

Banbury Academy

Ruskin Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 9HY

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2018

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal has transformed the culture of the school. She has created a positive sense of aspiration and purpose among pupils, parents, carers and staff.
- Leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is strong. It has improved the quality of teaching rapidly. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and the pockets of weaker practice that remain.
- Pupils' progress overall is not yet good. The legacy of weak teaching has hindered the achievement of some pupils. Some pupils' basic literacy hampers their progress.
- The school's lesson structure supports staff to plan well in order to match learning activities to what pupils already know. However, a minority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and do and do not set appropriately challenging work. This limits pupils' progress.
- The extensive intervention programmes put in place for current Year 11 pupils have been successful in helping all, including disadvantaged pupils, to catch up and make better progress.
- Leaders' work to improve pupils' attendance has been successful. It is now in line with the national average.
- The sixth form is outstanding, due to the exceptional leadership and curriculum. These support students to make substantial progress from their starting points.
- Sixth-form students are highly motivated and aspirational, due to the excellent pastoral support and careers education that they have received.
- Behaviour is good around the school. The new behaviour system is helping to eradicate the low-level disruption that is still found in a minority of lessons. However, some staff do not apply it consistently.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength. Pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain and are proud of their inclusive school community. Fundamental British values are promoted well.
- The curriculum balances academic and pastoral learning well. Careers and enterprise education is inspirational and helps to raise pupils' aspirations.
- Governors provide a good level of support and challenge to school leaders. However, they need to demonstrate more clearly their work to hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently demonstrate high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and routinely provide challenge in lessons
 - raising expectations of pupils' basic literacy skills, especially in their extended writing
 - embedding the new behaviour system so that teachers apply it consistently
 - continuing to improve the quality of teaching across the school so that all teaching is as strong as the best.
- Those responsible for governance should ensure that they clearly show how effective their work is when holding leaders to account for how well additional funding is used.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The inspirational and determined principal has rapidly improved the school since taking up post immediately after the previous inspection. She has transformed the culture of the school by building strong relationships with the local community, and establishing high expectations and ambition for all members of the school community.
- Leaders at all levels have embedded greater expectations of pupils and staff, especially relating to behaviour in lessons and the structure of learning. The new behaviour system has helped to improve how well staff manage pupils' behaviour across the school. However, leaders are aware that further work to embed this is needed, especially when there is a change of staffing.
- Leaders have established a robust culture of professional learning among staff. Best practice is shared routinely with staff excited to learn from each other and discuss strategies that have been effective. Teachers new to the profession are very positive about the support that they have received as they start their careers.
- While leaders provide effective support to strengthen pockets of weaker practice, they are aware that that turbulence in staffing means that some variation in the quality of teaching remains.
- Leaders at all levels have made good use of support from the Aspirations Academies Trust (AAT) and external partners to ensure that assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is accurate. School and trust leaders provide sharply focused support for those colleagues who require it and moderate work carefully. They are acutely aware that the rapid improvements in teaching, learning and assessment have not yet had enough impact on the outcomes for all pupils.
- Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum that balances academic and pastoral learning well. Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through their studies. Careers and enterprise learning is a strength and all pupils profit from independent advice and inspirational events. The 'drop down days' are effective in addressing local and international issues, helping to promote equality and fundamental British values at age-specific levels.
- Leaders have made effective use of additional funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who joined the school with lower than expected literacy and/or numeracy. Leaders understand the need to demonstrate precisely how they routinely evaluate its impact.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) knows the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities very well. She makes strategic use of external partners to help improve these pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. She works very effectively with teachers and teaching assistants to make sure that pupils receive personalised support that helps them to make good progress.
- Leaders' work to improve the attendance of pupils has been very successful so that attendance is now in line with the national average.

- The majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Some are anxious, rightly, about the turbulence in staffing and the amount of cover staff. However, many commented on the school's transformation since the arrival of the new principal. One parent noted: 'She has her finger on the pulse of what is happening within her school ... and does not compromise on her expectations. I am exceptionally happy with the school.'

Governance of the school

- Governance is undertaken according to the AAT's scheme of delegation. Trust members and governors are arranged into three main groups, each with specific responsibilities and accountabilities. For example, the executive operational board advises on strategic leadership and development activity for the district and local advisory boards (LAB) to implement.
- The trust closely scrutinises leaders' performance. Trustees with appropriate skill sets are engaged so that this scrutiny is professional and focused. The managing director and deputy managing director know the school well. They facilitate a wide range of support and challenge for leaders from other schools in the trust.
- The district board comprises members of the executive operational board, the district directors of education and finance, the district school principals and the LAB chairs. These governors also provide a high level of challenge, for example, through visits and scrutiny of pupils' work and outcomes.
- The LAB has a mostly advisory capacity and has helped leaders to make strong community links that benefit pupils. They undertake their duties relating to safeguarding well. As with the other governors, members of the LAB have clear determination and passion for the school to become the best it can.
- Governors are aware of a confusion in published information about governors' responsibilities and are working to correct this. They are also aware of the need to make clear their work to hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that adults are well trained and aware of the need to be vigilant at all times. Staff are confident with their knowledge of what to look out for, and how to use the processes to report and follow up even the smallest worry.
- Leaders and governors ensure that recruitment of staff meets the requirements of statutory guidance. The record of checks made on the suitability of staff to work in a school is kept accurately, and routinely scrutinised by governors.
- The leaders for safeguarding are highly knowledgeable and dedicated. They work very well with a wide range of external agencies, making timely and appropriate referrals to meet the needs of pupils and their families. Their proactive approach helps to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' relentless work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been successful. This has improved significantly, across the curriculum, since the last inspection. Overall, pupils now benefit from good teaching.
- The vast majority of teachers have a strong understanding of their pupils' learning and progress. They use this knowledge to plan purposeful lessons that build on pupils' prior learning successfully. Inspectors saw this in history, ethics and information technology lessons, and in pupils' books. However, a minority of teachers have expectations that are too low, which hinders pupils' progress.
- Where weaker teaching persists, teachers receive focused support and guidance so that they can improve. School information and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that this has been effective overall.
- Teachers have responded very well to the professional development programmes set up by leaders. Their questioning skills are now strong overall. Teachers' questions support pupils to develop their understanding further, for example by extending their answers either verbally or in writing. Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and support pupils to use technical language well, especially in their verbal responses.
- Staff have benefited from moderation of pupils' work across the trust and with external partners to make sure that they have an accurate understanding of the requirements of the new GCSE examinations.
- The new whole-school lesson structure helps teachers to check pupils' learning and progress regularly, and address misconceptions effectively.
- Teachers help pupils to improve their written answers successfully through structured improvement time in lessons. However, some pupils are not supported consistently to correct errors in their basic writing skills, such as forgetting to use capital letters for proper nouns or allowing their sentences to get too long.
- Homework has been strengthened this academic year. Pupils like the online tasks that are set, especially in mathematics, and told inspectors that it was useful. Parents like this organisation of homework as it allows them to monitor their child's work more closely than previously.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All pupils benefit from participating in an externally validated programme designed to support their character development. This includes their leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative, communication and well-being. For example, pupils in Years 7 and 8 all undertake a group community charity challenge. School information shows that this work has been successful in developing pupils' wider skills.
- Citizenship education is a strength. School information and discussions with pupils throughout the school shows that this is effective. Pupils feel well prepared for their

futures in modern Britain. They are proud that their school is inclusive, promoting equality and tolerance.

- Pupils who have previously found school challenging are supported exceptionally well to engage with their learning and to make good progress. Several parents and carers commented on the strong relationships between staff and pupils that help pupils to feel valued. One wrote that the school gave their child 'an opportunity when no one else would' and that staff have helped to improve his self-confidence and ambition.
- Some pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire raised a concern about how effectively staff resolve any bullying that might occur. However, the overwhelming majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors said that staff response to this had transformed since the previous inspection and that now there was very little bullying. Most were confident that staff would deal well with any that did occur.
- Pupils appreciate the independent careers advice that they receive across the school. They particularly like the wide range of outside speakers who visit the school.
- Pupils feel safe and told inspectors that there is always someone who will listen to any worry. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. However, some had a weaker understanding of the dangers of extreme behaviours, including how to keep themselves safe from such dangers, for example radicalisation.

Behaviour

- Behaviour is good around the school. Pupils are friendly, polite and calm. They are proud of the differences in their school since the last inspection.
- The behaviour of pupils is good overall, despite the low-level disruption that prevents other pupils learning in a few lessons. However, the new behaviour system is proving effective in tackling this and helping pupils to self-moderate their behaviour.
- Pupils like the new behaviour system and feel that it has made a difference. However, they are frustrated when staff do not apply it fairly. They told inspectors that when individual staff give too many chances, some pupils take advantage and behave poorly.
- Leaders have improved attendance rapidly and it is now in line with national averages. Far fewer pupils' progress is hindered due to poor attendance than in the past. Leaders are working very effectively with the minority of pupils whose attendance still needs to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for current pupils are not yet good overall because progress is not consistently strong across the school. This is due the legacy of weak teaching that has hindered the achievement of pupils in some year groups and subjects.
- Overall outcomes for pupils have improved since the previous inspection due to the improvement to teaching across the school. Published examination results for GCSE and equivalent courses for 2017 show that pupils' overall progress is average. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress was well below that of other pupils nationally.

- School information, along with pupils' work and their learning in class, shows that the progress and attainment of current Year 7 and 8 pupils are much improved from previous years, although this is not yet consistent across all areas of the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are making equivalent progress to their peers now.
- The progress of pupils in Years 9 and 10, including disadvantaged pupils, is not consistently strong across the curriculum. School information and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that they are still performing below the school's expectations. They are not progressing well enough to overcome the legacy of poor teaching in the past, often as the result of staffing difficulties.
- School information, validated by external moderation, indicates that the extensive intervention programmes provided for Year 11 pupils have been successful. This information suggests that all groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are currently performing better than previous cohorts at the same point in their studies.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported very well. They make similar progress from their starting points as their peers.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training through the innovative and highly effective careers education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Leaders of the sixth form have rapidly improved the academic and pastoral support for students. It now provides high-quality specialist teaching combined with excellent pastoral care that ensure that students are ambitious and well prepared for successful futures.
- Students make sustained and substantial progress from their starting points, including in specialist courses, such as engineering, where they have no or little prior learning. Staff spend considerable effort ensuring that students have caught up from any prior gaps in learning. This work is very successful, especially for those who retake their English and mathematics GCSE qualifications. Students' progress in these examination courses is much higher than is typical when compared with national outcomes.
- Retention rates are exceptionally high and all students progress to appropriate higher study, further qualifications or employment at the end of their courses. This is due to the carefully targeted pastoral support and the excellent careers support that all students receive.
- Leaders have planned students' programmes of study carefully to ensure that work-related learning is threaded through their courses. These learning activities are highly ambitious and help to shape students' ambitions. Many students that inspectors spoke to are aiming to be the first in their families to study at university.
- Students speak with passion about the work experience that they have enjoyed, including the weekly 'aspirations employability portfolios' where they work with external companies to solve real challenges. They are particularly motivated by the trust-wide competitions at the end of these challenges.

- Students feel safe and valued at school. They recognise the support that they are given and told inspectors of the ways in which it helps them to develop their self-esteem and ambitions. One student talked about the ways in which she has developed as 'a whole person' due to support from staff and school activities, including tutor time. Students like the way that they can direct wider learning; for example, a student helped her peers to understand Ramadan and how it fits with modern British society.
- Leaders carefully monitor the quality of provision and students' progress, ensuring that any extra support that may be required is swift and effective. They make good use of expertise throughout the trust to moderate and validate teachers' assessment and predictions about pupils' attainment. Leaders have prioritised sixth-form lessons so that students have not experienced as much turbulence in staffing and temporary teachers as other year groups.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138499 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10046564 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 741 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 63 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Rebecca Mileham |
| Principal | Sylvia Thomas |
| Telephone number | 01295 251451 |
| Website | www.banbury-aspirations.org/ |
| Email address | head@banbury-aspirations.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 8–9 June 2016 |

Information about this school

- Banbury Academy is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is sponsored by the Aspirations Academies Trust (AAT).
- It shares a site with the trust's studio school, Space Studio Banbury (SSB). The executive principal of Banbury Academy is also the executive principal of SSB. Some sixth-form students share specialist classes with SSB students. There is also a privately run nursery school on the site.
- The quality of provision and experience of Banbury Academy pupils was inspected, including in these shared classes with SSB pupils. SSB and the nursery were not considered as part of this inspection.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.
- The school leaders work closely with leaders of other schools, including secondary and primary schools in the trust, in order to provide and receive support.
- About a third of pupils come from White British backgrounds. About a fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 50 part-lessons, including assembly and tutor time, across the school. Many of these were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised a wide sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff and representatives from the governing boards, including the managing and deputy managing directors of the trust.
- Inspectors took account of the view of the 56 staff who completed Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils and considered the views of 52 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the view of parents and carers. They took account of an email from a carer, 35 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 31 written comments.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including information available on the school and trust websites. They also looked at the school's records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of local advisory board and district board meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plans were scrutinised, along with records of the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Lucy English, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| John Burridge | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sharon Cromie | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alison Robb-Webb | Ofsted Inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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