

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 May 2017

Mr Andy Riches and Mr Wayne Barsby
Headteachers
Brinsworth Academy
Brinsworth Road
Brinsworth
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S60 5EJ

Dear Mr Riches and Mr Barsby

Short inspection of Brinsworth Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Rebekah Taylor, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are rightly proud of the school's cohesive and inclusive community and the various external awards the school has received to recognise this. Pupils conduct themselves very well around the school site and are keen to contribute to their learning. Pupils wear their new uniform with pride and they said that the new behaviour policy has made the school a better place for them to learn. Pupils' attendance overall is above average and your efforts to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is being successful.

Relationships between staff and pupils are particularly strong. Pupils said they feel well supported and listened to. When pupils work together in lessons, they show a high level of respect for each other's opinions and they articulate their ideas very well. The positive ethos of the school was described by one pupil who said, 'Teachers make us feel as though we are their number one priority.' Most parents are also very supportive of the school. One parent said, 'Our child is extremely happy at Brinsworth Academy. He is achieving well in all subjects and has gained so much in confidence since he started.'

You and your senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You are working effectively to drive forward the necessary

improvements and you show ambition to 'achieve excellence' rapidly, as outlined in your school motto. You have made sure that the sixth form continues to be a strength of the school due to its effective leadership. Learners' progress is particularly strong at A level, but their progress across a range of AS level and applied courses is also good.

Since the last inspection, the school has become part of a multi-academy trust, known as The Learner Engagement and Achievement Partnership. There have been several changes in senior leadership roles, including the appointment of both of you as joint headteachers in 2016. Some senior roles are shared across the two schools because you recognise that there is more work to do to strengthen the skills of newly appointed governors and leaders. The partnership has also enabled teachers in the two schools to work together to address some of the weaker areas, for example pupils' progress in English, particularly the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You have also worked with teachers to improve the accuracy of teacher assessment and you are beginning to share the good practice in teaching and learning.

You have addressed most of the areas for improvement identified in the report following the 2012 inspection. Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong across all key stages and for all groups of pupils, including the most able. Pupils show a good understanding of how to apply their mathematical knowledge in a range of contexts, and their reasoning skills are well developed through effective teaching. Current pupils are also making good progress from their starting points, across a range of subjects, because you have raised the expectations of teachers and of pupils. You are aware that there is still some variability in the quality of teaching across subjects and you have put in place rigorous checks so that pupils who are not making sufficient progress are supported earlier.

Following the last inspection, you were also asked to develop pupils' reading and writing skills. There is evidence in pupils' books that they are encouraged to write at length in several subjects and, in most groups, pupils have ample opportunity to reflect on their learning and to revisit their work to make improvements. Pupils are well supported to organise their ideas and to use correctly a range of subject-specific language. You have also introduced new reading programmes for Year 7 pupils to encourage wider reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of safeguarding is evident in all aspects of the school's practice. You regularly update staff and governors on safeguarding procedures. Staff know how to report any concerns and record-keeping is detailed and of high quality, showing that staff follow procedures appropriately.

The designated safeguarding leaders treat safeguarding concerns with a high degree of professionalism and rigorously follow through referrals to other agencies. Some pupils are educated off-site for part of the week and given support through 'early help' providers. Strong systems for communicating between school leaders

and these providers mean that the pupils' attendance and safety are given high priority.

The pastoral team works very effectively to support pupils and to make sure they are safe. Pupils said that staff are very approachable; pupils know who to go to if they have any worries. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that any bullying will be tackled quickly. They are confident that the curriculum helps them to explore the risks they could face in the local community and online. Pupils talked confidently about the ways in which they could reduce the risks and keep themselves safe. Parents also agree that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- One of my lines of enquiry was to find out why there was a decline in pupils' progress in English in 2015 and 2016, and how effectively leaders have addressed this. Since you took up post in 2016, you have taken robust action to review all aspects of the English department's work. You have strengthened subject leadership, appointed additional qualified teachers and checked that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching. As a result of your actions, current pupils are now making much better progress. You know that this focus on improving outcomes in English needs to be maintained. You have also been decisive in tackling some weaker teaching and leadership in business studies, design and technology, and information and communication technology, so that pupils in the current Year 11 are achieving higher grades in these subjects.
- Across year groups, current pupils are making good progress because you have improved the rigour with which you track their progress and teachers are supporting pupils who are not yet meeting their targets. Teachers are also providing pupils with more effective exam practice. For example, during the inspection, Year 11 pupils received thorough feedback on their mock exam performance in English, mathematics and science. Teachers took time to work through any misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge, and pupils showed high levels of confidence in their ability to improve because of this effective support. Subject leaders also demonstrate the determination to raise standards further and you are giving newly appointed leaders the guidance and training they need to carry out their roles effectively.
- You have also reviewed the curriculum so that it is more challenging. You believe that a three-year key stage 4 programme will help Year 9 pupils to develop the skills they need for the new GCSE courses. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 are responding well to the aspirational targets you have set for them. You are working effectively with subject leaders to design an appropriate range of assessments to enable younger pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do next.
- Leaders and governors are using the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. However, in 2016, disadvantaged pupils did not perform as well as other pupils nationally, partly due to their weak performance in English and partly because some followed Level 1 qualifications which did not count in the new performance measures. Also, in the past, the proportion of

disadvantaged pupils being excluded from school for a fixed period was too high. You now provide greater guidance for pupils who choose to follow Level 1 courses to make sure that they are appropriately challenging and you have had some success in reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils being excluded from school. However, you recognise that leaders are not prioritising the needs of this group of pupils sufficiently in their improvement plans or analysing clearly enough whether the funded interventions are making a difference, and you acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress.

- Following the last inspection, you were asked to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. You have worked hard to make sure all pupils experience teaching which is at least 'good' and there is some very effective teaching in the school. You have also increased the rigour with which you check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, teachers have more opportunities to reflect on their practice with a colleague. Teachers said that any weaknesses are addressed quickly through departmental training sessions and one-to-one support. Subject leaders agreed that the school's culture encourages staff to try out new ways to engage pupils in lessons.
- You have correctly recognised the need to share the most effective teaching practice more widely, so you have recently appointed a new senior leader to lead on reducing any remaining variation across, and within, subjects. For example, the majority of teachers challenge the most able pupils in their class effectively, through questioning which probes pupils' thinking. When this is done well, pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence and articulate their reasoning in impressive detail. However, in some subjects, pupils are sometimes given the same level of work, irrespective of their starting points, and they make slower progress because teachers' expectations are not high enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- your current focus on improving outcomes in English is maintained
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils is given higher profile in the school's action plans so that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils nationally and fixed-term exclusions for this group are reduced
- the most effective practice in teaching is shared more widely, so that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve.

I am copying this letter to the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on

the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Kenworthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your leadership team, middle leaders and a group of teachers. I also met with two members of the trust and three members of the governing body. We met with pupils in Year 7 to Year 11, informally in lessons and also formally to discuss their views about school life. We visited learning across a range of subjects and year groups, some with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in books. We looked at a range of school information, including current assessment information, leaders' school self-evaluation, and information about the behaviour and attendance of current pupils. There were no responses to the pupils' questionnaire but inspectors considered 91 responses to the staff questionnaire, 59 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 46 written comments by parents.