

Barnfield South Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135338
Local Authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	345425
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	834
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Pete Birkett
Headteacher	Mr Patrick Hannaway (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	7 January 2010
School address	Cutenhoe Road Luton Bedfordshire
Telephone number	01582 722333
Fax number	01582 457344
Email address	s.wallis@barnfield.ac.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. During the inspection the majority of time was spent in classrooms and 40 different teachers and lessons were observed. In addition to this, inspectors met with the Principal and associate principal, the sponsor and Chair of the Board of Directors, groups of students, key groups of staff, including senior teaching colleagues from within the academy, and representatives from Barnfield College of Further Education in their role as core partners within the federation. Inspectors also reviewed a range of key strategic documents, including the academy development plan, and minutes and agenda from a range of meetings. In addition a sample of students' work from Year 11 was reviewed. The views of students, staff and parents were considered from various recent surveys, including 35 parental questionnaires.

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

- levels of attainment for specific groups of students, particularly those from White British heritage, Pakistani heritage, Year 7 and Year 10 and in the following subjects: physical education, humanities, design and technology and art
- the rate of student progress for some specific groups of students, including girls, current Year 10 and high ability students
- the response of leadership to recent changes in role, the monitoring of teaching quality and the impact of this on the overall quality of teaching
- the impact of changes to the curriculum, notably in vocational and wider (extended services) provision, particularly on behaviour and attendance levels
- standards of literacy across the wider curriculum and in all subjects
- planning for post-16 provision and the move to new premises.

Information about the school

In September 2007, Barnfield South Academy opened with its first intake of students aged from 11-16 years. It is part of a federation between Barnfield College of Further Education (which is the main sponsor) and a sister academy, Barnfield West. Barnfield South opened to replace a predecessor school which had been in special measures for two years; most of the students and staff transferred across from the previous school. At the time of the inspection the academy was still using the old premises whilst awaiting completion of a £30 million new build being developed nearby. Plans are to move to the new site in the spring of 2011. Part of this planning involves the opening of a 250-place sixth form and, from 2011, the academy will then become an 11-18 setting. Recruitment to the sixth form has already begun.

The academy is non-selective. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average at 30%. Around two fifths of the students are from White British backgrounds, with others coming from a wide range of different heritage and cultural groups; those with a Pakistani background form the largest minority. The proportion of students who speak a language other than English is around a third but rising rapidly. The proportion of students with special educational needs and /or

disabilities is average. The number of students who attend is rising rapidly and in September 2009 the academy was oversubscribed for the first time. Current specialisms are performing arts, business and enterprise, and information and communication technology (ICT). The academy is also part of Campus Luton, a partnership for the planning and delivery of the 14-19 curriculum locally.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

A very positive rate of improvement and progress has been maintained since opening and the academy is now good with an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvements. A rich cultural and social mix, together with increased ambition and fast moving innovation are genuine assets to an academy that is transforming the opportunities for those who attend. Attainment is in line with the national average but this represents a considerable improvement since its inception. In 2007, the proportion of students who attained five good GCSE passes was 17% in the predecessor school, whereas in 2009 this had tripled to over half of the students in the academy. The proportion of students who leave with no future education or employment places organised has been reduced from around a third of all students in 2007 to none in 2009. This reflects the considerable improvement and the benefit of close collaboration with the sponsor, Barnfield College of Further Education. The proportion of students who achieved five A*- C grade GCSE passes that also include English and mathematics was 36% in 2009. Whilst this was lower than the target set by leaders, it nonetheless represents a significant improvement since 2007. Students now make good progress and the academy is quick to offer additional good support where required, including for students who are at the early stages of learning English. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

The academy recognises that there is still work that remains to be done. Attendance is now just satisfactory thanks to a wide range of initiatives to improve it. That 2009 results were below the academy's target was largely due to a legacy of previously weak literacy skills and a variation in student assessment between departments. Some departments have not improved as much as others. In each case, leadership has acted swiftly to improve things. The capacity at middle management level has been increased through a series of strong director level appointments and an effective focus on literacy across all subjects is starting to bear fruit. Induction into the academy and transition to the next stage of employment or education is good.

Particular strengths already secured are a strong team ethos amongst all staff leading to good teaching, an outstanding contribution to promoting community cohesion and high quality leadership which reacts promptly and with integrity to any weaknesses. Innovative partnerships with other agencies have helped to develop a good curriculum and a particularly effective teacher development programme based on increasingly accurate student tracking. The curriculum is innovative but has been through significant change recently and is expected to evolve again once the post-16 courses become available. Safeguarding procedures are good, as is the care and pastoral support on offer. Teaching continues to improve and is increasingly tailored to individual students'

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needs. However, the range of teaching styles is sometimes too narrow, which limits opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills. The students themselves are playing their part in the academy's success. The vast majority now show good attitudes to learning and are very keen to do well. They recognise the improvements and appreciate the efforts being made on their behalf. In the words of one student, 'We now know we have a future.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Foster the use of a wider range of teaching strategies and styles to support independent learning by students and further increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching
- Increase levels of attainment in English and mathematics through
 - raising the proportion of students who manage to achieve five A*-C grades at GCSE
 - ensuring that all departments make a consistent contribution to students' literacy and numeracy
- Monitor the appropriateness of the curriculum and its impact on standards by
 - continuing the improvements in attendance levels
 - planning the development of the post-16 curriculum in detail.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students start Year 7 with standards which are below or well below average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved significantly over the last two years. The proportion attaining A* or A grades has risen and, in 2009, 88% achieved five GCSE passes from A*-G grade, with over a third achieving five A*-C grades which include English and mathematics. Where students did less well, it was because of their previous legacy of underachievement prior to the opening of the academy. The academy's student tracking system, which has been refined following the 2009 results to ensure greater accuracy, indicates that for the present Year 11 standards are broadly average. In mathematics and English, accurate records show that standards have improved and are now close to national averages. This demonstrates good and improving progress for these students over the last two years whilst they have belonged to the academy. There are some differences in the performance of students from different backgrounds. Those of White British heritage, especially girls, make less progress and have lower attainment than their peers, as do some students from Pakistani backgrounds. Even these groups now make good progress, however.

This good progress is confirmed by observations of lessons during the inspection, which show that learning and behaviour are good. In many lessons the greater challenge and engagement of students mean that learning is often excellent. When teaching is this good, behaviour improves accordingly. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. Students enjoy their time at the academy because

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they are successful with their work, lessons are now more interesting and they achieve well.

Students feel safe; they behave well and know how to conduct themselves in lessons, including the safe use of the internet. They have a very good understanding of moral issues and their social skills are very well developed. They are almost always polite and considerate to each other and to visitors to the academy. A striking aspect of the academy is how well students from different backgrounds and cultures get on with each other and how staff use the diversity to enhance the learning in lessons. For example, in an excellent English lesson, students considered poetry from a variety of cultures and were keen to share and work on these with students from different backgrounds. Students know how to live in a healthy manner, with an excellent attitude to taking exercise and a high uptake of extra-curricular sport and other fitness activities. In a good dance session, students from different cultural and faith backgrounds mixed well to produce some carefully thought out and enjoyable sequences of street dance.

Strong social development means students make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community, eagerly taking on the many opportunities available for them to lead groups, share their ideas and link with other organisations. They are involved with the development of their new buildings and looking forward to the possibilities this new site will bring, especially for increased vocational studies and performing arts. Students take part in a very wide and highly effective range of activities to prepare them for the world of work, particularly using the enterprise and information and communication technology (ICT) support available from partner institutions. However preparation is currently only satisfactory because, although attendance has improved significantly, it is still only broadly average, as are students' numeracy and literacy skills. There is a strong spiritual element to some lessons and assemblies where students fully appreciate the wonder and variety of the world around them. The academy's specialism of performing arts has made a significant impact in enhancing students' very good cultural awareness. The academy is careful to gain the views of students to ensure those from different cultural backgrounds are able to follow an appropriate musical, drama or dance activity. The behaviour of students continues to improve and is now good, although this grade reflects much better attitudes to learning and sometimes exemplary behaviour in lessons rather than general behaviour around the site where occasional boisterousness still exists. Behaviour is noticeably better when teaching is good. The steep reduction in exclusions has continued. The students themselves acknowledge this improvement in behaviour and say that, although it still exists, bullying is now rare. Attendance levels have risen and are now in line with the national average thanks to a wide range of initiatives including an ambitious 'air-miles' type scheme to reward good attendance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching continues to improve and is now good, partly due to a sense of increased ambition, but also as a result of a carefully tailored professional development and monitoring programme. During the inspection, almost two thirds of teaching observed was good or better and inadequate teaching has been virtually eliminated. Almost one in five lessons observed showed evidence of outstanding teaching. It is this improvement that is leading to the students' good progress.

Particular strengths observed in teaching are the increased pace, good use of lesson timings and some imaginative use of resources. Teachers' planning is good. Usually, students are clear what is expected of them and what their targets are through the 'minimum expected grade' system, although this practice is not consistent across all departments. Marking and the use of assessment to improve learning is good, although there is some inconsistency; although the great majority of teachers are diligent, some fail to mark work effectively. There are still occasions where teachers' expectations are too low and questions are too brief or simplistic, leading to students making little contribution to discussions. For example, despite the emphasis on literacy throughout the academy, not many teachers require students to elaborate their answers to help develop a stronger vocabulary. In many lessons, teachers encourage students to use exam criteria to improve their marks. This was particularly evident, for instance, in an ICT lesson where the teacher gave detailed one to one feedback and in a science lesson where students were left in no doubt about exactly what examiners would be looking for to award a higher grade.

The curriculum has been developed thoughtfully for the younger students via the

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'Rivers' curriculum, which is designed to offer greater choice to students in years 7 and 8, and there are plans to develop it further once the new premises are available and the sixth form is open. There are innovative links with a range of partners such as Barnfield Further Education College and the academy has maintained a wide range of choices for students to select from and provides a good level of guidance at key decision times. Some of the innovation relates to developing pathways for vocational learning that shares expertise and resources with the College and strengthens both the business and enterprise and ICT specialisms. As a result these are now also making a good contribution to student outcomes. These developments have been welcomed by the students but fragile attendance levels confirm that it is not fully engaging for all. It is too early to see the full impact of these curriculum changes on attainment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The quality of senior leadership is outstanding with clarity of purpose, very careful deployment of resources and visionary planning. The quality of decision making is exemplary at both governance and Principal level. A culture of high expectation and challenge is evident throughout. The capacity of the wider leadership team has been enhanced recently through a restructuring and this is now contributing to a continued drive to improve. Current leadership in the academy has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses and has the confidence of the community and staff. A very careful emphasis on good care, insistence on equality of opportunity and secure safeguarding is evidence of a leadership ethos which values individual students.

A rigorous system of departmental review (the MoveR system) is helping each department secure a clear set of priorities. A constructive and developmental approach to improving teaching is based on rigorous analysis. Leaders have high aspiration and have set themselves a target by 2012 of over 80% of students attaining five good GCSE grades. Whilst ambitious, this target is backed by strong departmental accountability, greater capacity and rigorous analysis. The sponsor and Chair of the Board of Directors has maintained his vision with energy and drive. The academy currently offers good and improving value for money.

The views of parents and carers are regularly sought and these confirm that the majority think the academy is doing a good job in preparing the students well for their futures. A particular strength is the outstanding way leaders contribute to community

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cohesion via a wide range of links with other groups. The outcome of this is seen in the excellent relationships between different groups of students in the academy.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Only a small minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Of those that did, most express confidence in the academy and recognise the improvements. They are especially appreciative of the quality of the current leadership. They also value the efforts being made by teachers. However, a minority also think that more information could be provided about students' progress more frequently during the year and some have concerns about behaviour outside of lessons and at the end of the day. This concern will be met when the new 'parents portal' opens in the near future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barnfield South 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 834 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	20	26	74	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	14	26	74	2	6	2	6
The school informs me about my child's progress	5	14	23	66	5	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	26	21	60	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	14	26	74	3	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	11	22	63	5	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	14	22	63	5	14	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)	5	14	23	66	3	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	11	24	69	3	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	17	16	46	8	23	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	14	24	69	5	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	26	23	66	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	26	22	63	3	9	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 South Academy Luton, Luton, LU1 3NH

You will recall that we recently inspected your academy. I would like to thank you for making us welcome and particularly thank those of you who found time to give us your views. I am writing to let you know of our main findings.

It is clear that the academy has continued to make strong progress since opening and we found that the overall level of education you receive is good. This is a success and it rests on very good leadership and good teaching. As a result, you are achieving well. Behaviour is good, although we would acknowledge it is sometimes better in lessons than outside. Attendance levels are now much more what is expected although the levels remain variable. The curriculum is imaginative and better suited to all students but we also feel that it is important that any changes are kept under review by the academy. We feel it is important for you to let them know of your views in this regard. We have written this as a key priority for the future. We were especially impressed with the long-term plans for a sixth form and recognise that the new buildings will enhance your education yet further.

We also found that there are some additional key aspects which require careful attention. These are to improve the proportion of students who achieve five A*- C GCSE grades which include English and mathematics as this will help to better prepare all of you for your futures. In addition, we would like to see teachers give you more opportunities to develop greater independence in your learning. This too will help you in your future learning and employment.

You will recognise that you have a key contribution to make to the future of the academy by behaving and attending well and I would urge you to keep the staff informed of your views. They are keen to hear them.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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