

The Bridge Academy

Laburnum Street, Hackney, London, E2 8BA

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. Though students enter the academy with starting points that are just below average their results at Key Stage 4 match national averages, indicating that many students make better than expected progress.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Consequently all groups of students, including disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those supported by additional funding achieve well.
- Teachers have high expectations and use information about students carefully to plan for their individual needs.
- In class and around the academy, behaviour is good. Students feel safe and display good attitudes to their learning.
- The sixth form is good. Staying on rates are high and the academy offers students a broad range of subjects that cater appropriately for students of different abilities and interests.
- Students' literacy skills, particularly in reading, are well supported, and this enables them to make good progress in a range of subjects.
- Leadership and management are both good. The principal leads a strong team and their highly effective work has led to key improvements in teaching and achievement in a short period of time.
- The very able governing body supported by a committed sponsor provides vision and challenge to the academy's senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently demanding enough to ensure that all students make rapid and sustained progress and achieve exceptionally well.
- There are too few opportunities for students to work independently or to explore and resolve issues and problems for themselves.
- The quality of teachers' marking and guidance to students is inconsistent. Written feedback is not always precise enough to show students how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team attended an assembly and made a number of short visits around the academy.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair, Vice-Chair of governors and an additional sponsor governor, members of the academy staff, including subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority. Telephone interviews were conducted with the chief executive and the director of the organisations responsible for additional student provision.
- Inspectors analysed the 69 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), an email and a phone call from parents and carers and the 94 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and looked carefully at numerous documents, including checks on teaching, minutes of governors’ meetings, data relating to exclusions, support for vulnerable students, and policies and records relating to students’ achievement, attendance, punctuality, behaviour, safety, bullying, and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Coyle, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average sized secondary academy, which serves students in the London Borough of Hackney.
- It opened as a new academy in September 2007 is sponsored by UBS who form part of the governing body.
- Students come from a wide range of ethnic groups, with many speaking English as an additional language.
- There are more boys than girls in the academy.
- The proportions of students supported by school action, action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all well above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional support through the pupil premium is well above the national average. (This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in local authority care.)
- The academy has specialisms in mathematics and music.
- The academy has established arrangements for students in Key Stage 4 to take alternative work-related courses at Regent's College and the Boxing Academy.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - creating more opportunities for students to work independently and to explore problems and research topics for themselves without being led too much by teachers
 - ensuring all teaching meets the individual needs of all students and consistently offers them high levels of challenge
 - improving teachers' written feedback to students so that it consistently helps them understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students arrive at the academy with skills and knowledge levels which are slightly lower than those expected but, because they are taught well, they make good progress during their time at the academy.
- In 2012, examination results were broadly in line with the average representing an ongoing upward trend of achievement. All groups of students achieve well, with several students exceeding expected progress in the academy's specialism mathematics as well as in languages and humanities.
- Students displayed good skills in reading, writing and communication in many of the lessons observed. In a Year 7 drama class, for example, students had to perform scenes from Oedipus Rex. Students were seen to listen and respond creatively through performance then provide feedback based on an assessment of what they had seen.
- Good support from learning support assistants ensures disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Gaps in attainment between students on school action and action plus, or those supported by additional funding through the pupil premium, and other groups of students within the academy are narrowing considerably as a result of the academy's well-managed provision of additional teaching support for reading and use of alternative courses off-site.
- The support provided for students who speak English as an additional language is used effectively to help them to improve their speaking, listening and writing skills, in particular in Year 7. These students are enthusiastic about reading for pleasure and make extensive use of the library.
- Additional and vocational provision commissioned from a local college and training provider, include courses in construction, catering, childcare and motor mechanics. These provide appropriate programmes for students whose progress would have otherwise been limited or curtailed. These progression routes ensure that students attending them are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Learning and progress in the newly opened sixth form are good. The academy's range of options both attracts students and ensures they complete their courses once they have started them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching overall is good and some outstanding practice was observed. The mainly young, energetic and enthusiastic teachers work hard to maintain positive working relationships with students in class and around the academy. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Most teachers expect high levels of concentration and effort from their students. However, not all teaching is at the level of the very best to ensure all students make rapid and sustained progress.
- Lesson planning is generally good, particularly in history, geography, drama and design and technology and French. This ensures that individual needs are met and students make good progress. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 history lesson, the teacher used civilian accounts of their experiences of world war two to explore the themes of objectivity and accuracy. Using key words, source material and skilful questioning, the teacher kept students

fully engaged and motivated. As a result they gained a clear understanding of how to challenge sources of evidence and each others' responses. They knew how their responses related to different target grades and how they could improve.

- Where teaching was less effective, work was not always hard enough to ensure students had to really think, did not provide enough opportunities for students to work by themselves or in groups or ensure that they made the maximum progress. Some books had evidence of marks linked to grading systems, which were understood and valued by students, but not all teachers make clear precisely how students could make the improvements needed.
- Learning support assistants are plentiful, well qualified and deployed effectively to support and aid the progress of students' literacy, particularly in the case of students with disabilities or those with special educational needs and whose first language is not English.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. In the lessons observed, teachers expected the best from their students and activities were well planned. Small groups were used effectively to encourage discussion between teachers and students. Assessment of work is accurate and tracking data is used effectively to adapt lessons to meet the needs of all students and to show them how to improve their grades.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the academy and staff have worked hard to promote a strong sense of community. Surveys of parents, carers and staff and discussions with students all confirm the inspectors' view that that the academy is a safe place where students feel secure and are keen to learn.
- Permanent and fixed term exclusions are now low. The academy's own analysis of exclusion data revealed that, formerly, most students excluded were from Black Caribbean backgrounds this is no longer the case. It has introduced a new behaviour policy, inclusion facilities and programmes for groups of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and these measures have been effective in reducing exclusions significantly.
- Students say that when bullying occurs it is dealt with quickly and effectively by the academy. They report bullying to be rare and mentioned 'drop down days' part of the personal, social and health education programme as a key part of raising awareness about racist, homophobic or cyber-bullying and how to stay safe.
- Robust systems are in place to track and follow up attendance and attendance rates are now above the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The very committed and dedicated principal leads an effective leadership team. Its members share his high expectations of what the academy can achieve. They use the responsibilities devolved to them to communicate the same sense of ambition to teaching staff and work effectively as a team to raise achievement and improve students' life chances.
- Leaders have devised effective monitoring systems for checking on the quality of the academy's work and their success in reaching key targets. As a result, the academy has improved since the last inspection and standards have risen.

- The management of teachers' performance is rigorous and supportive. The academy provides high quality professional development that is tailored to teachers' needs, notably new entrants to the profession. Consequently, the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- The range of subjects offered by the academy is broad and balanced and meets the needs of students. The academy has recently focussed on improving students' reading, writing and communication in subjects other than English. It has also established partnerships with local providers and the sponsor to provide work experience, good quality alternative and work-related programmes and progression routes to the next stage of education, training or employment for individual students and groups.
- The academy offers students the option of early entry into GCSE examinations as appropriate.
- Cultural events such as 'estate based theatre', musical events, sport and the mathematics and music specialism's contribute to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and provide opportunities for further qualifications and enrichment.
- The developing sixth form benefits from the flexibility and breadth in the range of courses it offers students. Students remark on the strength of relationships and support they receive and they in turn make a constructive contribution the academy through mentoring and as prefects.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met. The academy carefully monitors students' attendance and achievement when attending courses off site.
- By invitation, the local learning trust has provided guidance for the governing body, high quality data analysis to raise awareness of the academy's effectiveness and impact on progress, advised on the teaching and learning in English and mathematics and helped develop sixth form provision and the recruitment of students.
- Support for raising standards from the academy sponsor has also been good. Additional adults are employed by the academy's sponsor to provide regular mentoring for sixth formers as well as information communication technology and numeracy support there is a well-managed intervention scheme to support those students with weak reading skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well-organised and experienced and works effectively to hold the academy to account. Governors ensure they are fully informed about how well students achieve and know how the academy is performing against other schools locally and nationally. Governors successfully monitor the life of the academy through data on students' progress, newsletters and the principal's report, and through attendance at various cultural events such as plays and musicals. Governors know the strengths of teaching and the steps the academy is taking to improve it, and oversee the system for managing both the principal's and other teachers' performance carefully. The new Teachers Standards have been embedded into the academy's appraisal policy and governors ensure that teachers pay and promotion are linked directly to their effectiveness. The allocation and impact of the pupil premium money is carefully tracked and governors are aware of the ways in which it has been used to maintain small class sizes, provide high quality additional support assistants and reading mentors. Governors work hard to develop relationships with parents through the attendance at parent teacher evenings, newsletters and surveys.

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

Unique reference number	131609
Inspection number	402488

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	985
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Francesca Barnes
Headteacher	Stephen Foster
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2009
Telephone number	0207 749 5240
Fax number	0207 749 5269
Email address	info@bridgeacademy.hackney.sch.uk

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