

Barnsley Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131749
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	381395
Inspection dates	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Marianne Young HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	745
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	The local governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Guy
Headteacher	Mr Dave Berry
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 32 lessons taught by a similar number of teachers and they gathered further evidence from short observations of groups of students receiving additional literacy support. Three lessons were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Local Governing Body and groups of students. A discussion was held with a representative from the sponsors of the academy. Informal discussions were held with students at social times. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection and scrutinised a range of documents provided by the academy to support their view of provision. Inspectors gave due consideration to the 124 inspection questionnaire responses from parents and carers, and also to those questionnaires returned by staff and a representative sample of students.

Information about the school

Barnsley Academy is sponsored by the United Learning Trust (ULT) and is a smaller than average-sized school. The small sixth form enables students to study from a number of BTEC Level 3 and Advanced Level courses. Since the previous inspection the academy population has increased significantly. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The vast majority of students are White British but some other heritages are represented. The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is above that found nationally. Science and enterprise are the academy's specialist areas. A number of students in Years 10 and 11 are educated for part of the week off site at a number of alternative education providers. In 2011 the academy met the government's floor standard.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school which provides well for all students. It is not outstanding because improvements are still needed in the quality of teaching, in the monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders and in the consistency of application of policies and procedures. There are particular strengths in the senior leadership where their drive and ambition has contributed significantly towards raising students' aspirations. Consequently, the rapid improvement in students' attainment since the previous inspection was sustained in 2011. Students make good progress, given their well-below-average attainment when they join the academy. This is particularly, but not exclusively, evident in the core subjects of English and mathematics where teaching is stronger overall and the deployment of teachers is carefully considered. The sixth form is satisfactory. Students welcome the small classes and the support provided; however, their achievement varies between subjects. The personalised entry policy ensures that students are placed on courses appropriate to their needs and ambitions; consequently, most of them are able to access higher and further education.
- The key strengths in teaching identified by senior leaders were also observed by inspectors. These include careful planning considering students' differing abilities, lessons delivered at an appropriate pace and detailed questioning to ensure students' understanding and engagement. However, inspectors noted that, during the inspection and over time, there has not been enough strong teaching in all subjects. Consequently, although there are strengths, particularly, but not exclusively, in the core subjects, overall, teaching is judged to be satisfactory. Inspectors also saw, and this was supported by comments from parents, carers and students, that, at times, learning in a few lessons is adversely affected because of the immature behaviour of some students, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Students generally relate well to each other and are considerate to visitors. Attendance has improved throughout the academy; however, punctuality in the mornings and between some lessons is still not consistent.
- The very clear, unequivocal vision provided by the principal is endorsed and supported strongly by other senior leaders and members of the local governing body. Clear

systems to monitor performance and to provide support for teachers are in place. Nevertheless, the consistency with which all leaders monitor and evaluate performance and ensure that agreed policies and procedures are followed is not fully embedded.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching throughout the academy by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are planned carefully, taking into account the detailed information provided about students' abilities and potential in different subjects
 - delivering lessons that engage students in different activities
 - ensuring a consistent approach when dealing with potential disruption
 - providing oral and written feedback regularly so that students know how to improve their work.
- Strengthen middle leaders' ability to monitor and evaluate their subject area by:
 - ensuring that their monitoring and reviews result in appropriate and well-founded changes so that timely and apposite support is given and any inconsistency within teaching is eradicated.
- Make sure, through an appropriate monitoring system, that there is a consistent application of the agreed policies and procedures throughout the academy.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The most recently published data, academy records and inspection evidence indicate that standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly average. Although there is variation in the key indicator of five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics, students make good progress in these subjects, from a significantly below-average starting point. Students' performance in other subjects, for example science and physical education, is also strong and is closely linked to the quality of teaching students receive. Inspection evidence confirmed that students make better progress in mathematics compared to English because staff have considered students' capabilities at all levels in mathematics and thus ensured that all ability groups make the best possible progress. Until this year, there was not a similar situation in English. Changes at Key Stage 4 to the courses offered, particularly in science, are enabling students to be better prepared for sixth-form study in these subjects. Similarly, the BTEC courses in physical education prepare sixth-form students well and, consequently, many of these students make better than expected progress in this subject. Parents and carers were generally in agreement that their children make good progress and this was evident in the key subjects of English and mathematics particularly.

Secure tracking systems, careful consideration of which groups are taught by which teacher, plus regular monitoring of the quality of teaching are identifying where students are achieving their targets. However, the setting of these targets is often arbitrary and some teachers do not use them appropriately to guide their planning and ensure that students make the progress of which they are capable. Initial testing of Year 7 students in reading

and spelling shows that their capabilities, particularly in spelling, are significantly lower than expected for their age. Well-planned intervention work for students, including disabled students or those with special educational needs who need additional literacy support, is very effective. This programme enables them to become more fluent readers and to improve their comprehension and spelling skills which they need for effective learning across the curriculum.

More students from other educational establishments are joining the sixth form than previously. The standards reached, which are below average, and the generally good progress made by many students, are indicative of an improving picture in all subjects.

Quality of teaching

The academy has a systematic approach to the continuous professional development of teachers through regular training and workshops. However, in practice, there is considerable variation in practice across all subjects with some leaders having a more positive picture about the quality of teaching than that found by inspectors. The majority of teaching in the core subjects, where student performance in these subjects contributes significantly to the government measure of five A* to C GCSE grades, is strong and this results in students' good achievement in this measure. Inspectors saw evidence of good teaching in other subject areas, for example in science, music and physical education. Where teachers set challenging work for students with different abilities and provided careful feedback so that students, either independently or as part of a group, considered and solved problems for themselves, progress was made. Other key strengths included strong relationships, a brisk pace and use of resources that engage and challenge students. In a Year 9 English lesson students' involvement in the lesson was assured because well-chosen video clips engaged them in appropriate discussion before they planned how to advertise their own products. Similarly, in a Year 7 science lesson, the brisk pace, combined with questioning that probed and explored students' understanding, supported students' oral skills as well as their scientific ones. Additional activities and class discussion were used successfully in some lessons to develop students' literacy, social and moral skills.

These strong features were not replicated in enough lessons. Although teachers want students to do their best in lessons, students had limited time to reflect on their learning and to consider what their next steps should be. Too often praise was used inappropriately and students were given tasks that were either too difficult or too easy for them because their capabilities were not considered when lessons were planned. Feedback, both oral and written, although often supportive, does not ensure that students know how to improve in each subject. The questionnaire responses showed that a small minority of parents and carers had concerns about their children's lessons being disrupted by bad behaviour. Additionally, poor behaviour in lessons was reported by a minority of students, both in their questionnaires and during the inspection, as being of concern to them. Inspection evidence confirmed that a very small minority of lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, are disrupted by immature and childish behaviour. Consequently, too much of the teacher's attention is focused on managing this behaviour and thus the learning and progress of the whole class are adversely affected. Inspectors saw, and leaders agree, that some teachers are more capable at managing behaviour and ensuring that learning does not suffer. As a result, this variation and inconsistency limits the judgement for teaching to satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' safety is given a high priority. The students, including those who are vulnerable, disabled and/or have special educational needs to whom inspectors spoke, and from reading their comments in the questionnaire, agree that they feel safe and that any difficulties they may encounter, for example bullying, are dealt with rigorously and quickly. This view was supported by inspection evidence; students were very clear what was expected of them within the academy and what was not acceptable. Reading the comments from parents and carers, inspectors noted that a very small minority did not have such a positive view about bullying in the academy. In addition, a very small minority of parents and carers were concerned about the standard of behaviour. Inspectors found that there is a staff presence at different times of the day but, overall, students conduct themselves well around the site and in the dining room. Games of cricket and football are enjoyed by students during social times and members of staff are often welcome to join. This approach supports and develops well students' ability to relate courteously to adults and visitors as well as to their peers. Attendance for all year groups has continued to rise, with fixed-term exclusions reducing significantly since the last inspection. There has not been a permanent exclusion since the academy opened. The attendance of those students educated at times off site is also closely monitored and is good. However, inspectors saw evidence where the punctuality of a very few students before school and between lessons had a negative impact on the start of a few lessons. On these odd occasions, not all teachers dealt with it consistently. Leaders recognise that 'meeting and greeting' students is an important social start to the day but more urgency to lessons needs to be instilled into a very few students.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders are determined that all students must achieve their potential. Strong strategic systems include regular and accurate self-evaluation with clear success criteria which are used to measure progress and identify what else needs to be done. This approach provides evidence of leaders' capacity to improve. Consequently, leaders are relentless in their pursuit of improvement and were able to provide inspectors with a well-founded and clear picture of the academy. Much has been improved since the previous inspection, for example the rapid rise in the number of students attaining five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Leaders know that this measurable figure must be celebrated, but there is still work to be done in order to improve the overall quality of teaching. Regular training is provided, together with tailored support for individuals when needed. Inspectors agreed with leaders and teachers that, although this work is beneficial and leaders know and can recognise the strengths in teaching, not all staff are making best use of this training and there remain inconsistencies throughout subject areas which must be improved. Middle leaders generally share senior leaders' commitment and understand the need for accountability. This situation is also shared and firmly supported by members of the local governing body.

Inspectors and senior leaders agree that some middle leaders have a more positive view of provision in their subject areas than is the case. Although all middle leaders are keen to improve, recognising where improvements are needed is a challenge for some. Senior leaders also recognise that a consistent application of agreed policies must occur throughout the academy. The curriculum is evolving well and students report that they are able to follow appropriate courses at Key Stage 4, for example GCSE courses for science, before studying this subject in the sixth form. Additional clubs and activities are popular and well supported. Inspectors noted that the delivery of the personal, social and health education

programme is inconsistent so that the benefits afforded, for example developing students' spiritual awareness, are not widespread.

Senior leaders' drive for improvement and commitment to equal opportunities are embraced by most staff. Together they recognise the benefits for students being able to fulfil their capabilities and being prepared appropriately for further study when they leave the academy. The very low proportion of students who are classed as NEET (not in education, employment and training) is testament to this work. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire were confident about the safety of their children, but a few felt that communication between themselves and the academy should be improved. Leaders agree with the latter comment and are considering ways for this to happen. At the time of the inspection all government requirements for safeguarding were being met and are given a high priority.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Barnsley Academy, Barnsley, S70 3DL

Thank you for making me and my colleagues welcome when we inspected your academy recently. We enjoyed observing you at work and talking with some of you about lessons and life in general at Barnsley Academy. The inspectors were pleased to note that the academy has come a long way since the previous inspection. We found that you make good progress and generally behave well. However, a few of you misbehave in lessons and this spoils learning for the rest of the class. We noticed and many of you told us that you are more confident in your own abilities and consequently more of you are thinking about higher and further education when you leave school. If this is not what you are planning, you recognise that doing your best in lessons, particularly in English and mathematics, is important and will help when you are looking for a job.

Although your attendance has improved considerably, some of you are late to school and this spoils the start of lessons. Also, a few of you do not always have the right equipment to use. We noticed that when you are given work to do in lessons, which matches your abilities and interests you, then you generally make rapid progress. However, that is not always the case and we have asked Mr Berry to make sure that work is always matched appropriately and that you all understand how to improve your work in order to get the highest grades possible.

Senior leaders are very ambitious for you as individuals and know that it is important for the academy to continue to develop. They know that there are some inconsistencies at present, for example in the way your work is monitored, and are looking for ways to improve this situation. You can all play your part in helping to improve these.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

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