

The Barnsley Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131749
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	334532
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	John Rutherford HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	467
Sixth form	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Milward
Principal	Mr Dave Berry
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Academy address	Farm Road Kendray Barnsley S73 3DL
Telephone number	01226 284606
Fax number	01226 731793

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Barnsley Academy opened in September 2006 in the same accommodation as its predecessor school. In March 2009 it moved into a new building. The academy is sponsored by the United Learning Trust. It is much smaller than average and serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. Almost all students are White British. The percentage of students with a learning difficulty and/or disability is well above average. The academy's specialisms are in science and business enterprise. It has gained the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the academy

Grade: 3

The academy provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education. The inspection judgements are in line with the academy's own very frank and accurate self-evaluation. The principal and senior leadership team have used robust self-evaluation effectively to introduce considerable improvements in teaching and learning, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support for students. As a result, students' achievement and standards have improved from a low baseline and are now satisfactory overall. Students' behaviour and attendance have improved significantly. The strengths in self-evaluation and the improvements achieved so far demonstrate that the academy has a good capacity to raise standards further. The recent move to the new building has made a strong, positive contribution to the development of the academy. The local governing board makes a very significant contribution to the leadership of the academy. The academy has the full support of the majority of parents.

Students' attainment is below average when they join the academy in Year 7. They make satisfactory progress and, although they leave with standards that are below average overall, there are important strengths as well as areas for improvement. Achievement and standards in English and mathematics, while improving, are not yet high enough. However, standards are high in science, which reflects the academy's specialism, and a high proportion of students gain five good GCSE or equivalent passes. Students with a learning difficulty and/or disability make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to students' academic and personal development. The specialism in science and a strong emphasis on physical education have been used particularly well to tailor the curriculum to the needs and interests of the students. The additional support for lower attaining pupils is beginning to help them to catch up. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. While teaching is improving and students are beginning to take more responsibility for their learning, there is still a need for more good teaching and learning across the school to overcome the legacy of underachievement and raise overall achievement and standards beyond satisfactory.

Because of the good care, guidance and support provided by the academy, many students are raising their aspirations and striving to achieve more. The academy provides effective support to vulnerable students and those at risk of disaffection in order to keep them engaged in learning. The high expectations of the academy are seen in the challenging targets that each student has for raising their standards in English, mathematics and science. However, students are not yet receiving sufficient guidance on how they can make the next short steps of progress towards meeting these targets.

The academy helps students to make good progress in their personal development. They make particularly good progress in learning to lead a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe, form constructive relationships and show increasing responsibility in contributing to improvements in their community. They are laying a sound foundation on which to build their future education, employment or training.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of this new and growing sixth form is satisfactory. It is small and offers a satisfactory curriculum with a limited but expanding range of courses. Achievement is

satisfactory. Two students completed and passed their Level 3 courses in 2008 and entered employment. In 2009, for the first time, five students have applied for university courses. Numbers are too small to measure accurately standards and progress against national benchmarks. Most students are making satisfactory progress to meet the targets set by the academy.

Students' personal development and well-being in the sixth form are satisfactory. Attendance has improved in the current school year but it is well below the level for the rest of the academy. A minority of students make insufficient progress due to their poor attendance. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. When the sixth form opened, some students had low levels of qualifications and they were not always guided onto appropriate courses. Students are now better advised about post-16 courses, both in the academy and in other institutions. Students appreciate the support they receive from sixth form staff.

Sixth form students take on helping and supervisory responsibilities as prefects but few are involved as mentors for younger students. A minority of students stay on in the sixth form for a third year to enhance their qualifications and to develop their personal and intellectual confidence. The sixth form has developed effective links with the University Centre in Barnsley and the University of Huddersfield and this is helping to raise the aspirations of younger students to go on to higher education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A small proportion is good, and this is where teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and expertise. Many students are conscientious, they work effectively on their own initiative and they contribute well in lessons. However, a minority of students do not arrive punctually to lessons. Some students are insecure in explaining ideas and some groups are too small for developing discussion skills. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development.

What the academy should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in English and mathematics.
- Improve the proportion of lessons that are good or better.
- Ensure that marking and other feedback to students identifies the next small steps needed to improve their learning.
- Improve the quality of provision and students' outcomes in the sixth form.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' achievement is satisfactory. In 2008, they gained GCSE results which were below average overall: however, this represents satisfactory progress from their below average starting points. The proportion of students who gained five good GCSEs improved in 2008 and was above the national average. Standards are particularly high in science, which is the academy's specialism. However, the proportion of students who gained five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics declined and was very low by national standards. Improved attendance, high levels of individual support and the targeted teaching of underachieving groups of students in Year 11 is paying dividends and the academy is on track to raise standards in 2009. Evidence

from early GCSE results, for example, shows that standards will improve in mathematics and rise significantly in English.

Over the last two years, students have made outstanding progress in gaining five good GCSEs. This is due to the good curriculum at Key Stage 4, which provides a range of academic and vocational courses to match students' needs and interests. However, the progress students made in gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics was below average. This was mainly due to the legacy of slow progress at Key Stage 3. Progress is improving in Key Stage 3 and, as a result, standards in English, mathematics and science rose significantly in 2008 from their previous very low levels. According to the academy's own assessments, standards at Key Stage 3 have improved further in 2009. In addition, the academy has enabled some students in Years 7, 8 and 9 to gain early functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Most students enjoy working in the new building. This, and much hard work with students and their families, has brought about an exceptional improvement in attendance during the last year. It is now in line with the national average. The punctuality of students has also improved considerably. Students' behaviour is much better than it has been in the past and poor self-discipline is now restricted to a small minority.

Students have a good understanding of healthy eating. They take advantage of the many opportunities for taking a healthy meal or snack. They also understand the importance of exercise and many participate in the wide range of physical activities within the curriculum and extra-curricular programme. Students feel safe in the academy. They are confident to seek help from adults if they have a problem and they feel little threat from bullying. Students make a good positive contribution to their community through a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility for helping others, both within the academy and the neighbourhood.

Students form positive relationships that cross age, gender and ethnic boundaries, largely as a result of the academy's work to promote community cohesion. A minority of students can take advantage of the opportunities provided to reflect on such matters as body image, relationships, racial harmony and the effects of war. Their capacity to discuss such issues is often restricted by their lack of confidence and low levels of speaking skills. Students develop a sound basis for their future economic well-being. Key contributory factors are their progress in the functional skills of English, mathematics and ICT, their improving skills in working independently, their work-based experiences and their rising aspirations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The academy's monitoring and evaluation of lessons provides broadly accurate information about strengths and areas for development. Leaders have used this information to increase the proportion of good teaching, although this is not yet sufficient to bring about good overall achievement for students. The work on improving students' motivation and initiative in learning is also making a positive

difference. Where learning is good or better, students understand the lesson objective and they work conscientiously on well-planned, interesting activities. They work independently with growing confidence and often learn through discussion in pairs or groups. Teachers promote good progress with clear explanations and skilful questioning that extends students' understanding.

Where students learn less effectively, lesson objectives are imprecise and there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of tasks. At times, these tasks are insufficiently demanding or they involve unchallenging worksheets that students complete rapidly and with little care. Students' interest wanes and a minority become disruptive, which restricts the pace of learning and spoils the enjoyment of the majority in the lesson. Progress also falters when teachers' explanations are too long, limiting the time available for students to develop their skills in independent work.

Senior and middle leaders have recently been working hard to improve the marking of students' work. Overall, marking does not yet contribute sufficiently to improving learning. Much is too cursory and intermittent to provide students with useful guidance. Occasionally, comments acknowledge the effort students have made, but clear pointers for improvement are less frequent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall the curriculum is good, notably at Key Stage 4. The academy's specialism in science has been used effectively to lead the way in tailoring the curriculum to students' needs. Students can select from a broad range of science courses, including those with a vocational focus such as sports science. Other vocational courses, such as off-site provision for construction and hairdressing, also meet the needs of students. Establishing a range of qualifications that are assessed continuously has enabled students to achieve more success, especially in gaining five or more good GCSE or equivalent passes. The introduction of a new GCSE course in English Studies is beginning to pay dividends because it is relevant to students' interests. The academy's policy of entering students early for GCSE qualifications is increasing the confidence and motivation of students as well as raising their achievement.

At Key Stage 3, the emphasis placed on raising the standard of students' basic skills is well judged. Tests at several levels in the functional skills of English, mathematics and ICT are used effectively to motivate students. However, there is no clear and systematic approach across the curriculum to developing students' learning skills, especially their capacity to use talk to enhance their learning. Assessment information is used effectively to provide additional booster classes and individual teaching for underachieving students, which is beginning to have a positive impact.

A substantial allocation of curriculum time to physical education in both Key Stages 3 and 4 enhances students' enjoyment of academy life and supports them well in making healthy lifestyle choices. Weekly enrichment sessions, assemblies and tutorials also make an effective contribution to students' personal development. A growing range of events such as the carbon challenge, links with local employers, young enterprise businesses and clubs all contribute positively to students' future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care, guidance and support are good. A purposeful and caring environment for all students has been created in an impressive and well-resourced new building. The principal and staff know each student well and ensure that the academy helps them to thrive. This care has made an important contribution to the improving levels of students' attendance and motivation. The academy presents an inclusive ethos of high aspiration for all students. The strong inclusion team of learning mentors and a school counsellor provide a wide range of support to individuals and groups to reduce their barriers to learning, prevent failure and improve achievement. The inclusion team has built constructive relationships with vulnerable students and their families, which have clearly helped the students to continue with their learning.

The academy has developed systems for regular and prompt communication with parents about students' progress and attendance. It effectively draws support from a range of local agencies to help prevent crime, promote health, improve behaviour and attendance and raise aspirations for higher education. Over the last two years, the number of exclusions has been reduced significantly. Systems for tracking the development of students' academic skills and attitudes are used very effectively to monitor regularly and report on students' progress towards ambitious targets. Students are given effective additional support when their progress is found to be stalling. Students know their targets for the standards they must reach in English, mathematics and science by the end of each key stage. However, methods for guiding students on their next short steps of learning are at an early stage of development. As a consequence, students are not yet well enough informed to take responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The principal and senior leadership team provide very clear direction for raising students' achievement. They use data on students' progress very effectively to set ambitious targets for raising standards. These targets demonstrate the high expectations that the academy has for all students. Driven by the principal's vision, an important aspect of meeting these expectations is the considerable encouragement given to students, and their families, to raise their own expectations of what they can achieve.

The principal and senior leadership team have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the work of the academy. Their immediate and robust action to tackle any weaknesses has contributed significantly to the academy's improvements. This feature of their work is central to their good capacity for raising standards further. Senior leaders are helping middle leaders to develop the skills they need to make a stronger contribution to raising standards. Middle leaders use data effectively to ensure additional support is provided for students who are underachieving in their subject. They are at an early stage in taking a leading role in evaluating the quality of provision in their subject and introducing necessary improvements.

The local governing board makes an excellent contribution to raising students' aspirations and achievement, both by holding the leadership team to account and by providing very well-targeted support. They are very effective in securing the support of the local community for the academy

and they ensure that the views of parents are well represented in decisions about its future development.

The academy makes a good contribution to community cohesion, both within the school and the local area. There is a clear awareness of what is needed to improve cohesion and much progress has been made by opening up the academy's facilities to local groups and by organising events in the community to promote positive relationships between groups from different backgrounds.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when I came to inspect your academy with two of my colleagues. You gave us some very useful information when we talked to you during lessons and in our meetings with you. This helped us to make our judgement that your academy is providing you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education.

I would like to share with you some of the main points from my report.

- There has been an exceptional improvement in your attendance. Well done.
- Your behaviour has improved considerably in the past year. Again, well done.
- Your improved attendance and behaviour are helping you to make better progress in your work. You are now achieving well in some subjects, especially science.
- The academy is helping you to aim higher in your plans for the future.
- The academy provides you with a good curriculum that is well planned to meet your needs.
- The care for students is good, especially for those of you who, at times, need some additional support.

The principal, senior leaders and local governing board are constantly improving the work of the academy in order to meet their very ambitious aims for you. I have agreed with them a small number of areas to improve the academy further:

- to help you to improve your progress, especially in English and mathematics
- to ensure that more of your lessons are as good as the best ones we saw
- to give you more guidance on how to reach your targets
- to ensure that you achieve more in the sixth form.

You have already done a considerable amount to help the academy in its aim of building on 'the best in everyone'. You can help your teachers to tackle these areas for improvement by ensuring you know exactly what you need to do to improve your progress and 'going for it'.