

Barnsley Academy

Farm Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 3DL

Inspection dates

22–23 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is still too low.
- In Key Stage 4, not enough students make good progress, especially in mathematics.
- The achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and others in the academy are not closing rapidly enough.
- Too few of the most-able students attain the highest outcomes.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Not enough lessons challenge all students.
- Students' reading, writing and mathematical skills are not reinforced and developed in all subjects.
- Not all teachers check students' understanding carefully enough in lessons. Some teachers are not flexible enough to change activities to meet some students' changing needs.
- Students do not always respond to teachers' comments about how to improve their work. Not enough students are motivated to think for themselves, grapple with problems and test themselves fully in their work.
- Although persistent absence rates have fallen significantly since the previous inspection, overall attendance is still not high enough.
- Not all leaders and managers ensure that teachers' assessments of students' progress are accurate or are used to pinpoint and address shortfalls in teaching, and students' learning, early enough.
- The sixth form requires improvement because not all students make good progress or benefit from a wide enough range of activities beyond lessons that promote fully their personal development.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive principal shows aspirational and dynamic leadership. She has transformed the culture of the academy since the previous inspection.
- Weak teaching and leadership have been tackled vigorously. The many new teachers and leaders share fully the executive principal's high expectations and are ambitious for improvement.
- Relationships between students and adults, and among students, are positive. There is a climate of respect and tolerance throughout the academy.
- Teaching is improving and at least half is now good. Teaching is consistently good in English, and leading to rising numbers of students making good progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good across the academy by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan motivating and challenging work for all students, especially the disadvantaged and the most-able
 - encourage students to respond to comments about how to improve their work
 - carefully check on students' understanding before moving on to other planned activities in lessons
 - are sufficiently flexible to change the planned activities in lessons to meet students' changing needs.

- Raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4, and increase the proportion of students making good progress across the academy, especially in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that information about students' learning is accurate in all subjects, so that leaders and managers can identify reliably, and address successfully, underachievement earlier
 - challenging the most-able to attain the highest outcomes and reducing achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers
 - encouraging more students in mathematics to apply their skills sooner in real-life scenarios to solve problems
 - encouraging more students to explain and justify their mathematical calculations and findings.

- Heighten students' confidence, motivation and levels of self-challenge, by:
 - providing work that requires them to grapple with problems, think deeply for themselves and persist in demonstrating understanding.

- Develop the effectiveness of all leaders and managers, including the leadership of the sixth form, by ensuring that all have the necessary skills and confidence to:
 - identify shortfalls in teaching, learning and assessment, and to hold colleagues rigorously to account for underperformance
 - promote the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills, and personal qualities, in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The executive principal is aspirational for all students and staff. She shows unwavering commitment to improving the quality of teaching, and increasing students' outcomes. She has relentlessly tackled all of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, eliminating inadequate teaching and leadership across the academy.
- In a short time, the executive principal has transformed the climate of the academy. Students' behaviour is much improved. Their conduct around the academy is positive and orderly, and the vast majority are well equipped for their lessons and ready to learn.
- All this has necessitated significant changes in staffing, at all levels. Many teachers have only recently arrived at the academy. Many senior leaders and managers are relatively new to their posts. Several subject leaders have yet to be recruited, with temporary staff currently in place. The leadership of the sixth form still requires improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders share the executive principal's ambition to secure more rapid improvements in teaching, and in students' achievements. Nonetheless, not all have yet fully developed the skills and confidence to use information about students' underperformance to hold colleagues rigorously to account, and to astutely identify shortfalls in teaching.
- More work is still to be done by middle and senior leaders in establishing the accuracy of teachers' assessments of students' learning and progress in many subjects so that underachievement can be identified and addressed much earlier.
- Academy leaders recognise that pupil premium funding has not yet had sufficient impact in closing the achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers. They understand that not all disabled students and those with special educational needs, or the most-able, make sufficient progress. As such, the academy's work to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to do well requires improvement.
- Nonetheless, staff and students work together to promote strong relationships and to prevent any form of direct, or indirect, discriminatory behaviour. Prejudiced behaviour is not tolerated. These actions underpin the academy's positive culture.
- The academy sponsor, United Learning, has made good use of expert consultants and advisers, and national leaders of education and of governance, to support the academy's improvements. This ensures that academy leaders maintain an accurate picture of how well the academy is doing.
- Leaders and managers, at all levels, produce clearly focused plans to improve further the academy's work. For example, they have identified how to improve students' attendance, accelerate further progress in mathematics, ensure more consistently good and better teaching, and improve sixth form provision.
- Many of these plans are at an early stage of implementation and have yet to show impact fully.
- The curriculum has been recently overhauled, being increasingly well planned to meet students' needs. Changes to the range of academic and vocational subjects on offer, the successful introduction of the nurture group in Key Stage 3 work and increased one-to-one and small-group support out of lessons help to promote students' increasingly positive behaviour and welfare.
- The personal, social and health education programme is well planned and delivered by a team of specialist practitioners. It contributes well to students' physical, emotional and personal well-being. It also helps to promote the fundamental British values of freedom, observing the rule of law and equality of opportunity, through opportunities for students to consider issues such as criminal responsibility, laws that apply to young people, justice and local politics.
- A range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities help to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. These opportunities include students' participation in the annual 'Kids of Steel' triathlon, study tours to Germany, visits to local castles and places of interest. There are also visits made to the academy by holocaust survivors, local artists, the police and healthcare professionals that enhance students' spiritual, cultural and moral qualities. In providing all of these experiences, the academy emphasises the importance of good relations and community spirit.
- A whole-school literacy coordinator has recently been appointed but with limited impact. There is no similar appointment yet for numeracy. As a result, opportunities are not yet maximised in many subjects to promote and reinforce students' basic literacy and mathematical skills.
- Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are thorough. The executive principal

ensures that all teachers have robust targets to improve pupils' achievement, and are held to account for doing so. Members of the school improvement board are appropriately informed of, and included in, all of this work.

- Most parents are supportive of the work of the academy. They express confidence in the recent changes made and the positive impact on their children's lives.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Members of the school improvement board carry out their responsibilities with increasing confidence, and are effective.
 - The training that members of the school improvement board receive helps them to understand the academy's detailed information about students' progress, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. Consequently, they ask probing questions that hold leaders and managers to account for the academy's performance.
 - Members of the school improvement board discuss carefully major spending decisions, in particular the allocation of pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding. For example, they authorise additional staffing and resources to support students' development of literacy and numeracy skills in small groups. Members of the school improvement board are increasingly aware of the impact that these measures have on students' achievement.
 - Members of the school improvement board have put in place rigorous processes to review annually the performance of the executive principal. They ensure that they receive general information about the performance targets set for teachers and review potential links with salary progression. They ensure that teachers receive financial reward only if their students reach their challenging achievement targets.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet requirements. School leaders identify quickly any students at risk of harm. They engage well with a range of partners to respond as necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Much of the weak teaching at the time of the previous inspection has been robustly tackled and removed through large-scale changes in staffing. Thirty new staff joined the academy at the beginning of the autumn term.
- Senior leaders know that, amid all of this work they need to do more to reduce further the inconsistencies that remain in teaching in many subjects.
- In a large number of lessons, students' work is insufficiently motivating and challenging. Not all teachers have accurate information on students' progress from which to plan suitable activities and experiences. As a result, many students tend to complete the same work, for the same amount of time, regardless of their abilities and aptitudes.
- Some teachers allow students to spend too long on tasks that repeat, rather than extend, their learning. This is particularly the case with some of the most-able learners. Not all attain as highly as they should by the time they leave school. This is because some teachers do not provide enough tasks for them to deepen their thinking and motivate them to wrestle with problems and find their own solutions.
- Teachers do not always check carefully enough whether all students understand sufficiently what they are learning before moving on to new activities. Often, planning is not adapted to meet students' changing needs and to get the best out of them.
- Many teachers provide increased opportunities for students to respond to marking that invites them to improve their initial written work. Not all teachers yet insist that students take full advantage of these opportunities to produce their very best work.
- The teaching of mathematics requires particular improvement. In books and in lessons, not enough activities exist where students can apply their mathematical knowledge, justify their ideas and deepen their understanding in solving everyday problems.
- Teaching in modern foreign languages also requires particular improvement. Teachers do not encourage students to speak in the foreign language, or use the foreign language themselves as a means of communication in lessons. The planned activities do not develop students' linguistic skills sufficiently or equip them to use the foreign language in real-life scenarios.
- In some subjects, teachers miss opportunities to reinforce and develop further students' writing and mathematical skills. For example, in science, geography and history, there are inconsistencies in how teachers encourage students to write at length, sequence ideas in paragraphs, and develop analytical and

evaluative language. In design and technology, geography and science, some teachers do not take full advantage of tasks to enhance students' measuring and estimation skills and abilities in order to draw accurately a range of charts and graphs.

- Nonetheless, teaching is improving. Inspectors agree with the academy's information that indicates that approximately half of teaching is good or better. Many teachers plan increasingly to meet individual students' needs, and many lessons comprise activities that interest students in all years.
- Teaching is increasingly good in English, physical education and performing arts subjects. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, students were enthused by passionate teaching that encouraged them to develop their own ideas about the characters of Lennie and Crooks in *Of mice and men*. Similarly, expectations were high of Year 9 students in a drama lesson that invited them to explore the use of movement and speech to create mood in short everyday scenarios.
- Relationships between adults and students in most lessons, and among students, are positive. Teachers encourage students to show respect for others' ideas and views. Consequently, lessons begin punctually and are calm and orderly, with very little low-level disruption.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **require improvement**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Although persistent absence levels have reduced significantly since the previous inspection, too many students do not attend regularly. Overall attendance in the academy remains below the national average.
- While gaps in attendance between disadvantaged students and their peers are closing, the attendance of disadvantaged students is still below the national average. Therefore, some of the most vulnerable students in the academy miss the increasingly good advice and guidance that staff provide about how to keep safe.
- Although a number of parents expressed concerns on Parent View about their children's safety in the academy, and how well they are looked after, inspectors found no evidence to uphold these concerns.
- Students say they feel safe. Academy leaders take robust measures to keep students safe on-site and during educational visits. They liaise regularly with Barnsley Football Club and Barnsley College to make sure that those students who are educated for part of the week off-site attend well and behave responsibly.
- Students value the personal, social and health education lessons that provide them with good advice about how they can live healthy lifestyles, and how to stay safe when using the internet and mobile phones. They appreciate the useful information from careers lessons and interviews which help them to reflect on their future education, training or employment prospects.
- Students talk positively about their heads of year and safeguarding support officers. Students feel that there is always someone who will listen to their views and share and act on their concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- While the vast majority of students are prepared for lessons and ready to learn, too many are content to respond to teachers' minimum requests, without fully testing and challenging themselves. Not enough students are motivated to wrestle with problems, persist in developing further their understanding, and go beyond what is simply expected of them, in many lessons.
- The vast majority of students conduct themselves well throughout the day, including break and lunchtimes. Most students eat and socialise in a calm and mature manner.
- The academy is an orderly environment. Students quickly respond to adults' instructions, and the academy day flows smoothly and with minimal interruptions.
- Students of all ages show positive regard for each other's belongings, and are respectful of the academy's equipment and facilities. Buildings are graffiti-free, and there is little litter indoors and outdoors.
- Adults are quick to tackle the rare use of derogatory or aggressive language, rigorously challenging this in assemblies and tutor groups.
- Students point out how behaviour has vastly improved in the academy since the previous inspection. They know about the negative impact of prejudiced and homophobic behaviour. Student ambassadors and prefects all play their part in helping to prevent the rare occurrences of bullying.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, the proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, rose slightly. Even so, this represented no better than overall expected progress, from students' well-below-average starting points in Year 7.
- Students' progress in mathematics requires improvement. By the end of Year 11, the proportions making expected and better progress are too low. Many students lack confidence in tackling unfamiliar mathematical questions, and not enough persevere to explain and justify their mathematical reasoning to others. A minority are reluctant to challenge themselves to apply their developing mathematical skills to solve problems in real-life contexts.
- Students' progress also requires some improvement in English. While the proportion of students making expected progress is rising rapidly, and is just below national expectations, not enough are making good progress by the end of Year 11. A minority of students do not write extensively with a wide enough range of vocabulary and phrases. Similarly, not enough of the most-able students challenge themselves enough to write in sufficient detail.
- Students' progress across Key Stage 4 is well below expectations in many subjects, notably history, geography, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. Much of this underachievement is due to historically inadequate teaching, and a legacy of inadequately developed students' subject-specific skills, and basic communication and mathematical skills.
- In many subjects in Key Stage 3, students' progress is beginning to accelerate. This is in response to better teaching, and improved students' attitudes to their learning. Many students make increasingly good progress in science. They also make good progress in English literature, and in health and social care.
- The progress made by disadvantaged students requires improvement. Progress gaps in English and mathematics between disadvantaged students and their peers are not closing quickly enough by the end of Key Stage 4.
- In 2015, although the overall progress made by Year 11 disadvantaged students rose considerably in English, the gap with other students was still 15% in the academy, and 19% with others nationally. Progress made by Year 11 disadvantaged students in mathematics fell considerably. The gap with other students in the academy widened to 24%, and to 38% with others nationally.
- Gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged students are also widening by the end of Key Stage 4. In 2015, at the end of Year 11, disadvantaged students' attainment in English and mathematics was over a full GCSE grade behind their peers in the academy. It was almost two full GCSE grades behind other students nationally in English and over two GCSE grades behind in mathematics.
- School leaders have carried out a thorough review of the deployment and impact of pupil premium funded activities. As a result of additional staffing, new resources and changes in groupings of students, the progress made by disadvantaged students is improving and gaps are closing, in Key Stage 3.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve similarly to their peers. Their progress requires improvement because not all teachers match work carefully enough to meet students' needs. Where students are supported directly by adults who know very well their specific strengths and weaknesses, they achieve better.
- The progress of the most-able students requires improvement. Not enough reach the highest outcomes of which they are capable, largely because the work they undertake in many subjects is insufficiently demanding. Often, the planned activities do not deepen their thinking sufficiently or provide them with problems that require them to ponder and work things out without support.
- Year 10 and 11 students who are educated off-site on a part-time basis, at Barnsley Football Club and Barnsley College, make appropriate progress. They gain useful qualifications in sport and leisure, construction, travel and tourism, hair and beauty, and light vehicle maintenance.
- Good support is available for students at risk of falling behind. For example, Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used to provide specialist resources and teaching. The school's information on the impact of these measures shows good gains to date, especially in reading, spelling and basic numeracy skills, for a large majority of students.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Recruitment to the sixth form has declined since the previous inspection. Currently, there are no Year 12 students, and only 25 Year 13 students following 16 to 19 study programmes. A formal consultation on the future of the sixth form is in hand.
- In 2015, overall outcomes improved for Year 12 and Year 13 students in a number of subjects, and 16 to 19 minimum standards were met for vocational and academic qualifications. Nonetheless, attainment in many subjects was well below national averages and some students did not make enough progress. The most-able students are not always fully stretched and successful in attaining the highest grades of which they are capable.
- Leadership of the sixth form requires improvement. The use of information about students' learning is not used systematically to ensure that all of the study programmes are sufficiently challenging and that teaching subsequently meets all learners' needs.
- Teaching in the sixth form is improving, but there is variation across subjects. As a result, students do not make good or better progress in all subjects.
- Opportunities for all students to develop fully their personal, social and employability skills are not systematically planned. While some students do undertake work experience relevant to their needs, and impartial careers guidance enables most students to develop realistic plans for the future, the overall range of enrichment activities, visits and visitors is too narrow.
- Nonetheless, students who fall behind are generally helped to catch up. The few without GCSE grades A* to C in either English or mathematics follow relevant courses and make appropriate progress. The vast majority of students complete their study programmes, achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims, and are successful in moving on to sustained education, employment, training or apprenticeships.
- Students say that they feel safe in the sixth form and that they understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They say they enjoy most of their lessons and attend well. They believe that teachers, in general, are highly supportive.
- For the most part, students take their time in the sixth form seriously, behave well and act as positive role models for younger students in the main school.

School details

Unique reference number	131749
Local authority	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10001626

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Sponsor-led academy
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	883
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Creighton
Principal	Nikki Shaw
Telephone number	01226 284606
Website	www.barnsley-academy.org
Email address	admin@barnsley-academy.org
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with a very small minority from other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who are supported through the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding that schools receive to support those known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students joining the academy at other than normal times is above the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- There are 35 students, predominantly in Years 10 and 11, educated off-site on a part-time basis at Barnsley Football Club and Barnsley College. They study courses in sport and leisure, construction, travel and tourism, hair and beauty, and light vehicle maintenance.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been large-scale staffing changes, including a new executive principal, new senior and middle leaders, new governors and a new Chair of the Governing Body.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- United Learning and the academy have announced the opening of a period of formal consultation on the future of the sixth form. During the inspection, no Year 12 students were on roll.
- The academy receives support from United Learning education advisers, the executive principal of Hunningley and Worsburgh Bank End primary schools and Springwell Special Academy, Barnsley, and Notre Dame High School, Sheffield, as well as specialist external consultants and subject leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a wide range of different lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Pupils' work was sampled informally in lessons in a wide range of subjects. In addition, work from Year 11 was sampled separately.
- Inspectors also reviewed a range of documents, including the academy's own information on current pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of the school improvement board's meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with pupils across Years 7 to 13, members of the school improvement board and academy staff, including those with management responsibilities. A discussion also took place with a representative from United Learning, the sponsor of the academy.
- Inspectors evaluated the 31 responses of parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also took account of the views of 47 members of the academy's staff through the inspection questionnaires they returned.

Inspection team

Andrew Swallow, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara O'Brien	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Warboys	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Williams	Ofsted Inspector

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