



Barnwood Park Arts College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115720
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290315
Inspection dates 27–28 November 2006
Reporting inspector Linda McGill HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	St Lawrence Road
School category	Community		Gloucester
Age range of pupils	11–16		GL4 3QU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01452 530389
Number on roll (school)	720	Fax number	01452 530380
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Paul Rosewell
		Headteacher	Gill Pyatt
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	27–28 November 2006	290315

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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

Barnwood Park Arts College is a comprehensive school for girls. It is smaller than most secondary schools. Attainment on entry is below average; many pupils with higher attainment attend local grammar schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as are the numbers who have learning difficulties or disabilities. About one fifth of the pupils are from ethnic minority heritages and many of them speak English as an additional language, although few are in the early stages of learning English. In the past, the school has achieved awards in recognition of improvements in results. The school recently gained specialist status for arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Barnwood Park Arts College is emerging from a lengthy period of instability. A proposal to close the school led to a significant turnover of staff. It also had the effect of galvanising the support of parents, who made clear their desire for single-sex education for girls in a school where results were improving, year on year. It is because of the strong leadership of the headteacher and senior staff that results did not slip during this time, but continued to rise. Now that the prospect of closure has passed, the school is rebuilding its staff and continuing its drive for improvement. There have been several changes at middlemanagement level. Here, the staff are still getting to grips with their new positions and require support to develop their leadership skills. However, now that the school has gained specialist status for arts and recruited new teachers, it has a good platform on which to improve even more. The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good, and the findings of this inspection confirm that view. The school has good capacity to improve further and gives good value for money. The pupils' achievements are good. By the time they leave school, almost all of the pupils have achieved five GCSE passes and the proportion gaining five higher passes has increased year on year, closing the gap on the national figure. Good teaching has been one of the key factors in securing the pupils' good progress. Senior staff evaluate the quality of teaching regularly and accurately, and take effective action to support those who need it. One third of the teaching force was new to the school at the start of this term and the school's current evaluations show that there is some variation in the quality of teaching. This inspection found that in many lessons teaching was either outstanding or good, but in others there were inconsistencies, for example, in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning, and in marking. However, appropriate steps are being taken to support and guide teachers in implementing the school's agreed approaches so that the pupils' progress continues to be good. The school strikes a happy balance between helping pupils achieve their potential through a good range of academic and vocational courses and providing a supportive environment where they are well cared for. Last, but not least, the pupils themselves make a significant contribution to their own learning. This is because their behaviour is good, and often very good, and they are keen and enthusiastic in lessons.

What the school should do to improve further

- Support middle managers to develop their skills in leading their departments.
- Raise the quality of teaching to the level of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement across the school is good. Overall, the pupils make good progress from their below-average starting points. They do especially well at Key Stage 3, where the progress they make puts the school in the top 5% in the country. The school's results in the national tests have improved each year for the past four years. Good progress

continues across Key Stage 4, notably in English and mathematics, where it has been significantly above the expected rate for the past three years. In 2006, almost half of the sixteen-year-olds gained five GCSE passes at grades A* to C. Although lower than the national figure, this was an improvement on last year. Nearly all of the pupils gained five passes at grades A to G. The school analyses its results thoroughly. In response to the findings and in order to sustain improvements, it is targeting its efforts at those pupils whose attainment falls in the middle band on entry. This is because pupils whose attainment is higher or who have learning difficulties tend to make swifter progress. There are no groups of pupils whose progress is significantly slower than others. Information about the pupils' attainment and progress is used to set targets for them. The pupils can talk about what they are working towards, and in lessons and when marking books many teachers refer to the target grades and what pupils need to do to achieve them. The pupils do well to reach their challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is satisfactory. Lessons in music, English and art, for example, include aspects from different cultures and traditions, to which the pupils respond positively. Pupils take part in many activities to raise funds for charity and support those less fortunate than themselves. Older pupils also help younger ones in school; for example, Year 10 pupils worked with some from Year 7 to practise a dance routine at lunchtime. Most pupils enjoy school and improvements in attendance reflect this. They are appreciative of the support and guidance they receive from their teachers. Where teaching captures their imaginations, the pupils listen with rapt attention and express disappointment when the lesson ends. In almost all lessons, they apply themselves well and as a consequence, they make good progress. Some pupils and parents mentioned a few instances of inappropriate behaviour or bullying, but knew that should they arise, they would be dealt with effectively. The pupils move sensibly around the site. The school makes a good contribution to raising pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and of how to keep themselves safe through work in science, physical education and personal, social, health and careers education. This is having a positive impact on the choices pupils make. There is an effective school council; the pupils feel that their views are heard and acted upon, but would appreciate more frequent meetings. Older pupils have plenty of opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, such as acting as prefects or in mentoring younger pupils. Opportunities for the pupils to take part in community activities, together with their positive attitudes to learning and good achievement in English and mathematics, make a good contribution to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good, overall. During this inspection, a few lessons were outstanding in the way they captured the pupils' interest, harnessed their enthusiasm and so got the very best from everyone. Generally, pupils made good progress because of the way activities were planned to build on their existing skills and knowledge. This was particularly effective in subjects where pupils regularly evaluate their own work and that of others and where marking points to how to improve. However, this quality of marking is not yet universal. In almost all lessons pupils behaved well, listened politely and made progress, even if the material was presented in an uninspiring way. Pupils particularly enjoyed lessons which involved the use of ICT but not all teachers made the most of technology to enhance learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally very positive. Good support is provided by teaching assistants for those experiencing difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Barnwood Park offers a good curriculum. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are taught all required subjects of the National Curriculum and more-able pupils study an extra language. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good range of academic options and vocational courses. Pupils can choose to study geology or attend additional dance in after-school classes. The school's Arts College status will give pupils more opportunities to study art, dance and drama, but this is in the early stages of implementation. The school has good links with local sixth forms. Care is taken to provide an appropriate curriculum for those who have learning difficulties. In the two lower sets in Year 7, the pupils are taught mainly by one teacher in order to help them make a successful transition into secondary school. In Years 10 and 11 there is an alternative curriculum of fewer GCSE courses and regular days in a work setting related to the career they would like to pursue. Gifted and talented pupils have the chance to learn a third language and attend summer school. Visits and visiting speakers are used well to make subjects come alive for pupils. There is a good number of activities outside school hours, ranging from Latin to yoga. The sports clubs are particularly popular and pupils can achieve the Junior Sports Leader award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of the care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel safe because the school takes great care to ensure their safety and well-being. Procedures to protect children and keep them safe are robust and well known. Pupils say how friendly and helpful teachers and support staff are. Parents also appreciate what the school does. One parent wrote to say her daughter 'is thriving

on the challenges and learning opportunities provided by the staff at Barnwood. She thoroughly enjoys school and I am confident that with their continuing support they will enable her to reach her full potential'. The monitoring and promotion of effective health and safety measures are given a high priority and there are reliable systems for risk assessments. The school also takes great care to make sure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, and support for their academic progress is much improved since the last inspection. Targets are set and reviewed regularly so pupils know how they are progressing. There are revision classes and coursework catch-up sessions for pupils in Year 11, a homework club, and after-school 'drop-in clinics' to help all pupils who wish to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. Staff and older pupils act as mentors for younger ones. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support tailored to their needs. All of this contributes to the good progress pupils make during their time at the school. The pupils receive good guidance on the next steps after leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's improving results and the good quality of both the educational provision and the pupils' personal development point to strong leadership and effective management. The school had considerable strengths when it was last inspected five years ago, but the drive for improvement continued and the school has moved forward a good deal since that time. One of the main reasons for this is that the school knows what it does well and where it needs to direct efforts, and sets challenging targets. Another is that the focus on raising standards has been central to all of its work. The headteacher sets a clear direction for the school and she has good support from members of the senior team. Recent changes of staff left gaps at middlemanagement level and some posts are being filled by temporary promotions. This is giving teachers valuable experience, but their leadership skills are not yet well established. The drawbacks of the current staffing arrangements are known, but rather than making a hurried response, a measured approach is being taken to strengthen middle management in the longer term, and to reflect Arts College status. The governing body has fought long and hard for the school. Its members give good support to the headteacher and staff, but balance this with appropriate challenge. The specialist status for art is seen as a good opportunity to expand on strengths in this aspect of the school's work, to establish more links with other providers and the community, and to continue to improve results.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making me and my colleagues welcome when we inspected your school recently. Because you were friendly and willing to talk about your school and your work, you helped us gather the evidence that we needed to write our report. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection, but your parents will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it. Overall, Barnwood Park Arts College is a good school. Among its strengths is the way pupils have been helped to gain better results in tests and GCSEs since the last inspection five years ago. This is because the quality of the teaching in lessons has been good, which has helped speed up the progress you make. If you fall behind, there are many ways that you can get extra support and guidance. Your behaviour is usually good and most of you concentrate well in lessons, which also helps you make good progress. Strong leadership from your headteacher and other senior teachers has made sure that improvements have continued. As you well know, many new teachers joined the school at the start of this year. In order to make sure that you continue to do well, we have recommended that there is good support for those teachers who have taken on new responsibilities. We also want your school to continue to improve teaching, so that more lessons are as stimulating and enjoyable as the best ones. We hope that you will continue to do well at Barnwood Park Arts College, and that the opportunities which come from attending an arts college add to your enjoyment and your learning.