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### Cooper School work on schedule

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Cate Mallalieu-Needle, the new director of post-16 studies at Cooper School, Bicester

First published Thursday 31 March 2011 in [News](#)

by [Sam McGregor](#)

THERE is a buzz among students and teachers at Cooper School over the impending opening of the new £4.4m sixth form.

Cate Mallalieu-Needle, the new director of post-16 studies, said: "There's excitement among students over the new sixth form.

"It will give students the opportunity to continue their studies in a school where they have been nurtured by teachers they know. It will give them something to aspire to in their choices for further education and their whole lives."

- ▶ Building work is on schedule to be completed in time for two induction days in July in the run-up to the sixth form becoming operational at the start of the autumn term in September.

Already the sixth form is fully subscribed with 110 students, mainly drawn from young people already at the Churchill Road school. Other students come from outside the school's catchment area.

The development of a sixth form has long been an ambition of a succession of headteachers, ever since the school was opened in the early 1970s.

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In the past, the school has catered for pupils aged 11 to 16, but now that age range will stretch to 19 years.

Headteacher Ben Baxter said: "The sixth form will correct an historical anomaly, with the town having just one sixth form at Bicester Community College. With the projected growth of Bicester, there is a real need for another sixth form."

The sixth form will have the added benefit of encouraging more students to stay on in full-time education. Previously, the number of pupils going up to sixth form education from Cooper had been well below the national average.

Mrs Mallalieu-Needle said: "Although some students from Cooper – if they did not want to go to the community college – have gone on to sixth forms at Gosford Hill, Kidlington; Marlborough School, Woodstock, or to Oxford or Banbury, many were deterred by the travelling."

At the moment Cooper has just under 1,000 pupils but it is envisaged this will rise to 1,300 within two years. And there will be an increase of between 12 to 15 teachers to cope with the rise in numbers.

The new two-storey sixth form block will have a common room on the ground floor, along with a cafe that will boast a patio, plus offices, storage and an ICT unit. Upstairs there will be six classrooms, which will be served by a lift for disabled students.

The school is also getting three new science laboratories, as it will be a specialist science college.

Mrs Mallalieu-Needle added: "Many students have been attracted to our sixth form because of our emphasis on science – chemistry, biology and physics. We will also be running a diploma course in engineering."

Young people at the neighbouring Bardwell School, which caters for those with learning difficulties, will be offered sixth form education where appropriate.

Funding for the new development has come mainly from Oxfordshire County Council, with a £600,000 contribution from the government to make the building eco-friendly and carbon neutral.

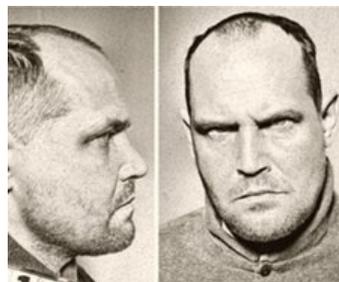
Although construction has been going on for some months, there was praise for the contractor's project manager, James Batty.

Mrs Mallalieu-Needle, who comes to Cooper from Chipping Norton School where she was head of the sixth form for four years, said: "We have not had any disruption or interference with the running of the school during the building work, thanks to Mr Batty."

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Nick Mawer says...

12:49pm Thu 31 Mar 11

At last a good news story in the Bicester Advertiser!

Score: 0

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Severian says...

2:26am Fri 1 Apr 11

In fact it's amazing that the Bicester Ad even ran this story. They NEVER have anything good to say about Cooper. Normally when there's great news about Cooper the Bicester Ad just ignores it, and when there's bad news it's splashed everywhere.

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The new 6th Form Centre at Cooper looks fantastic, and is vital to the success of the town. Too late for one of my children, but perfectly timed for one of the others. We're really excited about it - can't wait to see it finished.

Score: 0 |  | 

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Severian says...

2:28am Fri 1 Apr 11

"The school is also getting three new science laboratories, as it will be a specialist science college. "

Actually Bicester Ad, The Cooper School has been a specialist science college for years - you obviously haven't been paying attention to Bicester. Perhaps less news about Kidlington and more concentration on news about our town and you would have known this?

Score: 0 |  | 

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