

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231
Maple View Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 01695 566863
Skelmersdale enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320
WN8 9TG www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** jbenett@cfbt.com

14 May 2015

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

Dear Mrs Shaw

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Barnsley Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 13 May 2015 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in February 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. It is my recommendation that the next inspection of the academy be carried out under the provision of section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the School Improvement Board (SIB), the Executive Director People for Barnsley and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Trust.

Yours sincerely

Terry Holland
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014:

- Improve the quality of teaching in the Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form so that it is consistently good with more that is outstanding to raise achievement further by ensuring that:
 - information gathered on students' progress is used more effectively by teachers in their planning to set work for students that is appropriately challenging in the main academy, and especially in Key Stage 4
 - the focus and the variety of learning activities always keep students fully involved and stimulates their interest
 - the questions that teachers ask of students always make them think deeply and encourage the students to give reasoned and extended answers
 - the quality of marking and feedback to students in the main academy is consistent in making clear to students what they need to do to improve their work and in insisting on neatness and pride in the presentation of their work
 - teaching in the sixth form gives students more opportunities to find things out for themselves and to develop the skills they will need in higher education.

- Further close the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy, especially in Key Stage 4, by:
 - making sure that pupil premium funding is used with a much sharper focus on meeting disadvantaged students' needs
 - ensuring that disadvantaged students attend as regularly as other students, especially in Years 10 and 11.
 -

- Improve behaviour in lessons, especially in less-able teaching groups, by:
 - making sure that all students are fully aware of what is unacceptable behaviour and that teachers are consistent in the way they manage poor behaviour
 - giving the importance of good behaviour, manners and respect a much higher profile across the academy
 - making more effective use of tutor and enrichment time to encourage good behaviour and to enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Improve leadership and management including governance further by:
 - holding subject leaders more rigorously to account for improving teaching and standards in their subject areas
 - ensuring that the new school improvement board holds senior leaders and managers rigorously to account.

An external review of governance and an external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 13 May 2015.

Evidence

The inspector met with the executive Principal and members of the senior leadership team; advisors, consultants, a lead officer and the Director of School Improvement from the sponsor, United Learning; and the current Chair and vice-Chair of the SIB. He jointly observed three lessons with members of the senior leadership team and met with a small group of students from Years 8 and 10, including 'student ambassadors', who, in various ways, provide support to teachers and senior managers and now enable students to have a voice in how the academy operates. The inspector scrutinised documents including students' achievement and progress information, and attendance and exclusion records. He also reviewed the updated action plan from the spring term 2015 and the current action plan for the summer term, and the sponsor's and senior leaders' evaluations of the academy's work and progress to date.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2014, 21 further staff have left the academy and 19 new staff are in post or taking up their posts in the near future. These include two new vice-Principals and an assistant vice-Principal. Overall, by August 2015, 66 staff will either have left or been replaced in the academy, many previously occupying middle management or senior posts.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The executive Principal and the restructured senior leadership team continue to have a very clear view of what still needs to be done to improve learning at the academy and to address fully the points for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection report. Senior leaders have remained firm in implementing the actions needed to begin to improve teaching and behaviour, and to raise standards, especially for disadvantaged students supported by additional government funding (the pupil premium). This clarity of purpose is evident, for example, in the degree of necessary changes to staffing at all levels in order to put the required structures in place and provide the appropriate springboard for the academy to make the improvements needed. Evidence from this monitoring inspection indicates that the academy has successfully 'turned the corner'.

The actions of the executive Principal and sponsor in brokering links with other schools offering excellent practice regionally and locally, and in bringing in additional expertise and consultancy where necessary, have had a major impact. As a result, the key actions to address the areas for development identified by the section 5 inspection are now firmly embedded. Two key decisions demonstrate the rigour of the academy's evaluation of the degree of change required and its willingness to take the necessary action. In the light of reduced numbers for the next Year 12 cohort, the academy has decided not to offer a Year 12 curriculum in September 2015. It has, therefore, invested its energies in supporting students in finding

suitable provision with other local providers. A new curriculum model has also been agreed with the SIB and will be in place from September 2015. These decisions will ensure that students have better breadth, balance and continuity in what they study at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the pathways to further study open to them.

There is now a clear and embedded culture of accountability at all levels of the academy. Middle leaders are now fully aware of their responsibilities and their accountability for improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement, and the accurate assessment and moderation of students' work. The plans, programmes and specific actions needed to improve further the academy's performance and the outcomes for its students are in place and are robust.

The systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are now rigorous and the academy's picture of the quality of teaching is robust and accurate. The criteria applied to its monitoring of teaching focus clearly on helping teachers to monitor their students' progress better and to use assessment data to differentiate tasks so that students of all abilities are given work that challenges them. The programme to improve the constructive use of marking and feedback is now firmly embedded; although the academy is aware that an area for continued focus is to improve the consistency of practice across all staff. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The academy judges that just over half of teaching is currently good or better, with a target of 60% to be at this standard by the end of the summer term. Nonetheless, the academy is aware that much teaching still requires improvement and that there continues to be inconsistency in the performance of some teachers. Leaders are clearly focused on the actions needed to raise the quality of all teaching to at least good.

Clear improvements have been made in the monitoring of achievement. The academy's data on attainment and the progress being made by students are now accurate and based on more robust use of assessment. This has revealed even greater challenges in the short term as cohorts of students who have made insufficient progress in the past move through the academy. This is particularly true for the students supported by the pupil premium who make up half the overall student population. The greater clarity and accuracy in the data have ensured that the academy has robust, comprehensive and extremely well integrated strategies and that actions are now in place to help all students to achieve their potential.

The academy has successfully halted the decline in achievement reported by the last section 5 inspection. In 2014, Key Stage 4 results rose and, though they were marginally below the government's floor standards for five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics, the academy's current data predict that results will rise above the floor standard in summer 2015. Nonetheless, the legacy of underachievement and low expectations continue to have an impact. Though improving, GCSE results generally remain well below national averages. The gap in achievement and progress between disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium and their peers narrowed quite significantly in 2014, but is predicted to plateau again this year, due principally to low performance in mathematics. The

academy is well aware that the achievement of students throughout the academy needs further improvement and remains a clear target for the next stage of developments.

Very significant progress has been made in tackling the endemic problems in behaviour identified by the last section 5 inspection. The behaviour policy is proving successful and sets clear expectations and action for both staff and students alike. It places the emphasis on students taking personal responsibility for managing their behaviour alongside more carefully tiered levels of support and intervention for students who struggle with their behaviour. As a result, the academy's data show a significant reduction in internal exclusions from classes and in day-to-day sanctions for poor behaviour. It was the unanimous view of the students talked with during this monitoring inspection that the '6 Stage' approach to managing behaviour has been the most significant improvement to the academy; and has had a clear and measurable impact on their opportunity to learn and to enjoy their learning in lessons. Students commented positively on how teachers were now 'building up a relationship with us and dedicating themselves to helping us succeed' and 'how interactive learning now is – there's an element of fun in the learning and learning is fun'.

The impact of the tiered levels of support and intervention, for example, through the Nurture Centre, Internal Exclusion room and 'Back on Track' room, and the employment of full time social workers to liaise with and support students and their families, has also been very significant. This is demonstrated by the significant rise in parental engagement with the academy and in levels of attendance. Attendance is now close to the national average. Persistent absence by a small number of students, however, remains a problem. The number of temporary exclusions at the academy had, historically, been below that nationally. However, there are some students who had come to expect a lower threshold of acceptable behaviour and who continue to test the academy's resolve as new expectations and standards are introduced. The academy is, rightly, holding firm on its policy and approach, with a consequent rise in the number of managed exclusions.

The SIB continues to provide good support and to be a highly effective body in its monitoring and evaluation of the academy's progress and in assuring that the necessary improvements are made. The new Chair, previously a national leader of education (NLE), brings outstanding experience of education and management to the role. Changes to the structure of the SIB and the introduction of specific committees now mean that members of the previous governing body are directly involved in monitoring the impact of specific priorities for improvement and the academy's overall progress against the challenging targets set in the improvement plan.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- The executive Principal, with the senior staff, provides very strong leadership, a clear vision and the determination needed to bring about the improvements necessary.
- The strategic thinking underpinning the extensive restructuring of management and staffing has established clearer lines of accountability. Leaders throughout the academy are now fully aware of their professional roles and responsibilities in raising the achievement of all students and taking forward the academy's improvement programme.
- The willingness on the part of the academy and the sponsor to draw on professional expertise locally and nationally has helped to bolster and develop the programmes for improving teaching and learning, performance management and systematic approaches to assessing students' progress and achievement.
- The re-evaluation of the curriculum, including post-16 provision, and curricular planning to enhance the breadth, balance, continuity and progression of learning for students and to secure the best possible pathways to further educational opportunities.
- The work undertaken to ensure that assessment information is now more accurate and secure. This has led to more realistic analysis of the academy's potential performance and targets and, most importantly, to better informed and robust strategies to improve the progress of students and enable them to achieve to their full potential.
- The greater emphasis on individual students' progress has helped staff to sharpen their focus on the performance of different groups of students and the integration of support provided.
- The rigorous and systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding has resulted in a clear action plan that successfully interweaves all the relevant strands of academic and pastoral support for these students.
- The clear criteria and consistent understanding among staff of the basis for monitoring teaching and the associated expectations of effective practice and setting of individual targets within performance management.
- The academy's rigorous programme of support and challenge to curriculum and subject leaders has resulted in greater awareness of their leadership and management roles, accountability for the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects and their contribution to the academy's overall improvement.
- The carefully integrated planning and provision of support to students who are most vulnerable emotionally and whose behaviour and attendance are often affected by a complex set of factors. This has had a positive impact on both behaviour and attendance, and resulted in significant increases in the engagement of parents and the community the academy serves.
- As a result, in the midst of necessary change, the academy has maintained and fundamentally improved its safeguarding, inclusion, support and care for its students, especially those who are most at risk of underachieving.

Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- Although the decline in attainment has been halted, the academy and SIB are aware that progress of students throughout the school, and particularly of the large number supported by the pupil premium, still needs continuing improvement.
- The academy is well aware that the current performance of some staff remains too low or still too variable. The quality of teaching needs to continue to improve.
- Students' achievement and progress in mathematics remain too low. The latest changes to the management and leadership of the subject now need to have a positive impact on students' progress throughout the academy.
- Despite improvements in behaviour, the academy is well aware that the continuing impact of the legacy of previous expectations and behaviour management is having an effect on levels of fixed-term exclusions, and having a disproportionate impact on students supported by the pupil premium.
- The rate of persistent absence is improving, but is still too high. The academy's continued actions to address this problem will need to demonstrate consistent impact.

External support

United Learning provides excellent support strategically, financially and in the resources it provides. The sponsor's support for the executive Principal has been seminal, both in resourcing and financing the restructuring that has taken place and in enabling her to access additional support from senior practitioners to help key developments to continue alongside the restructuring. The continuing work of the sponsor's academy improvement advisor and the commissioned support of an executive headteacher of two local primary schools, for example, have had significant impact in providing additional support to senior leaders. Their monitoring and quality assurance work has also helped to strengthen teaching and learning and secure necessary improvements in middle management and subject leadership. The backing of the sponsor has also enabled the executive Principal to draw on, and draw in, expertise and best practice from a wide range of sources. This has helped the academy to make rapid improvements in its pastoral support to both students and families, in attendance and behaviour management, and in the restructuring of staffing and management across the academy. The local authority has also worked closely and effectively with the academy and the sponsor to help draw on expertise and support from local schools and Barnsley College. As a result, the academy is no longer isolated and is actively engaged in the local community of schools in order to provide the best education for its students.