

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566863
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
jbennett@cfbt.com



1 July 2014

Mrs Nikki Shaw
Executive Principal
Barnsley Academy
Farm Road
Kendray
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 3DL

Dear Mrs Shaw

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Barnsley Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 30 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Executive Principal, members of the senior leadership team and staff with responsibility for key areas of improvement, representatives of the governing body and the School Improvement Board (SIB), representatives of the academy's sponsor United Learning (UL), and a senior representative of the local authority who chairs the SIB. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's action plan were evaluated.

Context

There have been several important changes to staffing since the section 5 inspection. The Principal of the academy at the time of the inspection has tendered his resignation, and is currently not working in the academy. An Executive Principal initially appointed by UL has left the academy. Five Directors of Learning have also left. A new Executive Principal has been appointed and formally takes up post on 1 July, but is already working full time with the academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The leaders and governors of the academy, with incisive support from the sponsor, have responded promptly and robustly to the judgements of the recent inspection. They are taking appropriate action to address the points for improvement identified in that last report. The senior leadership now has a firm grasp on the actions needed to improve teaching and behaviour, and to raise standards, especially for less able pupils and those supported by the additional government funding, the pupil premium. Leaders know where improvement is required and are building on the developments to improve outcomes for pupils that were already evident at the time of the last inspection.

Actions to achieve this include, for example: improved procedures to judge the quality of teaching and learning; more effective systems for monitoring and responding to any issues of pupils' behaviour; more rigorous approaches to using data and assessment information to ensure that pupils are motivated and challenged by lessons and to help staff ensure that pupils make the maximum progress and attain the highest standards they can. The academy is now actively holding staff to account to assure that they are focused on their responsibilities to support improvements in standards. It is working hard to build on the strengths within the staff team through improved programmes to support the professional development of all staff, including middle managers and curriculum leaders. The impact of the new systems for monitoring and supporting behaviour is already evident in significant improvements in the extent to which pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes are recognised and in the reduction of day-to-day sanctions for poor behaviour.

The new Executive Principal and sponsor, in conjunction with the local authority, are now actively brokering links with other schools offering excellent practice and with National Leaders of Education (NLE) regionally and locally to give further support to the academy. A review of governance has been undertaken and additional training for governors has been provided. While the dual responsibilities of the SIB and the 'shadow' governing body are complex, governors are now generally better aware of their responsibilities in helping to lead the academy out of serious weaknesses. For example, they now are directly involved in monitoring the actions and evaluating the impact of specific priorities for improvement as part of the SIB.

The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's plans are well integrated. These assure that the academy's priorities for development and the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report are fully coordinated and aligned. Both plans provide clear and cogent objectives and targets to drive the improvements needed. Actions are carefully planned and the overarching targets set incorporate the individual areas for improvement and actions needed to reach these outcomes. These targets are challenging but achievable and the associated criteria for success are precise and measurable. Timelines are also challenging, but reflect the academy's ambition. The procedures for internally monitoring and checking progress, including the SIB, are robust, pertinent and will increasingly enable all parties to monitor the success of actions effectively.

Following the inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's action plans are fit for purpose

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Terry Holland

Additional Inspector