

St Bartholomew's School

Andover Road, Newbury, RG14 6JP

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all students make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development. She is supported well in this ambition by all governors and all staff with leadership roles. They have taken strong actions that have improved the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They are determined to raise standards further.
- Teaching is good across the school and supports the learning of all students.
- A large proportion of students gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Students make good progress in a wide range of subjects by the end of Year 11.
- The sixth form is good. All students make at least good progress from their different starting points.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding throughout the school. Their conduct is exemplary at all times and they show a consistent desire to learn in all their lessons.
- Students feel safe in all parts of the school and understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This ensures that students are well prepared to be caring and considerate citizens.
- Governors are highly effective and show a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Occasionally, work is too easy or too difficult for students, which means they do not then learn as well as they could.
- Disadvantaged students have not made the same rapid progress as other students.
- Teachers' marking and feedback do not always indicate to students how to improve their work. Some teachers do not consistently provide students with opportunities to act upon their advice.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in parts of 36 lessons, four of them jointly with members of the school's leadership team. They also visited an assembly and several tutor groups.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and carried out two detailed scrutinies of their written work in several subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with three groups of students to hear their views on learning and behaviour in the school. They also spoke informally with students during their breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities and three members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone discussion with the school's improvement consultant to consider the impact of external support for the school.
- Inspectors examined a variety of school documents. These included records of current students' progress, self-evaluation reports and improvement plans, and behaviour and attendance logs. Inspectors also examined a sample of the minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to safeguarding and the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 111 members of staff, 324 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, three letters from parents and responses to the school's own recent parental survey.

Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Allan Barfoot	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
Teresa Hill	Additional Inspector
Carol Webb	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Bartholomew's School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, about one in 10, is below average. These students are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is about one in 10. This is below average.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding, typically one in 10, is below average. This funding is provided for students who did not reach the expected standards in reading or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- A very small number of students extend their education by spending part of their week in local work-experience placements.
- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for just over one year.
- St Bartholomew's School converted to become an academy in September 2011. When the previous school, of the same name, was last inspected in December 2009, it was judged to be good.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the standard of teaching across the school to outstanding, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide activities that are sufficiently challenging to enable students of all abilities to make their best possible progress
 - provide students with marking and feedback that give detailed advice on how to improve their work
 - give students opportunities to act upon the feedback provided.
- Ensure that steps taken to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students, particularly in English and mathematics, result in them making the same rapid progress as other students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all students make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development. She is supported well in this ambition by all governors and all staff with leadership responsibilities. Together, they are determined to raise achievement to outstanding.
- The leadership of teaching is good and many changes have been introduced in the last year that are improving the quality of teaching further. A wide range of training is provided that meets the needs of staff at all stages of their careers.
- School leaders ensure that students' behaviour is outstanding by insisting that all staff share very high expectations and by providing support for staff on the rare occasions that this is needed.
- The school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses is rigorous and its conclusions are broadly accurate. The school produces detailed plans for its further improvement with clear targets for success.
- Subject leaders fulfil their roles well. They support their colleagues, check on students' progress and the quality of teaching in their areas, and plan for future changes in the curriculum. Currently they are focused on improving the consistency of the marking and feedback that students receive.
- The school's system of managing staff performance is well organised and rigorous. Evidence shows that this system has led to improvements in teaching and achievement.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and balanced and meets the needs of the school's students. Provision for younger students is varied according to their abilities, and in Key Stage 4 there is a very wide range of GCSE courses, complemented by a smaller number of high-quality work-related courses.
- The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Many opportunities are provided for students to discuss and reflect on sensitive issues as well as on their own achievements. Tutor times, assemblies, after-school clubs, student council elections and regular educational visits all make a strong contribution. Students learn how to show respect for those with different faiths and beliefs and develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. The British values of free speech, democracy and respect for others are actively promoted through the curriculum. These activities prepare students well for life in modern Britain.
- High-quality careers education and guidance are introduced from Year 8 so that students can make well-informed choices about their futures.
- Leaders make sure that arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements. All staff receive suitable safeguarding training. Risk assessments are thorough and recruitment processes are effective.
- Since the appointment of the current headteacher, school leaders have completed a thorough review of the provision made for disadvantaged students and have taken steps to improve their achievement. The school now makes much better use of the pupil premium funding. Provision now includes small-group and individual support in English and mathematics as well as funding for necessary equipment. The funding is also used to ensure that all eligible students can benefit fully from educational visits and activities that take place outside the usual school day.
- The school's records show that disadvantaged students currently on roll are making better progress than in the past but that the initiatives introduced in the school have not yet had enough time to show their full impact in Key Stage 4.
- The headteacher and the governing body ensure that the school rejects all forms of discrimination, fosters good relationships and effectively promotes equality of opportunity. The school is a cohesive community where all staff and students work harmoniously together.
- Leaders ensure that the small numbers of students who spend part of their week in work-experience placements attend regularly and that there are no concerns about their progress and behaviour.
- The school's improvement consultant has helped to maintain contact with the local authority. The consultant has provided advice on a very wide range of issues, including raising the achievement of disadvantaged students and improving aspects of teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors give a strong lead to the direction of the school and provide a good balance of challenge and support. They are fully involved in the life of the school and ensure that the skills of all governors are used fully in checking the quality of all aspects of the school's work. Governors work well as a cohesive team.
 - Governors have a thorough understanding of performance information and how the school compares to others nationally. They ensure that they have regular training to enable them to carry out all parts of their role effectively. Governors have been vigilant in checking that additional funding such as the pupil

premium is used effectively and they monitor its impact closely. They have challenged the school's leaders to demonstrate greater impact of this funding. Governors promote links with parents and carers and the wider community well, and ensure that students and staff are kept safe.

- Governors have a strong role in checking and supporting teaching and learning. They ensure that teachers' pay rises are linked to the achievement of their students and the whole-school targets set. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. Governors fully support school leaders in their constant drive for improvement in all aspects of the school's work. For example, they meet with subject leaders to ensure that governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' great desire to learn makes a very strong contribution to their good progress. Students pay close attention in lessons, follow all instructions and suggestions carefully, share their own ideas and listen respectfully to the views of others. Inspectors observed students of all ages working exceptionally well by themselves and in small groups as well as in full classes.
- Students are exceptionally well mannered and welcoming. They speak politely to all staff and frequently offer to help visitors find their way around the school.
- Students move calmly and purposefully around the large school site so that they are very punctual for their lessons. Immature behaviour, such as pushing or rushing, was not observed during the inspection and both staff and students confirm that it does not occur.
- Students take great pride in their school. They all wear their uniforms smartly and show great respect for all parts of their environment. There is no graffiti and no sign of any litter.
- The school maintains a very detailed behaviour log. This shows that the school employs a range of completely successful sanctions to improve the behaviour of the very small number of students whose behaviour does not meet high expectations. The students who spoke with inspectors confirmed that behaviour was usually 'very good' and that staff were extremely skilled at dealing with any minor misbehaviour. They also reported that they could not recall any racist or aggressive language in the school.
- The behaviour of students who attend work-experience placements off the school site is good. This is checked regularly by the school.
- Students' very strong social and moral development enables them to respect each other and understand the consequences of their actions. This contributes to their outstanding behaviour.
- Attendance is above average and is continuing to improve. This is because of detailed checking of absences and very good working relations with parents and carers.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students show a very good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and all forms of prejudice-based bullying. They report that it is 'almost unheard of' in the school and this is confirmed by the school's records. Older students take a leading role in encouraging outstanding behaviour and preventing bullying.
- Students of all ages say that they feel completely safe and secure in all parts of the school's large site and when taking part in off-site activities such as educational visits or work-experience placements. They have complete confidence in the care shown for their welfare by all school staff.
- All policies relating to safety and safeguarding are reviewed regularly and are consistently implemented. The identities of all visitors to the school, including governors and volunteers, are checked carefully to ensure students' safety. Very detailed assessments of risk are made by staff for all activities organised by the school.
- The curriculum ensures that students develop an exceptionally high level of understanding of safe and unsafe situations and this prepares them very well for their futures. Students show an excellent understanding of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites outside the school. Older students support those younger than themselves in learning about how to keep themselves safe.
- In their questionnaire responses, all staff and almost all parents and carers agreed that students are well behaved and completely safe at the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The school's leaders check all aspects of teaching rigorously. The results show that teaching is typically good and some is even better, both in the main school and in the sixth form. This was confirmed by observations of students' learning during the inspection, looking at their books, talking with students and examining records of their progress.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good throughout the school so that students all make good progress in these subjects.
- Lessons are well planned and start promptly so that little learning time is lost. Teachers show good subject knowledge, have high expectations of their students and show enthusiasm for what they are teaching.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers ensure all students learn rapidly by ensuring all tasks are at the right level of difficulty for them. They check students' understanding frequently, for instance using questioning skilfully to make sure that all students are making good progress. In a small minority of lessons, these strong features are less well developed and some students do not make as much progress as they could because the work provided is either too difficult or too easy for them.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly. However, marking does not always provide sufficient guidance on how well students are doing and how to improve their work. Also, some teachers do not give students opportunities to act upon the advice provided.
- There is a strong emphasis on promoting literacy and communication skills in all subjects and an agreed policy has been developed for correcting all written work. This is leading to improvements in students' writing skills.
- Relationships between staff and students are extremely good so that students can ask questions in confidence and are not afraid of making mistakes when learning new ideas.
- Teachers explain clearly to students how to show success in their subjects and what is expected of them in their examinations. This helps them to attain highly.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and they are clear about what support they should offer students. They collaborate well with class teachers and contribute to the checking of students' progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is consistently above average. A high proportion of Year 11 students gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Students make good progress across a wide range of subjects and there is very little difference in achievement between subjects.
- All groups of students make at least good progress from their starting points in English and mathematics. Some groups of students make outstanding progress in both these subjects.
- The school uses a very detailed tracking system to check the progress of each individual student and of all student groups. The results are used to provide extra support promptly for students when needed. This is contributing to a rise in students' achievement.
- The school regularly checks the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs. As a result of well-targeted and effective support in all subject areas, these students are making good progress from their starting points, equal to that of their peers.
- The most able students make rapid progress, more rapid than this group of students nationally. As a result, the proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades is above average in almost all subjects.
- Disadvantaged students have made slower progress than other students in the school but their progress is much better than the national average for disadvantaged students. Results for 2014 show that the attainment of disadvantaged students in English was about one grade below that of their peers but about two thirds of a grade below that of other students nationally. In mathematics, these attainment gaps were about one and a half grades and one grade respectively. Initiatives introduced with younger students are proving very effective in raising the achievement of disadvantaged students currently on roll so that these gaps are reducing.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used to provide small-group and individual tuition in literacy and numeracy, and to organise intensive catch-up summer schools. As a result of this effective support, these students are making good progress and catching up with their peers.
- Previously, some Year 11 students were entered early for their GCSE examinations in mathematics. There is no evidence that this lowered the achievement of any group of students.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- Sixth form standards are improving year on year. Provision and achievement are good.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and this is leading to improving achievement. Leaders regularly check the progress of students towards demanding targets and encourage staff to share good practice on sixth form teaching. They also ensure that all sixth form students receive thorough careers education and guidance so that they are well prepared for the future.
- The sixth form provides a very wide range of academic Level 3 courses and a small number of work-related courses. This combination is well matched to the needs of the students and is regularly reviewed. Provision is well planned, enabling students to build on their previous achievements and providing clear routes for further study or employment. Large numbers of sixth form students progress to well-regarded universities.
- Students report that they benefit from teaching that makes them think and work hard. Observations during the inspection confirmed this view and many examples of effective teaching and rapid learning were seen in sixth form lessons.
- Sixth form attainment is well above average and many students gain the highest possible A-level grades. The progress that students make in a small number of subjects is outstanding but in most subjects it is good. Also, typical progress in Year 12 is greater than that made in Year 13. Sixth form leaders are aware of these variations and are working to reduce them.
- Skilled teaching in English and mathematics is provided for any students who do not already have a GCSE grade C in these subjects. Success rates in these subjects are above average.
- The behaviour of sixth form students is outstanding. Their conduct in all parts of the school is exemplary and they provide excellent role models for younger students. In lessons, students focus fully on their studies and show complete commitment to achieving success. Sixth form students make a wide range of contributions to the life of the school, acting as subject mentors, councillors and leaders within the house system. They report that the school always ensures that they are completely safe.
- The sixth form is not yet outstanding because some students do not make rapid progress throughout their time in the sixth form.

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

Unique reference number	137465
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	449707

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,700
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	453
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Peddie
Headteacher	Julia Mortimore
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01635 521255
Fax number	01635 576320
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