

Inspection of Barclay Academy

Walkern Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 3RB

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students at Barclay Academy know that they attend a school where expectations are high for their achievement and their behaviour. Leaders have made significant improvements since the school opened. In the majority of subjects, pupils do well. This includes those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Everyone is encouraged to read for pleasure. Those who struggle are given good support to help them access texts in lessons.

Pupils and students are happy and feel safe here. They are known well by staff. Behaviour on the corridors and around the school site is usually well ordered. Pupils report that any bullying is usually dealt with swiftly and fairly by adults.

The range of extra-curricular clubs is exceptional, due in no small part to support from the trust. This includes activities in the arts and sports, karting, rowing, and opportunities to experience trips to the theatre and abroad. Students in the small but growing sixth form are given opportunities to take responsibility and develop leadership qualities. As a result of the excellent programme, pupils and students have a mature understanding of and respect for different personal characteristics.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the curriculum. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils achieve very well as the result of very well-designed, well-sequenced and well-taught programmes of study. A strong programme of intervention work supports those who struggle to read when they join the school. A whole-school approach to reading for pleasure and a range of enrichment activities around literature also positively promote the benefits of reading to all pupils and students. Sixth-form students who have previously struggled with English and mathematics are given individualised support.

Leaders have introduced a greater range of demanding courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The number of pupils following courses that contribute to the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) is rising, most notably in languages GCSEs because of pupils studying Latin from Year 7. Effective strategies are used in class to identify and support pupils with SEND, including whose needs are identified through education, health and care plans. Pupils achieve well, overall.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils are offered a full range of subjects. In a few foundation areas, pupils' work is not yet of a consistently high quality. This is due in part to further work being needed on planning or on ensuring that the knowledge and skills taught are demanding enough. Consistent classroom routines mean that pupils and students are required, and able, to focus on learning as soon as they arrive in lessons. This often takes the form of tasks where they are asked to recall previously learned knowledge or think about new concepts. This is usually effective, but on

occasion, pupils' misconceptions are not picked up or their responses are not given enough consideration by teachers.

Expectations are high for behaviour in and out of the classroom. Most, but not all, pupils and parents understand and accept the rules set by leaders, including for personal presentation and for being equipped for lessons. A small but persistent number of pupils do not conform to teachers' repeated requests and do not self-regulate their behaviour. This leads to short periods of isolation or longer exclusion.

Provision for pupils' and students' personal development is exceptional. All classes are taught personal, social and health education twice a week. These sessions are supported by visiting speakers and theatre groups that cover issues such as consent, bullying and moral choices. Pupils and students are encouraged to give their views and to be physically and mentally resilient. They are taught how to use information technology, including social media, both safely and healthily. The trust gives strong support to character development and participation, including through the provision of a full-time co-curricular coordinator. Provision for careers education is also strong, both in the main school and in the sixth form.

Parents, staff, and trust leaders rightly recognise the determined and principled work of the headteacher and his leadership team in improving the school since it opened. Comprehensive ongoing training and support are provided for staff, who also appreciate the thoughtful and meaningful consideration given to their workload. Those in the early stages of their teaching careers are particularly well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All required checks are made on adults working at the school. Any concerns are managed swiftly and appropriately, including through referrals to the appropriate authorities. Individual and accurate pupil records are kept, with help secured from outside agencies when it is needed.

Staff training in safeguarding is regular. Clear policies are in place and action taken in cases of abusive language or behaviour around the school. Adults have an accurate understanding of how to spot any signs of concern, and about how to report these when they occur.

Leaders make regular checks on the well-being of pupils attending alternative provision, to ensure they too are kept safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, leaders have not planned a curriculum that includes sufficient content or details of what pupils should learn. This means some pupils do not produce work of a consistently high quality. Leaders should ensure that all subjects are planned and delivered in a way that enables pupils to gain high-level, age-appropriate knowledge and skills.
- A small minority of pupils are not yet able to self-regulate their behaviour effectively. Subsequently, they are sent to isolation or require exclusion. This disrupts their learning. Leaders should continue to work with parents and pupils to support pupils to manage their behaviour and to reduce further the number of lessons that are disrupted.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144623
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10267818
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	815
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	81
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lord John Nash
Headteacher	Dr Matthew Laban
Website	www.barclay.futureacademies.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school opened in February 2019 as part of the Future Academies Trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and chief executive officer, senior leaders, other leaders, staff and pupils.
- As part of evaluating the quality of governance, the lead inspector met with the chair of the trust, the chair of the local governing body, and other governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, music, physical education and Spanish. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors explored other curriculum subjects through curriculum plans, visits to lessons and sampling work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record of recruitment vetting checks, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the 158 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors also considered 72 responses to the staff survey and 60 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Warburton	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Kerridge	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Hearn	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023