2005. In English it is notable that for one year group students' relatively weak performance in tests in Year 9 was replaced by very strong performance at GCSE for the same students.

Standards in the sixth form were above the national average in 2004 and 2005, having been below the national average in 2003. The school's rising trend in the overall sixth

form pass rates and in higher grade passes has been particularly strong since 2001. Achievement is good overall.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development is good. Students spoke very positively about their school, they feel safe and know that any concerns that they have will be addressed. They take an active part in school life and generally behave well around school and in lessons and are usually polite. Vulnerable students make very good progress in their personal development. Students' attendance is good and well above the national average; they arrive punctually both to school and to lessons. They enjoy their education, participating in a wide range of activities. The percentage of students staying on into the sixth form is lower than in most schools, although a large proportion of those who leave after Year 11 continue in education or enter employment.

Students understand the importance of physical exercise to leading a healthy lifestyle; many take the opportunity of the various extra-curricular sporting activities. Students' spiritual awareness is good; their moral and social development is also good because of the very good relationships fostered throughout the school and the encouragement to join in a variety of activities. They show an understanding of other cultures, for example, through their study of poetry in English, art, geography and the school's link with Uganda.

Students are fully involved in the community through the School Council, which is very effective in listening to their views and in making improvements to school life. They contribute well to fundraising and charitable activities. They develop workplace skills well through good levels of literacy and knowledge about information and communications technology. Sixth form students provide invaluable support as counsellors and mentors to Year 7 students, enabling them to settle quickly into school life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good both in the main school and the sixth form leading to good progress by the majority of students. Planning for lessons is effective and where teachers use lively starters to lessons it ensures that everyone is engaged in the learning process from the outset, setting a really good tone. In these lessons the last segment of the lesson, the plenary, is also used effectively with teachers checking learning and offering feedback to students on how they may improve further. Independent learning was also being promoted in the good lessons and positive use was being made of the improved ICT facilities. There is still further scope to develop the use of ICT in the 'virtual learning environment' across all departments. In a particularly effective Year

7 science lesson, the teacher organised a series of experiments which encouraged students to apply different learning techniques in response to the challenges set.

In the few less effective lessons, expectations of students were lower, lessons lacked sufficient pace and small groups of students, usually boys, failed to engage fully and became restless. In these lessons students were given fewer opportunities to learn and research independently becoming too reliant on the teachers' input.

Assessment of learning takes place in most subjects through regular testing, helping teachers track the progress of their students. Many teachers engage students in peer and self assessment, highlighting the steps they need to take to improve further. This is a positive outcome of the work the school has undertaken on the 'assessment for learning' initiative. Students reported that where this type of assessment occurred they found it particularly helpful. However, it is not yet consistent across all departments. Homework is not always consistently set by teachers leaving some students too much to do and others with none for several days.

In the main school and the sixth form, students benefit greatly from the subject knowledge of their teachers. In one scholarly sixth form history lesson students benefited from a first-class range of resource material, written by different historians. This stimulated an excellent debate between the students, facilitated by the teacher, and helped to develop a deeper understanding of the differing view points of historians.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum provision is satisfactory both in the main school and in the sixth form. It satisfies the statutory requirements and in the main meets the needs of the students. Whilst a choice of some vocational courses exists for students in Years 10 and 11, the range is very limited. This is particularly marked in the sixth form. The school recognises the need to develop this aspect of its curriculum further.

The school's specialist technology status means that all students study technology and ICT at Key Stage 4. Additionally over 90% of students take a foreign language and 12% choose to take two. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is largely academic but makes some provision for alternative education and courses for students who might have otherwise struggled.

Students that are particularly gifted and talented are appropriately identified in each year group and are encouraged to register for the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY). This is a promising start to the development, which is well co-ordinated and provides a valuable challenge for pupils in a number of curriculum areas.

This academic focus is maintained in the sixth form where the school offers advanced and advanced supplementary courses in a wide range of subjects. As a consequence only about 60% of the students in Year 11 stay on in the school with the remainder exploring options at college, in other schools or in the workplace.

The school provides a good variety of extra curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and an extensive range of school visits and residential trips, for example to Russia, the battlefields of Europe and foreign language exchanges. Good links have been forged through the technology status of the school with Siemens Engineering and local businesses.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff provide good care for the students; they are encouraging and supportive. There is a very well-organised pastoral system, which one parent described as 'second to none'. Students' individual needs are effectively identified and addressed; information about them is shared appropriately with staff. The provision for vulnerable students is outstanding; those with emotional difficulties are extremely well supported. There are very good links with other agencies such as the Connexions service, a school nurse and a school counsellor. Younger students are ably guided by sixth formers. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities are effectively guided by teaching assistants and helped through appropriate support programmes, for example in English and mathematics. The few students who have English as an additional language are also supported well. Child protection measures are appropriately in place. Provision for careers education is good, and there is very good guidance for students undertaking university selection.

A range of healthy eating options is available and, whilst other foods are currently available, plans are being implemented to widen the range of healthy food. A variety of physical activities enables students to experience healthy lifestyles, including extensive extra curricular pursuits.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a well led school. The headteacher has been in post a little over a year and together with his able senior team has provided a new impetus and drive towards further improvements in the school. Astute budgetary management over the last year has ensured that financial sustainability is now more secure. As a result of the budgetary changes it has been possible to make a much needed increase in departmental allowances for additional curriculum resources. The nationally required changes to the structure of the teaching force in the school have been effectively managed.

The school now has more robust self evaluation structures in place, providing clear direction for future developments. The link between departmental annual reviews, the school improvement planning process, teachers' performance management and lesson observations is good. However, the new system has had insufficient time to impact significantly on standards. The senior team have a keen eye on what student achievement data is telling them whilst the understanding and use of data is becoming more widespread throughout the school.

Middle managers are acutely aware of their responsibilities and have a perceptive understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their departments. They consider the recent changes in departmental annual reviews and performance management will lead to improvements in teaching and learning.

Governance of the school is a particular strength. Governors know the school well through their links with departments, visiting the school at work and being fully involved in the planning and review cycles. They provide very good support and challenge to the headteacher and his senior team.

The school regularly seek the views of parents and a significant number of parents responded to the parental questionnaire during the inspection. Comments received were consistently positive although there was some justifiable concern about the consistency with which homework is set.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### 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>	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	
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
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

<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	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<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	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	Yes

<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**

Students

You will remember that we visited your school recently to inspect the quality of education. We spoke to a number of you during the course of the inspection and we would like to thank you for the views you provided about your school. This helped to give the inspectors an added dimension to understanding the school's strengths and areas where it needs to do further work. We hope that you and your parents will take the opportunity to read the full report on the Ofsted web site.

Bartholomew School is a good school, which takes very good care of you and helps you to become well rounded citizens. It provides you with a good education and effective lessons that help you achieve well. We saw that you behave well in lessons and around the school and that the vast majority of you enjoy coming to school and aspire to reach high standards. Specialist technology status has enabled the school to provide you with very good ICT facilities and the creation of a 'virtual learning environment'. We have asked the school to develop this initiative further as we think it will help you make even more progress and enable you to access additional information for your homework. We also noted that the school only provides limited opportunities for vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Again we have asked the school to consider what it provides in this area.

Your achievements in national tests and examinations are good as a result of good teaching and your desire to do well. We think that if you were sometimes set more challenging work and had to work more independently in a few more lessons you could achieve even higher standards. You told us about how you are assessed and the good quality feedback teachers usually give you. However, you pointed out that this is not the case in every lesson. On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you every success in your studies and for the examinations this summer!

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector