

Serco Inspections  
Cedar House  
21 William Street  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 1LH

**OFSTED**  
T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**SERCO**  
Direct T 0121 683 3888



14 January 2011

Mr S Foster  
The Bridge Academy Hackney  
Laburnum Street  
London  
Hackney  
E2 8BA

Dear Mr Foster

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Bridge Academy Hackney**

Thank you for the help which you, your staff, governors and students gave when I inspected your academy on 13 January 2011, for the time your colleagues gave to phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, a permanent and enlarged senior leadership team has been established. This has included your appointment as substantive Principal and the appointment of a second Vice-Principal. The academy, which opened in September 2007, has continued to grow in line with its development plans and the fourth Year 7 cohort entered the academy in September 2010. The academy is now fully staffed and employs 24 learning support assistants. The academy is heavily oversubscribed.

As a result of the inspection on 7–8 October 2009, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, strategies to accelerate students' progress have proved to be effective with the result that standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science are now in line with those seen in other academies and schools by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement, given students' below and sometimes well below average starting points. A raft of strategies are now in place to address the previous underachievement of students of White British, Black Caribbean and

September 2010



Turkish heritage though these have not yet had time to have their full impact. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students because rigorous monitoring procedures enable staff to respond quickly to incidents of underachievement.

The academy's work to improve the quality of teaching has been markedly successful with the result that the proportion of good lessons has increased significantly. When teaching is most effective, well structured opportunities for paired and group discussion ensure high levels of engagement and enjoyment. Not all teachers are yet equally confident in devising opportunities for students to take control of their own learning.

Good strategies to improve teachers' use of assessment to support learning have had a clear impact. Students now have a very good understanding of what they are trying to achieve in each lesson because all teachers set clear learning objectives and share success criteria with the class. Students also know how well they are doing against their challenging targets because they are given regular opportunities to assess their own progress. They are sometimes less confident in converting this knowledge of their numerical levels into a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve the next steps in their learning. While staff plan carefully to meet the needs of students of differing abilities, not all lesson plans articulate with sufficient clarity how students with specific learning difficulties will be supported. Similarly, teachers' planning does not always ensure that learning support assistants are fully utilised.

The academy's successful work to improve the quality of teaching and learning has been accompanied by an extremely rigorous and effective approach to improving behaviour. Inspectors saw consistently good behaviour throughout the monitoring visit, in lessons and around the academy, and students reported that behaviour is now almost always good. However, the proportion of students subject to fixed term exclusions is too high, particularly among students of Black Caribbean heritage. Rigorous and relentless work to raise attendance has been extremely effective with the result that attendance is now high.

There are now more effective strategies to secure parental engagement than previously. A wide range of events is now provided to enable parents to support their child's learning, and activities to encourage parents to engage with the academy are increasingly diverse and imaginative. The impact of this work was seen in very high levels of attendance at Year 9 options evening, although not all functions are equally well attended. Strategies to engage with parents are enhanced significantly by the work of a full time community relations manager, facilitated through the academy's sponsor.

After a legacy of considerable turbulence, leadership and management of the academy has been stabilised and strengthened and has accelerated the pace of improvement. Systems and procedures to support learning, including monitoring,

self-evaluation and review are now embedded. Your highly ambitious vision for the academy is shared by all staff who welcome the high expectations and demanding targets that underpin their work. While staff benefit from good support and professional development opportunities, they are held robustly to account with regard to students' academic performance. Leadership and management arrangements benefit from the expertise of a highly experienced and committed team of governors.

The academy's excellent partnership working is enhanced significantly through practical and financial support from the academy's sponsor. As a result, staff and students benefit from a wide range of mentoring and coaching opportunities. Arrangements to support the academy's specialist subjects are particularly strong and provide superb opportunities for students to engage, for example, with professional musicians from the London Symphony Orchestra or with senior staff at UBS. Specialist status is having a clear impact in raising achievement and both mathematics and music enjoy a high profile in the academy. Achievement in music is outstanding.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your academy. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2009.**

- Engage students more effectively in their learning by providing more opportunities for them to develop as independent learners and to be actively involved in assessing their own progress.
- Ensure that systems and procedures to support learning are embedded and sustain the good pace of improvement.
- Enable parents and carers to support their children's learning.