

# Bartholomew School

Witney Road, Eynsham, OX29 4AP

**Inspection dates** 21–22 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	NA
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Students make outstanding progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Results in GCSE examinations were above average in 2012 and are on track to be even better this year.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Most students continue their studies into the sixth form where they achieve very well. A high proportion of students attain the top grades in their A-level subjects and many proceed to higher education.
- The school leaders have established a climate where everyone is keen to learn and improve. Through regular checking and feedback to teachers, they have maintained a very high quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- There is a relentless focus on raising academic standards within a caring atmosphere that also values and promotes students' personal development exceptionally well.
- The needs of each student are considered carefully and alternative programmes and support are planned for those who would benefit from them, to accommodate their strengths and interests.
- The students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are polite, respectful and work very well together. They are proud of their school and enjoy being given responsibilities, such as being part of the student council or mentoring younger students. Thinking skills lessons are helping them to reflect on their own learning.
- Teachers' high expectations, strong subject knowledge, skilful questioning and positive relationships with students contribute to students' excellent learning in lessons.
- Teachers also go out of their way to support students through extra lessons at lunchtime and after school. The school organised very well-attended Saturday sessions to boost attainment in English this year.
- The school leaders and governors have a very accurate view of what needs to be done to continue raising standards. There is no hint of complacency and the school improvement plan is based on the school's accurate and realistic judgements on the quality of its work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, or part lessons, small-group work, one-to-one sessions, and registration periods.
- Inspectors held discussions with students during lessons, around the school and in three organised meetings. They spoke with the headteacher, other members of the leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, teachers with subject and other responsibilities, other teachers and support staff.
- They undertook joint observations with members of the leadership team and observed them feeding back to teachers.
- The team looked at students' work in lessons and also in samples provided by the school.
- Inspectors analysed the 89 responses to the staff questionnaire, the 119 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, and two letters submitted by parents and carers.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school improvement and development plans, the self-evaluation, examples of reports on supported reviews, a wide range of progress data, safeguarding documents and records, policies, records of the monitoring of lessons and documents relating to teachers' performance management.

## Inspection team

Helena McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Lafford

Additional Inspector

Mireille Drayton

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bartholomew School is an average-size secondary school. The number of students on roll, including in the sixth form, is expected to rise in September.
- The school converted to academy status on 1 March 2012. The predecessor school of the same name was inspected in May 2009 and judged to be outstanding.
- The school has specialist status for technology and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). It is also a Leading Edge school for its 'Thinking Voice' project.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families) is well below the national average, although increasing each year. There are currently two children from service families and one looked after child at the school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, but rising. The largest ethnic group is of White British heritage. There are very small numbers of students from a very wide range of other ethnic groups. Around 4% of students are learning English as an additional language, which is well below the national average. None is at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is lower than the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of students that start or leave school at times other than the beginning of Year 7 is above the national average.
- The school makes some use of alternative provision for a small group of students in Years 10 and 11 who attend local further education colleges on one day each week to follow vocational courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of written feedback to students is of a consistently high standard and provides students with a clear idea of how to improve their work by sharing the very good practice that exists in the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is well above average overall. The number of students with high prior attainment has, though, decreased over the past year.
- Students make outstanding progress across all year groups and achieve extremely well in nearly all subjects by the end of Year 11. The proportion of students who attained the top GCSE grades (A and A\*) was well above the national average last year in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and the sciences.
- The proportion of students who were awarded five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is on track to increase this year, due in part to the school's effective measures to improve English results, particularly for middle-ability boys.
- Students are making excellent progress in literacy. The school's use of 'Philosophy for Children' has helped to develop good oralcy skills. Students are articulate and speak confidently in front of their peers. Strategies such as the 'Reading Challenge', in which sixth formers support Year 7 students, and the one-to-one and small-group support for less able readers have helped to raise standards in reading. Students also have opportunities to read during morning registration sessions, where they also learn about and discuss current events.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported in lessons or through one-to-one or small-group sessions, and make excellent progress.
- Students eligible for support through the pupil premium attained lower than other students in 2012 in English and mathematics, with results being approximately one grade lower. The school tracks these students' progress assiduously and puts in place measures to improve their achievement; as a result, the gap in attainment is closing and eligible students are on track to improve on last year's performance.
- All groups of students achieve extremely well, including those from different ethnic groups and the small proportion who speak English as an additional language. Students who attend alternative provision also make excellent progress.
- The sixth form is inclusive and a good proportion of Bartholomew students stay on in Year 12, where they are joined by students from other schools. There is a very high retention rate between Years 12 and 13. Examination results are very good with well above average proportions gaining the top grades (A\* to B) in many subjects at A level. Predictions for the current Year 12 and 13 students indicate that results will be equally good this year.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is of a consistently high standard with much that is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. Relationships are excellent and set the positive tone for learning. Most lessons are taught by subject specialists who are able to provide a good level of challenge, so that students make excellent progress.
- The school has focused on improving teachers' questioning through its involvement and training in 'Philosophy for Children' and the 'Thinking Voice' project. This has clearly had an impact as teachers use questioning effectively to check students' understanding and expect students to think deeply. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning and often ask questions in lessons, which indicates their interest in the topic and confidence in their relationship with the teacher.
- Teachers go out of their way to help students with their learning. For example, they hold revision and catch-up sessions at lunchtimes and after school. In addition to support sessions in English for individual students, extra lessons were arranged on Saturday mornings and these were extremely well attended and had a positive impact. Over 80% of students are on track to attain grades A\* to C in GCSE English this year.

- Teachers assess students' understanding during lessons and make adjustments where necessary. Students know how well they are doing and say that they get very good feedback from their teachers. The quality of teachers' marking of students' work is excellent in many subjects, particularly in English, humanities, design and technology and art. These teachers check work regularly, modify errors and give an indication of what has gone well and what needs to improve. Where teaching is best, opportunities are provided for students to read and respond to teachers' comments. The school leaders have, correctly, identified marking as an area for improvement, as this excellent practice is not consistent across and within all subjects.
- Teachers often make learning interesting and fun. They use practical work extensively in science, for example, and Year 7 students were seen taking great delight in observing and recording the colour changes in a strip of copper that they heated in a Bunsen flame, before completing demanding word equations for the reactions. Year 10 students were shown a video clip of Winston Churchill's famous speech to lead into a discussion about the power of persuasive language. Another group of Year 10 students visited a local supermarket in order to learn about rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are exemplary and contribute in no small measure to the high standards they achieve. They are very polite and respectful of each other, of staff and visitors. They are proud of their school and feel safe and well looked after. They feel that they have a voice and are listened to by staff.
- There is a good awareness among students of all ages about the different types of bullying. Students say that very little bullying happens in Bartholomew and if it does it is managed very swiftly and effectively by staff. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers also feel that students are well behaved and that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. There are relatively few persistently poor attenders; they are monitored closely and subject to parenting contracts and support from the education welfare service.
- No students have been permanently excluded since the school opened and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced. The school credits the reduction to the introduction of the Alternative Learning Programme Support (ALPS) centre, which provides a safe haven, counselling and support for vulnerable students.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The school is extremely well led and managed. There is a very strong and coherent leadership team that models best practice and through a good combination of relentlessness and 'compassion' (as described by one of the sixth formers), is driving continuous improvement.
- There is no sense of complacency, All staff understand the importance of regular checking of lessons and students' work. Staff are keen to learn and encouraged to take on leadership roles. Leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and contribute to a comprehensive and realistic self-evaluation, which informs the strategic school improvement plan and more detailed development plans. Subject leaders prepare their own development plans and there are useful 'supported reviews' each term that involve an in-depth look at a department or aspect of the school, and include lesson observations, work scrutinies and feedback from students.
- Arrangements for performance management are robust, with a clear link to training needs, professional development and progression up the pay scale. A useful audit of strengths and weaknesses against aspects of the Teachers' Standards has also helped to identify common development needs.
- Students of all ages experience a rich and varied programme of subjects and extra-curricular

activities, trips and visits. The way that the school promotes students' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is a particular strength. Students enjoy the 'thinking skills' lessons and the many opportunities to work in teams and to help each other. Sixth formers explained how they were each linked to Years 7 and 8 form groups to help their younger peers. In a registration session observed during the inspection, Year 7 students publicly thanked and said 'goodbye' to the Year 13 students who had been helping them through the year. The student council is influential and has a number of committees, aligned to those of the governing body. Members of the council have, for example, been involved in staff appointments.

- The school promotes equality of opportunity very successfully. Students' individual needs and interests are well catered for in terms of their choice of examination subjects. An alternative programme (called the 'A band') is provided for around 15 students in Years 10 and 11 who benefit from more a vocational route alongside core subjects.
- Some students are entered a term early for mathematics in order to allow them more time to secure good grades in English. Those entered early achieve well and are not disadvantaged as attested by the examination results, as over three quarters of students were awarded grades A\* to C and just under a third gained a grade A or A\*. A large number of students also opt to study mathematics in the sixth form.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are highly effective and played a key role in the consultation about academy status. They established a small task force to oversee the process and liaised extremely well with school staff, parents, carers and the community, as well as involving the student council. Members of the governing body continue to link well with parents and carers by, for example, making themselves available at each parents' meeting and holding an annual meeting with the Parents' Association to hear parents' and carers' views.
  - Governors are well informed about information on students' achievement, the school's strengths and what needs to improve, as well as the quality of teaching and the link with performance management and pay progression. They provide a good level of challenge to the leaders, while being very supportive, and have a very high regard for the headteacher and his vision for the school.
  - The governing body fulfils all its statutory duties including safeguarding, and has helped the school to sustain a healthy financial balance, which is earmarked for much needed improvements to the school buildings. Governors are aware of how pupil premium funds are used for eligible students and what the impact has been. There is a well-received induction programme for new governors and regular training opportunities for others.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137919
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412313

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,070
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	167
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Osborne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Hamilton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	NA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0186 588 1430
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