

Barnfield West Academy Luton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135337
Local Authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	345420
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Pete Birkett
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel DeSouza (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	7 January 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 40 teachers, visited 49 lessons and looked at students' work. They joined two assemblies, observed break-times, held meetings with the sponsor, members of the academy board, representatives from the Parents Focus Group, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including school data, information relating to the academy's federation with Barnfield College and Barnfield South Academy, the academy development plan, records of meetings, a survey of parents' views carried out in December 2009 and 19 parental questionnaires, staff and pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how the academy enabled almost all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to successfully make above expected rates of progress and reach standards above the national average in 2009, in less than two years and to ascertain whether this progress is being maintained
- whether the academy has taken action to ensure that more able students gain higher standards in English
- why some students from minority ethnic backgrounds made relatively less progress than other groups in English and mathematics in 2009, and whether all students are now making similar progress
- whether the academy has ensured that activities in lessons are tailored to meet the needs of all students, and ensures that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work
- how effectively the academy is promoting the development of students' learning skills, so that they all become independent reflective learners

Information about the school

Barnfield West Academy opened in September 2007. Sponsored by the further education college, Barnfield College, it is part of the Barnfield Federation with Barnfield South Academy and Barnfield College. It is also part of Campus Luton, a partnership for the planning and delivery of the 14-19 curriculum in the local area. Barnfield West Academy is of a similar size to most secondary schools. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average. Over half the students come from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of students who do not speak English as a first language is over twice the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average and the number of students with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average. The academy has specialisms in creative cultural industries, enterprise and new technologies. Work on a new building is on track for completion in September 2011, and includes facilities for a sixth form.

The academy has a range of awards. In 2008, within a year of opening it achieved International Schools Status, gaining Healthy Schools status, the Every Child Matters

Quality Mark Gold Award and the national 'Education Business Award of Outstanding Academy' in 2009. The academy has also received 13 national awards from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for 'Raising Achievement and Transforming Learning', including that for the most improved school or academy.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Barnfield West Academy has improved outcomes for students from one of the lowest in the country to among the very highest in only two years. This truly remarkable achievement is due to the dedication, passion and relentless drive for improvement with all involved in the life of the academy. The initial vision of the sponsor, Barnfield College, was to improve both the quality of provision for students in the local area and to improve facilities for the community. This has been brought to fruition through the outstanding leadership of the principal and her senior team, together with the academy board and the Barnfield Federation. The principal has a keen eye for detail. With the support initially of senior leaders, and now with an outstanding team of middle leaders, she has ensured that high standards have been established in every area. Endorsing the sponsor's expectation of traditional values, she has successfully created an ethos of mutual respect and trust which pervades the academy. This, together with the emphasis on praise, celebration and reward means that all members of the community feel highly valued. As a result, all want to achieve as highly as possible and to contribute both to their own personal success and to the overall success of the academy. This is another remarkable achievement. The academy is exceedingly well-placed to move into the next stage of its development in its new building. It has an outstanding capacity to improve even further.

Students make exceptional progress from their starting points to reach standards, by the end of Year 11, that are significantly above average in most respects. All aspects of provision are outstanding. The use of assessment is a model of best practice. It is embedded in the academy's everyday work and successfully underpins the high aspirations of teachers and students. Robust tracking systems inform timely and effective interventions which are highly successful in ensuring that a significant proportion of students not only achieve their aspirational targets but also their 'stretch grades' and above. High quality teaching combined with the students' positive attitudes and rigorous assessment ensures that all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make accelerated progress, particularly in acquiring knowledge and developing their understanding. This outstanding teaching is due to senior leaders' focus on improving consistency in the delivery of lessons. The development of students' skills is often excellent. However, the desire of teachers to ensure students do well leads on occasion to too few opportunities for young people to develop their own independent learning skills. Learning outcomes are skilfully designed to accelerate learning, but activities in lessons are not always tailored to enable the students to work independently. In lessons the promotion of students' wider personal development is at times overlooked as opportunities are missed to develop their insight

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into or reflect on the views of others in order to reassess their own values.

Students' good behaviour contributes strongly to their outstanding rates of progress. It is mostly outstanding but is to an extent dependent on the level of interest and enthusiasm generated by teachers in lessons. In the very few weaker lessons where teaching is less inspiring a few pupils fail to take a more independent role in moderating their behaviour, or supporting that of others.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise attainment and further improve outcomes for students the academy should continue to develop students' learning skills by:
 - closely tailoring activities to planned learning outcomes so that students have greater opportunity to work independently
 - ensure lessons regularly provide opportunities for students to discuss their responses
 - providing more opportunities for reflection and the evaluation of the views of others in order to strengthen and deepen spiritual development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The proportion of students achieving at least five A*-C grades including English and mathematics increased to 54% in 2009, slightly above the national figure. Attainment in English was lower than that in mathematics due to a smaller number of students attaining the highest grades. However, current data indicates that more able students are on track to attain high standards in English, that the rising trend in attainment is set to continue, and that the academy will exceed the results achieved last year.

The quality of learning observed in lessons is good and often outstanding. In lessons observed, the students settled quickly to their work, sustained their concentration well and enjoyed rising to the challenge presented by a variety of demanding activities. High levels of attendance and punctuality are indicative of how much students enjoy their time at the academy. Students know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet or mobile phones, because they have an excellent grasp of potential risks. They feel that the academy keeps them safe, that there is little bullying and that the measures put in place to deal with any bullying which may occur are highly effective. Members of the anti-bullying team 'ABAT' take pride in their role to prevent bullying. Students have an extensive knowledge and understanding of how to lead a healthy life style. They know that diet and physical activity contribute to their well-being and conversely that smoking, drugs and alcohol carry a high risk of ill health. Students take advantage of the extensive range of health-related fitness activities on offer before and after the school day. They are rightly proud of Barnfield West and actively participate in the smooth running of the academy. Prefects and House Captains take their responsibilities seriously. The school council has been consulted about the new building work and their ideas have been shared with other professionals involved in the

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build. Outside the academy, sports leaders are closely involved with local primary schools and encourage young children to become involved in sport. A local residential home for the elderly values the contact the academy has with them. Some students are even learning ballroom dancing so that they can perform an exhibition dance at the tea dance they are organising. The academy's specialisms have generated much student interest in enterprise activities. Students taking qualifications in business studies and information communications technology have been highly successful and reflect the outstanding achievement in students' development of workplace skills. Students aspire to do well and feel confident that they have the necessary skills to move successfully into the working environment and/or develop their education further. Students have a strong moral code and almost always relate very well to each other around the academy and in lessons. They are fully prepared to listen to conflicting arguments that relate to culture and beliefs and are tolerant of these issues. They are eager to learn about issues that affect them but have still to develop a more reflective view on how these influence them a personal level.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Teaching in the academy has improved rapidly over the last two years. Much of it is innovative and exciting so contributing to the outstanding progress of students.

In lessons the teachers' constant reappraisal of students' understanding, combined with rigorous marking, provides students with clear guidance on their next steps for improvement. Assessment information is used to set challenging work and ambitious targets for students, to track their progress over time, to report to parents and to shape specific interventions for anyone in danger of falling behind. Most lessons are well planned and carefully structured with clear learning objectives shared with students. Students are aware of their teachers' high expectations and greatly appreciate the substantial help and support they receive. Teachers make very good use of technology, including interactive whiteboards, to deliver their lessons and most provide a wide range of activities that ensure students are actively engaged in their learning.

The innovative curriculum provides a very wide and exciting range of courses matched carefully to students' learning needs. The academy uses its specialisms well to create opportunities for student development. Students start many of their final courses in Year 9 and all successfully complete vocational courses in business studies and information communication technology. This early start also enables students to gain qualifications in art, drama and food technology. The extended school day run by school staff provides many learning opportunities before and after school as well as in the holidays and has enabled students to exceed their original examination targets. This provision has been enhanced by a wide range of after school courses that enrich young people's experiences and are recognised in its Graduation Awards. The innovative school portal further extends learning beyond the classroom so that students can access resources, information and advice. In its drive to meet the needs of all students including those wanting a more vocational experience, Barnfield Federation has set up the first Studio School, a national initiative which combines core studies with vocational training and enterprise education.

The highly individual nature of both the pastoral and academic support provided for all students has an outstanding impact on their progress. Because the students are known well by all of their teachers and because of the trusting respectful relationships students listen and act on the valuable advice provided. The academy's conflict resolution manager is highly effective in supporting individual students and their families. The excellent links with a range of outside agencies further enhance this provision. Students are very well prepared for the world of work through the personalised support and care of the careers and Connexions manager.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	1
	1
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	1

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1
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How effective are leadership and management?

Precise, detailed strategic planning and decisive action have enabled students to make such truly outstanding gains in attainment. From the outset the academy set what would appear to be unrealistic targets, but due to carefully planned action, and the unshakeable belief that they were achievable, these targets have been exceeded, and so future targets have been increased even higher. The development of such a talented and highly skilled team of dedicated teachers and support staff is directly the result of rigorous monitoring and training. Senior leaders show a very clear commitment to developing creative and innovative approaches to teaching and assessment. Middle leaders are closely involved in a regular cycle of improvement that evaluates all aspects including marking for improvement, classroom practice and lesson planning. All of this is conducted in a positive and constructive way and engages all staff in the process of school improvement. Board members provide outstanding governance. They are fully aware of the academy's strengths, know the relative weaknesses, and know what action has been taken to address these. They share the high ambition that only excellence is acceptable. Members of the Parents Focus group share this ambition. They are currently being influential in shaping community provision in the new building. The academy works highly effectively with a range of partners in addition to the federation. It has developed strong links with the community, with its four main primary schools, with multi-agency services and with an ever increasing number of business partners. Students are true ambassadors in these partnerships. For example, some help to build relationships with the community, and others have raised funds so student representatives can build a school in the Cameroon. These links are also examples of the extensive work to support community cohesion, another outstanding aspect of the academy's work. Equality is outstanding. Each and every member of the academy community is valued and given real opportunity to progress. Safeguarding procedures to ensure the safety and security of the community are rigorous.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Only 19 questionnaires were received by the end of the inspection. However, members of the Parents Focus Group expressed the view that this was because the academy had very recently carried out a survey through PACE (Parents' Attitudes to Their Children's Education). Inspectors reviewed the very comprehensive report which indicates that parents/carers have a positive view of the academy in all areas.

Responses from the 19 parents who returned questionnaires show that just over a quarter of them do not believe that the academy deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good, and felt that the academy deals very effectively with the small number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour. In the very small percentage of lessons where teaching is less strong, student behaviour can be marginally disruptive. Academy leaders are actively addressing this issue. However inspectors feel that although personal development is outstanding, still more can be done to ensure that all students independently manage their behaviour in an outstanding fashion.

A number of parents felt that their children were not making enough progress and that the academy does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors do not agree with either of these views. They found that students' progress is outstanding and that the academy fully takes account of the views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barnfield West Academy Luton to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 900 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	32	11	58	1	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	26	12	63	2	11	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	21	14	74	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	16	12	63	4	21	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	2	11	15	79	1	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	16	11	58	2	11	1	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	11	13	68	3	16	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	4	21	11	58	2	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	11	14	74	2	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	11	11	58	5	26	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	11	11	58	4	21	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	26	12	63	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	26	12	63	2	11	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Barnfield West Academy, Luton, LU4 0NE

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your academy recently and joining you in lessons. Thank you for making us so welcome, for talking to us and showing us your work. We think that your academy is quite remarkable in the way that it has improved your learning and helps you to make such outstanding progress. We know your principal, senior leaders and teachers have worked hard to make sure that they can give you outstanding opportunities to learn.

To help you reach higher standards in your work and to make your personal development even stronger, we have asked Mrs de Souza, the directors and staff to:

- closely tailor activities in lessons to their planned learning outcomes so that you have greater opportunity to work independently
- make sure that you regularly have opportunities in lessons to discuss your responses (for example, to questions)
- provide more opportunities for you to reflect on and evaluate the views of others in order to strengthen and deepen your spiritual development.

You can help by using all the opportunities created by your teachers to further develop your skills in independent learning and to think more reflectively about the perceptions of others. Your responses during Miss McCartney's assembly showed me that you already have an awareness of doing so.

Yours sincerely

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector

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