

# Barnfield Vale Academy

Wilbury Drive, Dunstable, LU5 4QP

**Inspection dates** 17–18 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The strong leadership of the academy trust has established a community of dedicated and enthusiastic staff who work closely together to improve standards.
- The new interim Principal and leadership team have implemented rigorous and effective systems for checking and developing the work of the academy.
- The system for checking the work of teachers ensures new staff are well supported.
- Pupils' behaviour and the academy's work to keep pupils safe are outstanding. Pupils are eager to learn and exemplary in their attitudes to their work. Pupils report how safe they feel at the academy.
- Pupils new to the school receive effective support to settle quickly and make good progress.
- The broad and interesting curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' achievement and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers make lessons interesting for the pupils.
- Children in the Reception classes make good progress, often from low starting points, due to good teaching.
- Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 8 reach standards that are higher than those expected for their age.
- The high-quality marking and advice given to pupils enables them to know how well they have done and how they can improve their work.
- Parents hold highly positive views about the school and report how keen their children are to attend each day.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils make good progress in mathematics those in Year 6, last year, did not make as much progress in mathematics as they did in English.
- Occasionally, teachers take insufficient account of what pupils already know and can do and so set work that is too easy.
- Until recently, subject leadership was weaker in mathematics than in other subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons, part-lessons and activities taught by 19 teachers, as well as groups led by teaching assistants. Some observations were carried out jointly with the interim Principal and other senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly, lunchtime and playtimes, as well as pupils arriving at and leaving school.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, teaching and other staff, school leaders and members of the governing body, The Barnfield Academy Trust.
- The inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils’ books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the 35 responses to the online survey Parent View and the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also obtained the views of a number of parents bringing their children to school.
- The inspectors observed the school at work and considered a range of documentation. This included school and external data on pupils’ progress and attainment, school improvement planning and the school’s work to judge its own performance. In addition, the inspectors looked at minutes of trustee meetings and documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

St.John Burkett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Graham Marshall	Additional Inspector
Veronica McGill	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Barnfield Vale Academy is part of the Barnfield Federation. It is supported in its work by The Barnfield Teaching School Partnership.
- Governance is through the Barnfield Academy Trust, who appointed an academy advisory board for Barnfield Vale Academy.
- This middle deemed primary school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is in the process of changing from a middle school to a primary school.
- The school became an academy in March 2011. At the time it was a middle deemed secondary school for pupils from Year 5 to Year 8. In September 2013, it admitted children for the first time into Reception classes, as well as pupils into Year 1 to Year 4.
- Numbers on roll in Years 7 and 8 are reducing as the academy changes from a middle to a primary school over the next few years. There were 12 classes when it was a middle school, and there will be 14 when the change over to a primary school is completed.
- Due to the changes in age range, a high proportion of pupils joined the school during the last academic year other than at the usual time in the Reception Year and Years 1 to 4.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There is a 'pre-school' on the school site which is not managed by the governing body and so was not part of this inspection.
- An interim Principal was appointed from September 2014. It is intended that a permanent appointment will be made for January 2015.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by ensuring that:
  - teachers use information from assessments more effectively to drive learning forward
  - those responsible for leading mathematics check teachers' planning and teaching more rigorously, than in the past, to ensure that these lead to consistent and rapid gains in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Increase the effectiveness of the leadership of teaching by using the existing examples of outstanding practice in the academy as a model for improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The school's new interim Principal has worked quickly with senior leaders, supported by the work of the academy trust, to maintain the strong sense of community among staff, pupils, parents and trustees. Leaders are well regarded by all staff. Consequently, staff morale is high.
- The school's view of its performance is accurate and realistic. The school has detailed action plans so that it continues to improve. For example, the focus on improving the way mathematics is taught has resulted in pupils making good progress, following a dip in progress in Year 6, last year. This is evident in lessons and in the work in their books.
- The academy is highly inclusive and promotes equal opportunities. Pupils work readily with their classmates, irrespective of their background. Careful planning, guidance and support are ensuring that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium, are progressing well. This has enabled the many new pupils to settle quickly to learning.
- The curriculum is well planned to interest and engage pupils. They learn through a range of exciting topics; for example, 'tails, whiskers, scales and wings' in which pupils make a scarecrow, visit a farm and discuss their feelings about animals. The curriculum incorporates many additional activities which inspire and excite pupils. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong, and prepares them thoroughly for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's partnership with other schools within the Barnfield Academy Trust, including the teaching school, and the support of the Trust itself, has helped the academy to make good progress, in most areas, since it was last inspected. Due to strong appointments made by trustees, and the way the school's subject leaders now work, leaders and managers have a good capacity to bring about further improvement.
- The school makes good use of the primary school sports funding. The academy provides swimming lessons in Years 3, 4 and 5, and ensures that all pupils receive three hours of physical education each week. There are high rates of participation and pupils enjoy success in competition with other local schools. For example, they were recently runners-up in the Bedfordshire County Cricket competition.
- Procedures to keep pupils safe and secure are effective, and are carefully monitored by the school's leaders and managers.
- Teachers' performance is well managed. Decisions regarding teachers' pay and salary progression are directly linked to whether staff meet their targets and the impact they are having on pupils' achievement. Training is well matched to the school's priorities for improvement. A pocket of weaker teaching of mathematics has been tackled so that it is now much improved. Most staff share and observe the best practice in the school and try out new ideas to help pupils to make more rapid progress. However, this effective approach to continually improving teaching is not used as widely as it could be.
- Senior leaders and most teachers with additional responsibility evaluate the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. This means they know the pupils well and quickly identify those pupils who may need additional support to move their learning on. However, checks on teachers' planning and teaching have not been rigorous enough in the past, in mathematics, and this has led to a dip in pupils' progress in Year 6. Leaders and managers have acted quickly to ensure this does not happen again.
- Parents have many opportunities to be actively involved with the school, particularly by talking with teachers and finding out how well their child is doing. Communications with parents are good. . Parents responding to the online survey, and those who spoke to inspectors were unreservedly positive about the care, guidance and support their children receive at the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Trustees bring a wide range of expertise to their roles and have a thorough understanding of the

strengths and weaknesses of the school, putting effective plans into place to address any weaknesses and tackle any underperformance. Consequently, the school is improving, and in some areas making rapid progress. Trustees have aspirations for pupils to reach even higher standards, and have worked closely with leaders to provide resources and ensure that changes made to teaching and school organisation are effective.

- Trustees ensure that the academy achieves good support and advice from across the Trust and the teaching school. Trustees visit the academy regularly. They have a good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and ensure that all statutory arrangements are met.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and act responsibly in managing both their own behaviour and helping others in the academy. Pupils readily express their views about standards of behaviour and the importance of showing respect for each other. This message is quickly embraced by those joining partway through the school year. This contributes to the friendly, social atmosphere in the academy.
- Pupils are proud of the academy. The buildings and grounds are neat and tidy and pupils have plenty of room to play and places where they can sit quietly and reflect. Pupils all speak positively about how much they enjoy and value being a part of the academy, and this is evident in their very smart appearance and their impeccable manners.
- The high standards of behaviour contribute strongly to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils work and socialise with those who have faiths and beliefs different from their own, have a keen understanding of right and wrong and demonstrate positive attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect. Consequently, the use of discriminatory or derogatory language is extremely rare and pupils have a clear understanding about how their behaviour contributes to the positive culture of the school.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe. Parents agree that the school does all it can to provide a safe caring environment for the pupils. The academy's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are very thorough. Its work to reduce absence is effective, and attendance is now above average.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Bullying of any kind is rare and pupils say that any incident is dealt with straightaway. The work of 'The Sub', which helps any pupil who needs guidance or support, is highly effective in the way it works to keep pupils safe.
- Five of the nine year groups have only been on roll at the school for one year. During this time, there have been many pupils who have started after the beginning of the school year. They are welcomed by other pupils, who readily make new friendships. New arrivals are quick to behave as well as pupils already at the school, and appreciate being at Barnfield Academy. They too say they feel very safe.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers know their pupils well. They make good use of questions to probe, extend pupils' understanding and improve their learning. In this work, they are well supported by teaching assistants. Teachers have high expectations, assess pupils' progress accurately in lessons and provide work that children enjoy. They give good levels of attention to the most able, disadvantaged, low attaining and those who have special educational needs or who struggle. This enables all to learn well and make good progress.
- The strong, positive relationships between adults and pupils support the outstanding attitudes to learning that pupils show in lessons and around the school. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Classrooms are well organised, bright and welcoming. They have been thoughtfully set up for the new age ranges of pupils on the academy's roll.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is well managed so pupils develop an enjoyment of reading that supports the good progress they make over time.

- Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers' comments in all subjects give pupils clear guidance on what they need to do next to improve their work. Homework is regularly set and helps to move pupils' learning on.
- Teachers assess pupils' work frequently. They adjust activities so that all pupils are challenged to do their best work and to learn quickly. The most-able pupils are supported well by most teaching, enabling them to achieve beyond what might be expected. However, there are occasions, particularly in mathematics, when teachers set work for pupils without taking enough account of what the most able pupils already know and can do. When this occurs, more-able pupils are sometimes given work which is too easy for them, and they do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable. The new mathematics leaders are taking action to make sure these pupils are always stretched by the tasks they are set.
- Leaders' high expectations of the quality of teaching and the checks they make of the work of teachers ensures that a high degree of consistency is maintained as the academy and its staff change from a middle to a primary school. Through this process a small amount of weaker teaching of mathematics has been tackled. Teaching of mathematics is much improved. Evidence seen by inspectors in pupils' books and lessons showed pupils are now consistently learning well and making good progress.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge below those which are typical for their age. By the end of Year 8 pupils reach standards, in both English and mathematics, that are higher than those expected for their age.
- Pupils make very good progress in understanding and using the sounds that letters make to read and write because the teaching of phonics is well structured and is taught well from the start of Reception. The proportion of pupils meeting the required standard at the end of Year 1, in the screening check of their knowledge of phonics, was well above the national average last year. The school's assessment information shows that these high standards are set to continue this year.
- Pupils in the newly formed classes in Year 2 made good progress to reach standards which were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. However, last year some pupils in Year 6 did not make as much progress in mathematics as they did in English. Nevertheless, scrutiny of work in pupils' books shows that they made good progress. The school has acted promptly to ensure pupils make equally good progress in English and mathematics in all year groups.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. In the Early Years, phonics and Year 2 assessments, the most-able pupils achieved well. However, occasionally they are not challenged to make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning, together with careful assessment and planning by teachers to challenge pupils to do their best work, contribute strongly to the achievement being made. The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of other groups. They are successfully helped through one-to-one support within the classroom.
- All pupils have good opportunities to succeed, and gaps in progress or attainment within or between groups of pupils including those supported by the pupil premium are quickly identified and closed. There is no published data to show any differences in attainment between this group of pupils and their classmates but inspection evidence confirms that disadvantaged pupils are making the same good progress as their classmates.

### **The early years provision** is good

- When children start at the school, their skills and knowledge are below and sometimes well below those which are typical for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress. The proportion of pupils who started in Reception at the beginning of the year and who achieved a good level of development was

above the 2013 national average.

- More-able children and children who are disabled or who have special educational needs make good and sometimes exceptional progress due to the very careful planning by teachers to help them to think hard and maintain an excited interest in their learning. Teaching is at least good. The design and quality of the classrooms and the outdoor area help children to stay safe and to learn well.
- Children's behaviour in Reception is outstanding. They are keen and enthusiastic to learn and play well with each other, readily cooperating and sharing. The quality of provision contributes strongly to children's good physical and emotional health, safety and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children learn well in the Reception classes because they are well organised. Leaders are ambitious and reflective and make sure that good-quality activities help children to learn quickly. Consequently, provision for this age group is strong.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138714
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	447790

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	396
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Barnfield Academy Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Bronwen Philpott
<b>Principal</b>	Rebekah Howe (Interim Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 523000
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