

# Barnfield Studio School

1 - 9 York Street, Luton, LU2 0EZ

## Inspection dates

1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leadership and management are not good enough. Effective strategies to monitor and improve students' achievement have not been in place long enough to have had an impact.
- Governors have insufficient understanding of the progress made by students and so are not well placed to challenge the school's leadership.
- Students do not achieve enough. Over time, teaching has not been effective in closing the gaps that exist in many students' knowledge and understanding when they join the school.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are not developed effectively by all teachers within different subject areas.
- Some Key Stage 4 students misbehave and make limited progress because they do not work hard enough in lessons.
- The sixth-form requires improvement because some students do not make as much progress as they could.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have created a safe environment in which students feel secure and supported. Many grow in confidence and make accelerated progress, including those who face challenging circumstances.
- Teaching is improving because leaders provide effective support and challenge to staff. New leaders understand the improvements needed within their areas and how to achieve them.
- Students' conduct outside of lessons is generally good, and they have positive relationships with their peers and their teachers. All staff work well to support those who find it difficult to behave well consistently.
- Students benefit from the very effective careers guidance they receive. This helps ensure that nearly all move on to further education, training or employment when they leave the school.

**Information about this inspection**

- Inspectors observed an assembly, tutor periods and teaching in 13 lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Documentation was analysed, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance, exclusions, behaviour logs, the school’s systems for improving teaching and learning, and details of its use of pupil premium funding.
- Inspectors were unable to take account of the online Parent View survey because there were insufficient entries. They analysed evidence of parental views gathered by the studio school.
- Inspectors took account of the ten responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, other senior and subject leaders, teaching staff, a director of the Academy Trust and a member of the governing body, and groups of students.

**Inspection team**

Jason Howard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty’s Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Barnfield Studio School is much smaller than an average-sized secondary school. It opened on the Barnfield College Campus in September 2010 as one of the country's first two studio schools, and part of the Studio Schools Network. It was initially named the Barnfield Business and Enterprise School Academy, before changing its name to Barnfield Skills Academy.
- In September 2012 the school relocated to its present site.
- The studio school is currently a part of the Barnfield Federation, and works in partnership with Barnfield South Academy, Barnfield West Academy and Barnfield College. Although it is an academy, staff, students and parents refer to it as a 'school', as does this report.
- Many students who join the school have had a significantly disrupted education in the past. Many have not attended school regularly and some have been educated at home.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are looked after by the local authority.
- An above average proportion of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision in Luton on a full-time basis, as an alternative to permanent exclusion, at the Avenue Centre for Education, and KWS Educational Services.
- The small sixth form offers several Extended Diploma options, although sixth-form students can also opt for subjects taught at one of the partner establishments.
- Main subjects, such as English, mathematics and science, are taught in the main teaching block, but students travel to specialist facilities for their work-related lessons. Students spend some of their time on project-based learning and are encouraged to gain workplace experience and develop business ventures.
- The school does not meet government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Four of the ten teachers in post during the previous academic year have left the school without being replaced, because the number of students on roll has fallen.
- The school's sixth form accounts for half of the students who are currently on roll.

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

- Improve teaching so that students' progress accelerates, particularly in English and mathematics, and also in the sixth-form, by ensuring that:
  - students know what they need to work towards and understand how to take the next steps in their learning
  - leaders and teachers use the information they have about students' gaps in knowledge and understanding to plan well-targeted activities that help them to catch-up, or move forward, quickly
  - teachers encourage students to explain their ideas and develop their answers fully
  - students make the necessary improvements to their work in response to feedback.
- Further improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning in Key Stage 4 lessons, so that individuals do not disrupt their own learning or that of others, and complete their work to a high standard.
- Ensure leaders and teachers work together so that students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed within all subjects.
- Ensure that governors use progress information about students to hold leaders and teachers to account for standards in their areas of responsibility.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Over time, leaders have not ensured that teaching has been effective enough to enable students to make rapid progress so that they secure good attainment across different subjects. There is too much behaviour that disrupts learning.
- Although leaders diagnose any gaps in the knowledge and understanding of students when they join the school, this information has not been used sufficiently well to ensure that teaching, and additional help, enables students to catch-up, particularly in mathematics. Changes have been made so that additional help is better-targeted, but these are too recent to have made a difference.
- The school has systems to monitor regularly the progress that students are making. However, leaders have not ensured that all teachers have used this information to set appropriate targets for students and to plan activities that help them to take the next steps in their learning.
- Leaders of English, mathematics and science have taken on management responsibilities very recently. They understand the changes that are needed if standards are to improve rapidly in their areas, and are pursuing these determinedly. However, it is too soon to see the benefits of these changes.
- Leaders' actions to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills have had variable impact. Over time many students' reading ages have improved because of the additional support they receive, but for others improvements have been limited.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged students can gain additional support to help them catch-up in different subjects, and to enable them to take part in all of the activities available at school.
- Leaders are flexible about the course options students choose. This helps students to achieve the qualifications they need to access the next stage of education or training, and pursue their interests and ambitions. Allowing students to take the IGCSE in English helped many to gain at least a grade C in 2014, for example.
- The school's curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, and promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students develop a broad understanding of themselves and of their local community. The majority of students, including those returning from a fixed-term exclusion, are able to identify right from wrong. This is evident in the generally harmonious relationships across the school, and the positive feedback from parents about how the school prepares students for the next stage of their lives. Students understand the importance of tolerance, and the threats posed by extremism to individual liberty, the rule of law, and democracy.
- Teachers and students' personal coaches know the students well, develop positive links with parents and work constructively with other agencies to support vulnerable individuals so that they stay in school and make progress.
- The school has made appropriate arrangements to review the performance of teachers and tackle under-performance. Colleagues from a local teaching school, also a member of the Barnfield Federation, help leaders to check standards and determine which aspects of teaching across the school promote learning well, and which do not. They also help support teachers to improve. Leaders provide challenge where this does not happen rapidly. Because of this, there have been recent improvements in the effectiveness of teaching, but there is still some way to go.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know the school's key strengths and areas for development. They understand what published performance data show about the achievement of different groups of students, such as those eligible for the pupil premium, in public examinations. They are less well-informed about the progress students make as they move through the school. Governors are aware of the ways in which the pupil premium is

used to support students. Changes to the way in which teachers are rewarded have ensured that future pay increases are linked to performance. Some governors visit the school regularly, both informally and to attend events. Governors ensure the school's arrangements for the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements.

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

## **requires improvement**

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because attitudes to learning in lessons, among some students in Years 10 and 11, are not good enough. Some do not start work quickly, maintain their concentration and complete tasks to the best of their ability. At times, they disrupt their own learning and that of the majority who work well, by engaging in off-task conversations, calling out answers, or talking over the teacher or another student.
- Work in a minority of students' exercise books is poorly-presented and sometimes rushed. Where this is the case, students do not always take care to respond to instructions or guidance about how to complete tasks.
- Although many students respond to feedback and make improvements to their work, some do not and continue to make the same mistakes.
- Leaders have helped many students who find it difficult to manage their behaviour to attend regularly, focus on their learning and make progress. The school's monitoring information indicates that serious misbehaviour within the classroom is rare and dealt with effectively when it does occur. Students believe behaviour has improved recently because lessons are more interesting.
- Leaders have revised the school's behaviour policy and are reinforcing their expectations. This has resulted in a rise in the number of fixed-term exclusions, although figures remain below national rates. There has only been one permanent exclusion to date.
- Most students conduct themselves well during break periods and as they move around the school site. Although some use unacceptable language and jostle each other in the corridors, the school's monitoring information indicates this is uncommon.
- Many students are involved in leading improvements within school, managing projects and working in business environments. These activities help develop their confidence and social skills, and help them prepare for life outside of school.
- The school's strategies to promote attendance are effective. Overall, attendance rates are in line with the national average and the level of persistent absence is low. Just a few students arrive late to school, or to lessons.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The small size of the school means that teachers get to know the students quickly; students feel they are understood and supported well. They describe school as being like 'a big family.' The school's values ensure students from different backgrounds generally socialise well together and treat each other with respect.
- Students report that bullying of all kinds, including racist or homophobic bullying, is rare. This is supported by the school's monitoring information. When it does occur, it is dealt with effectively. Students understand how they can stay safe in different circumstances, including when using the internet.
- All safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are effective. Leaders identify and work well with others, to support and monitor children who may be at risk. Checks are made to ensure those who are attending off-site provision or work experience, are attending, behaving well and are safe.

**The quality of teaching****requires improvement**

- The extent to which teaching has enabled students to make good progress and achieve well has varied between, and sometimes within, subjects. Over time it has been strongest in English, but not good enough in mathematics and in science.
- Questioning, and other techniques, often do not ensure that students develop their ideas and explain or evidence them fully, either orally or in writing. At times, students are praised for responses that are superficial, rather than challenged to think more deeply.
- Although many students complete work in groups productively, for some this method is ineffective because they lose focus and make insufficient progress, especially when teachers do not make clear who is responsible for each aspect of a task.
- Activities that students complete are not always well-matched to their abilities and this sometimes leads to a lack of challenge and slower rates of progress for more-able students. When selecting resources, teachers sometimes choose written material that is too complex for weaker students. Opportunities for students to develop their extended writing skills are not a regular feature of learning across all appropriate subjects.
- Very recent changes have increased the extent to which teachers comment on the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar when giving students feedback on their work. Some are beginning to use this to improve their work, but not all do so. Some older students continue to make basic errors in spelling and in punctuation.
- Teachers usually make clear to students what it is that they need to do in order to improve their work, but many students do not make the necessary changes. Some teachers do not challenge students effectively when they rush their work, or present it poorly. This means that some do not prepare for assignments or examinations well enough.
- Students report that the quality of teaching has improved considerably recently, because 'teachers have got better at meeting our different needs', and because it is rare, now, for most students to have to complete tasks that are too easy, or too difficult for them. Teachers are sharing their effective ideas and techniques with each other.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their understanding of what students know and can do to plan different activities, each of which are effective in helping students move forward. When students find work difficult, teachers ask questions to understand why, and use different explanations to help. During a mathematics lesson, this technique helped build the confidence and accelerate the progress of students who initially found tasks difficult. At the same time, the more-able quickly moved on to more difficult tasks. All tried hard throughout the session and moved forward.
- Where marking is most effective, teachers set students additional challenges if they have found tasks easy, or set simpler questions to try to help them work in small steps towards the answer if they have struggled. Students respond and teachers change their learning tasks accordingly.
- Teachers and other adults who support learning within the classroom work together effectively to ensure that most current students who have special educational needs are making good progress, often from low starting points.
- Students who speak English as an additional language, including those who have started their education in another country, are well-integrated and supported. They make at least as much progress as their peers.
- The school successfully uses alternative provision to ensure the progress of a very small number of students who are at risk of permanent exclusion.

**The achievement of pupils****requires improvement**

- A very large number of students who join the studio school have made very little progress at their previous schools during Key Stage 3. Some have had prolonged periods of absence owing to illness or exclusion. The school's monitoring data, together with work seen in lessons and in students' books, indicate that many make rapid progress from these low starting points. Despite this, too few students make the expected, or above expected level of progress in key subjects between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4.
- In recent years, teaching has been more effective in helping students catch up lost ground in English than in mathematics. In 2013, all students gained at least 5 A\* to C grades in GCSE or equivalent qualifications, and in 2014 the school's results were its strongest since opening. However, the proportion of students attaining at least a grade C in both English and mathematics remains low by national standards.
- The school's monitoring data indicate that students in Year 11 are starting to make faster progress as teaching improves, although gaps in their knowledge and understanding remain. Nearly all of the very small number of the most-able students are on course to achieve A\*-A grades in English and mathematics at GCSE.
- Some students have responded to initiatives to encourage them to read more widely and have accelerated their reading ages rapidly; others have not and have made insufficient gains.
- In 2013, students supported by the pupil premium made more progress, and attained more highly than their peers, in English. The proportion who made the expected level of progress was similar to that made by other students nationally. In 2013, disadvantaged students made more progress than their peers in mathematics. The attainment of those supported by the pupil premium is consistently below that of other students nationally in both English and mathematics. In 2013 they were two terms behind the others in mathematics and one-and-a-half terms behind in English. The school's monitoring data indicate the gaps are beginning to close and that current disadvantaged students are making about the same progress as their peers.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs requires improvement because over time it has varied too much. Support arrangements for the development of these students' literacy and numeracy skills have been improved and their progress is accelerating. More recent school data indicates that these students are now making progress at the same rate as others.
- The school does not make use of early GCSE entry, except where individual cases mean this is in the best interests of the student.
- The school's leaders are committed to ensuring all students receive the support they need. Enterprise and work-related learning opportunities help prepare students for the workplace. Careers education and advice helps students understand the career options open to them and how to access them. Very few do not enter education, employment or training when they leave school; many progress into the school's sixth form.

**The sixth form provision****requires improvement**

- In 2014, the first cohort to complete the sixth form obtained their results; although many gained merits or distinctions on completion of their Level 3 qualifications and achieved in line with expectations, few made above expected progress. Some students who are completing the new vocational courses are making slow progress because they do not attend regularly enough.
- Most Year 13 students performed poorly when they initially re-sat their English and mathematics GCSEs during Year 12, but the school's monitoring indicates that more are on track to gain at least a grade C when they next take the examinations because the quality of teaching has improved.

- Sometimes, teachers move students on to new activities before their understanding is secure, so progress slows. The impact of marking and the use of assessment is variable. The feedback students receive does not always make clear what it is that they need to do in order to improve their work and their grades.
- Few students have developed their employability skills to a high level because their opportunities to complete work experience have been limited. The school's development plan to improve the work experience entitlement of sixth-form students is detailed and ambitious, but it is too soon to judge its effectiveness. There is limited evidence of employer involvement in the construction of the courses students study.
- Leaders have expanded the range of BTEC Extended Diploma courses available to post-16 students in order to meet the needs and interests of students as the sixth form has grown. Students can choose from three separate 'pathways' and study health and social care, business studies, or sports studies.
- Although GCE A levels are not taught on site, arrangements are made so that students who wish to study subjects alongside their vocational qualifications can do so.
- The most effective learning happens when teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and effort, and use information about what they can already do to plan activities that will challenge them further. In a physical education lesson, a teacher skilfully planned an exercise that required students to interpret information gathered during a trip to a sports centre. This led to students successfully devising assessments to reduce the risk of potential injury to clients.
- Sixth-form students are respectful to their peers and their teachers. They have a sound understanding of the impact good behaviour has on their ability to make effective progress, and are positive about their teachers. Relationships in the classroom are good. Many become involved in leadership activities within school, managing projects and making changes.
- Students appreciate the effective careers guidance that they receive, and the ability to take part in university 'taster days.' They have a good level of awareness of the qualifications they will need for the next stage of learning or employment. A large proportion of leavers secured university places in 2014.



## 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>	139237
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	447857

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy studio school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–19
<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>	90
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	45
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bronwen Phillpott
<b>Principal</b>	Mark Cronin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 569702
<b>Email address</b>	mark.cronin@barnfield.ac.uk

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