

St Bartholomew's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110098
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	337440
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1650
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	401
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I M Campbell
Headteacher	Mrs C Haddrell
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 35 lessons, conducted four learning walks and held meetings with staff, groups of students and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school's self-evaluation, development plans and policies. In addition, 73 staff, 265 parental and 143 student questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The progress made by specific groups of students, including those in the sixth form.
- The collective impact of all aspects of provision in promoting equally strong outcomes for all students.
- The extent to which senior and middle leaders are involved in rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation.
- The contribution made by the school's business and enterprise specialism.

Information about the school

St Bartholomew's is a large school that gained specialist business and enterprise college status in 2001. Most students are of White British heritage, and there are a few from a wide range of other backgrounds. A very few are at an early stage of learning English. The mobility rate of students is low. The proportions of students entitled to free school meals or with a statement of special educational needs are low. However, the proportion with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy School status and Gold Artsmark. A new school is currently being built on the school site and is due for completion in October 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Bartholomew's is a good school that values its history and traditions and is very effectively planning for transition to the new school buildings. The outstanding curriculum and care, guidance and support provided for students are significant factors in their good progress and development as fully rounded individuals. Their good attendance, behaviour and involvement in school life are clear signs that students have pride, enjoyment and appreciation for the extensive range of opportunities on offer. They have a very strong sense of right and wrong and show care and respect for each other.

Students' attainment on entry represents the full ability range, although the proportion who are more able is well above that found nationally. The very large majority of students make good progress over their time at the school so that by the end of Year 11 their attainment is high. The small fall in examination results in 2008 has been effectively addressed.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. However, the quality of teaching varies considerably across the school and overall it is satisfactory. Students make most progress when they can actively engage in their learning, such as in practical lessons. However, lessons are at times too teacher-directed, with insufficient opportunities for students to get actively involved through well-tailored whole-class, individual and collaborative activities that meet their learning needs. Consequently, in these lessons the learning pace slows. Verbal feedback is good and most students are aware of their targets, but there is a lack of consistency in the quality of subject-specific written guidance given on how to improve their work.

The school makes excellent use of well-developed partnerships, particularly through its specialism and links with external agencies, and this contributes significantly to students' outstanding achievement and their well-being. The new headteacher and her team have a secure view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Monitoring of data about students' progress is regular and rigorous, resulting actions are clearly identified and systematically planned, and the impact of actions taken is consistently evaluated. As a result the school is well focused on sustaining and improving students' achievement as well as their personal development, demonstrating its good capacity to improve. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly, although more focus is placed on teaching than students' progress when judging its quality. While this contributes to teachers' development, best practice is not systematically shared and inconsistencies in teaching remain. All aspects of community cohesion are promoted, but action-planning and evaluation are not sufficiently rigorous and so students' cultural awareness is only satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is consistently good and a higher proportion is outstanding, enabling the majority of students to make exceptional progress, by:
 - involving students in more active and collaborative learning
 - ensuring that teachers more closely match tasks and activities to students' abilities
 - taking a systematic approach to sharing best practice across the school.
- Improve the consistency and quality of written feedback by building on the best practices so that students are consistently clear in all subjects about how to improve and so move to the next level.
- Develop a more rigorous approach to planning and evaluating the promotion of community cohesion, in particular to improve students' cultural understanding.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students have positive attitudes to learning and the large majority of students were seen to be making good progress in lessons in almost all subjects. Their attainment against a range of indicators, including the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades, is consistently well above the national average. Consequently, achievement is outstanding for most students across the school. Able students achieve additional qualifications as part of their personalised curriculum, including GCSE statistics and AS computing. In 2008 results in English and mathematics fell; however, the school's rapid action addressed this in 2009. GCSE module results for those in the current Year 11 show the improvement in 2009 is set to continue. Almost all students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good or better progress because of the well-tailored support they receive.

A few staff, students and parents said that sometimes there were incidents of poor behaviour. In the lessons seen during the inspection behaviour was generally good, but satisfactory in lessons where students are less actively involved in their learning.

Students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, feel safe in school. They adopt safe ways of working in practical subjects and also when moving between the two sites. Students say bullying is rare and it is effectively dealt with. Almost all parents supported this view. The uptake of sporting activities is good and the large majority of students adopt healthy lifestyles, although some students raised concerns about the current short break times. Students participate well in all aspects of school life, including the sport and performance opportunities through the house system, the school council and the development of the new school building. Many of these include opportunities to develop leadership or teamwork skills such as mentoring for Year 7 students. Activities such as house fund-raising for local charities such as Mencap, food boxes for elderly people in London, assemblies and religious education (RE) lessons facilitate good spiritual, moral, and social awareness. However, students' wider understanding of local, national and international cultures is satisfactory. Students

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are well prepared for the world of work and the next steps in their education because they can apply their well-developed basic, personal and enterprise skills and receive good careers advice and support as they move through the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers build good relationships with students and manage their classrooms well. As a result there are good attitudes to learning in most lessons. However, while teachers use good-quality questioning to assess progress and promote learning, the pace slows when too much time is spent on teacher-directed activities. Teachers understand the learning needs of students, particularly the need to challenge the most able. However, this is too frequently through additional or extension tasks rather than highly tailored activities. Teachers set clear learning objectives when they plan lessons, but the success criteria by which students' progress is judged are sometimes linked to the completion of activities rather than the quality of their learning. Teachers provide good verbal feedback to students in lessons on how to improve. However, this is rarely recorded so that students can later remind themselves of what they need to do. In some subject

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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areas, for example in art, peer- and self-assessment with clear criteria are used well. While there are some good examples of formal written assessment, this is not consistent across the school, and comments provide little subject-specific feedback to help students understand how to move on. The current resources are adequately used, and displays promote opportunities and learning. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and work well with teachers to support students.

The curriculum serves the needs and interests of the students exceptionally well. It is designed to be broad, balanced and flexible with clear lines of progression. It includes learning two languages at Key Stage 3, commencing GCSE science and RE in Year 9, as well as languages, design technology and English literature at Key Stage 4 for all students. Linked to the school's specialism, all students take an information and communication technology or business qualification. Curriculum enrichment and skills days spread throughout the year provide exciting learning opportunities to develop students' enterprise, personal and learning skills. The curriculum is further enhanced by trips, visits, visitors to school, after-school clubs and revision sessions. All Key Stage 4 students participate in weekly enrichment options which include fitness, the Combined Cadet Force, sports and dance leadership courses and an additional GCSE in art.

All students belong to one of four houses. These provide outstanding care and support through very effective systems to monitor the well-being of all students and identify concerns. As a result, students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are extremely well cared for and supported within this large multi-site school and feel valued as individuals. Transition arrangements for the new Year 7 are highly regarded and students say they are well supported in making their choices as they move through the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher is providing strong leadership. The senior leadership team and staff at all levels are committed to improving the learning and personal outcomes for all students. While preparing for the opportunities that the new buildings will bring for improving the learning environment, the school is ensuring that current achievement is not compromised.

Challenging targets are set for students as they enter the school. These are reviewed and lifted for the large majority as they progress through the school. Senior leaders,

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heads of houses and subject leaders carefully track achievement and regularly monitor students' progress and intervene as needed. Most staff are involved in the annual cycle of self-evaluation and development-planning which includes detailed analysis of examination results, monitoring of teaching and curricular review. Leaders at all levels have a clear idea of the strengths and areas for development in their areas both currently and for the new building. They provide appropriate training, support and actions to address any variations in performance, such as the lower examination results in 2008. However, self-review of teaching is not sufficiently refined to improve the consistency of teaching and assessment, and best practice is not systematically shared.

The school has robust systems to ensure the safety of students, although the child protection policy lacks clarity in a very few areas. Overall policies and procedures are clear and well structured, regularly reviewed, updated when needed and followed by staff. The school is inclusive in its approach. It ensures that students of all abilities, including the most able, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few who speak English as an additional language, have access to a curriculum that meets their needs.

The governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They use their expertise well to provide both support and challenge, and this has been particularly apparent in relation to the new building. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory because while actions are taken, these are not cohesively planned or evaluated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Most students choose to remain in the school at the end of Year 11, reflecting the high esteem in which the sixth form is held by both staff and students. They enjoy their time in the sixth form and almost all remain until the end of their courses. Most students make good progress and there is outstanding progress made in some subjects such as A-level sociology or design technology. Nonetheless, students' achievement varies both between and within subjects. Students are very mature and take responsibility for their own learning and are mutually supportive in their approach to private study. They make particularly strong contributions to the school and wider community through their leadership of a wide variety of sporting, cultural and pastoral opportunities. Teaching is at least satisfactory, and good in many cases. Teachers have good subject knowledge, but students are not always sufficiently actively involved in their learning. The curriculum is exceptionally wide with clear progression routes. It is reviewed systematically so that the needs of students with a wide range of prior attainment are met. Students appreciate the regular and timely reviews of their performance and academic targets and constructive feedback, particularly verbal, from approachable staff. They participate with enthusiasm in the wealth of enrichment opportunities that include international visits. Students receive excellent care, guidance and support, in particular for those who need additional help to overcome barriers to learning. Progression to university, employment and training is high and well supported by the school's guidance systems. Sixth form leadership is good, and is increasingly focusing on evaluating and addressing the variations in performance.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A relatively small number of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Most of those who did showed high levels of satisfaction with the school. A few parents and carers raised concerns about the how well the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour. However, inspection evidence suggested this was dealt with well by the school and there was no impact on the learning of other students. A very small minority also felt that the quality of teaching was inconsistent across the school, which was supported by inspection evidence, and that they would like to meet subject teachers at parents' evenings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bartholomew's School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 265 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1650 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	109	41	144	54	10	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	95	36	161	61	4	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	97	37	153	58	9	3	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	99	37	149	56	11	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	27	175	66	6	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	23	151	57	33	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	24	157	59	32	12	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	88	33	133	50	7	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	83	31	147	55	22	8	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	22	130	49	29	11	9	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	16	158	60	25	9	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	93	35	147	55	8	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	40	145	55	11	4	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bartholomew's School, Newbury, RG14 6JP

On behalf of your inspection team, I would like to let you know that we enjoyed the time we spent with you on our recent visit. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for completing the student questionnaires and sharing your views with us in meetings, lessons and around the school. We think that St Bartholomew's is a good school.

We hope that you will take the time to read the full report, but I have highlighted the key points below.

- You enjoy school, feel safe and attend well.
- The standards you achieve by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form are well above the national averages.
- The quality of the teaching you receive is variable. Although some is good or better, it is satisfactory overall. However, the large majority of you make good progress because of the outstanding curriculum and the outstanding care and support you receive, particularly through the house system.
- The curriculum is enhanced exceptionally well through the curriculum enrichment and skills days and the wide range of trips, visits and activities offered to you.
- Most of you know your targets and how well you are doing. However, you are not always clear about what actions to take to improve because you do not always receive high-quality written feedback.
- You behave well, and show respect for each other.

Your headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard to improve the school and, together with all the other staff in the school, are keen to improve it further. To help the school improve, we have said that senior leaders should:

- improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better
- improve the consistency and quality of written feedback so you know how to improve your work and so move to the next level
- develop the planning and evaluation for promoting community cohesion to improve your cultural understanding.

I hope that you will enjoy learning in your new school building when it is ready for you

to use towards the end of 2010.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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