

# The Business Academy Bexley

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133769
<b>Inspection number</b>	294655
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Ellis HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1477
6th form	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tim Garnham
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Martin Clinton (Acting Executive Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Yarnton Way Erith DA18 4DW
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8320 4800
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8311 9546

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<b>Age group</b>	3–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Business Academy Bexley opened in September 2002 with a business and enterprise focus and moved to its current purpose built accommodation in September 2003. The primary section opened in 2004 following the closure of two local primary schools. The academy has grown rapidly and is one of only a few schools that provides an education for pupils aged from 4 to 19 years. The academy serves a socially disadvantaged community and there are more pupils entitled to free school meals than are found in most schools. Around two thirds of the pupils come from white British backgrounds and the remainder are from diverse minority ethnic heritages. Around one in four pupils do not speak English as their mother tongue, although only a few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need, is well above average and the academy has a special unit for primary pupils who have severe language and communication difficulties. Recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff has challenged the academy in recent years. However, the turnover of staff is now in line with other local schools and there are no significant vacancies.

The academy was found to be inadequate when it was last inspected in November 2005. A notice to improve under section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005 was given because significant improvement was required in relation the quality of teaching and learning in the secondary section and the effectiveness of provision in the sixth form.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The academy provides a satisfactory standard of education for learners. It is an improving school and has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified by the inspection in November 2005 and in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. However, its senior leadership team is realistic and recognises that there remain areas for further development.

Children join Reception in the primary section of the academy with standards that are below or well below average and, although they make satisfactory and increasingly good progress in the primary section, many of the older pupils do not achieve the standards expected at age 11. Students start the secondary section with standards that are below average overall. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. Results in GCSE examinations in 2006 were low. Overall standards are rising and, given their starting points, the students' achievement is satisfactory. However, a significant minority achieves standards that are well below the expectation for their ages.

Personal development and well-being are good. Children of all ages enjoy learning and say that they feel safe and well cared for. Learners are proud of the academy and feel that their views and opinions are sought and responded to. Most have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and improving.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most learners but pathways for students to follow to achieve different levels of qualifications are not well established, and the academy is working to develop provision so that it meets learners' needs and aspirations more precisely. Teaching is satisfactory but more needs to be good or better if learners are to achieve as well as they might. Care, guidance and support are good and this contributes to learners making satisfactory progress and feeling secure.

Parents are supportive and a large majority value the opportunities which the academy provides for their children.

Leadership and management are good and the executive principal and his senior team have a clear vision for the future of the academy. Senior leaders monitor the work of the academy well and have an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The academy makes sensible use of the excellent range of resources at its disposal. The positive impact of actions taken since the last inspection demonstrates that it has good capacity for further improvement.

Provision for the Foundation Stage is good. Good teaching results in children making good progress during the Reception Year so that an increasing proportion move into Year 1 with skills which are similar to those expected nationally in all areas of learning, except linking letters to sounds. However, more than a third of children have literacy and numeracy skills below expectations.

The play-based curriculum successfully involves children in learning and gives them a good start to their education because they enjoy school and make good progress. Progress in social development is very good. Children learn to listen, cooperate and interact well through 'talking partners', sharing play equipment and group work. Collaboration skills, such as working together on a computer, are less well developed and only satisfactory. Children with behaviour issues are well managed and supported by teaching assistants to enable them to improve their social skills and benefit from learning opportunities. Children have a sound understanding of 'right'

and 'wrong'. They are encouraged to become independent and to have confidence in making choices.

The good leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures a consistency to raising standards. Progress is regularly checked through short observations which assess what children know and understand. This enables teachers to successfully plan activities which match the next step in children's learning.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Following recent improvements, the sixth form is now satisfactory. The academy rightly seeks to raise students' aspirations by encouraging them to stay on in the sixth form. In 2006, too many students failed to successfully complete their courses. This was largely due to being placed on courses which were inappropriate for their abilities and previous examination results. The curriculum has now been changed so students have a wider range of courses which are better tailored to their abilities. However, there are not yet sufficiently coherent routes for students to progress through different levels of qualifications.

The tracking of students' progress is much improved and is now good. There are regular checks on each student's progress. They value the mentoring they receive from university students. Students feel well supported and are appreciative of the improvements they see in sixth form provision. These recent improvements have demonstrated that the leadership and management of the sixth form are now satisfactory.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching to eradicate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion that is good or better in order to raise standards.
- Develop the curriculum so that it meets more precisely the needs of the learners.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory overall but a significant minority of students reach standards which are well below the expectation for their ages. The youngest children enter the primary section with standards that are below or well below average in communication and ability to use numbers. Children make satisfactory progress and, by the end of Reception, many achieve the standards expected for their age. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are rising but are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' standards are below average and, although progress is satisfactory overall, pupils make less progress in English and science than they do in mathematics.

Pupils start Year 7 with standards that are generally below average. Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen steadily since the academy opened, and pupils make satisfactory progress. However, standards remain below average and the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher Level 6 in national tests is low compared to other schools. Standards at GCSE have also risen but remain below average. In 2006, less than one in three pupils achieved five or more subjects at grade C or above, including mathematics and English. There continues to be considerable variation in the results achieved in different GCSE subjects.

Sixth form results in 2006 were an improvement on the poor results achieved in the previous year although too many students failed to complete their courses. As a result, standards overall were too low.

Across the academy there were no significant differences in the performance of different groups, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The progress that learners made was more closely related to the quality of teaching than the learners' backgrounds or prior attainment.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Learners' personal development and well-being are good and they feel well supported by the academy's strong pastoral system. Older pupils feel their transition from the primary stage is very smooth. The well-run house system, learning mentors and a good reward scheme motivate them to behave well. As a result, behaviour around the academy is orderly and relationships are generally good. Behaviour is good in the primary section and in most lessons in the secondary section. A few students in secondary classes disrupt lessons when teaching fails to engage them but persistent misbehaviour is effectively dealt with. Most students respect each other and the environment well, but a few are too boisterous, don't follow the academy's expectations and have to be closely supervised. Attendance is close to the national average and is well monitored and punctuality is improving. Students enjoy school, and all ethnic groups work well together. They report that they feel safe and that, when bullying occurs, they know to whom to turn. Incidents of verbal abuse have halved in the last year, and permanent exclusions show a downward trend. Pupils and students feel that the academy has made good progress in introducing healthier meals. They show a good awareness of the needs of others through charity collections, such as Red Nose Day. They celebrate their own diversity through assemblies and the International Day. All Year 10 students recently took part in the Lionheart Challenge where they competed in teams to design and make new products to improve people's health. The students' council represents them well and helps make important decisions such as changes in uniform. Students enjoy and benefit from work placements and the increasing enterprise activities. Many students have good awareness of environmental issues and the academy's own electric car, built by students, wins national Green Power races.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The majority of teachers plan their lessons well to meet the needs of their students. They make good use of interactive whiteboards in order to enhance learning. Lesson objectives are clearly shared with the learners. Many students know what level they are working at and what is required to enable them to reach the next level. Learning support assistants are active in supporting learners who have difficulties in understanding. Relationships at all levels are good. In many lessons, positive attitudes to learning are evident. Teaching is good or better in around half the lessons. In the best lessons assessment information is used well in order to monitor the progress of students and plan challenging tasks and activities.

The pace is brisk, the activities varied and the teachers use skilful and challenging questioning to promote learning. In these lessons teachers have high expectations of what can be achieved and the students are totally engaged and well motivated. However, there remains a small but significant proportion of lessons which are less successful or inadequate. In these, the pace is slower, expectations are too low, pupils go off task, low level disruption is unchecked and the pupils make inadequate progress. Teaching and learning, as a whole, have improved as a result of a rigorous monitoring and a good coaching system that has been implemented in order to improve the quality. The academy recognises that this needs to be sustained so that teaching is further improved.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of most students. Many students enter the academy with low level literacy skills and there is good provision provided to assist these students to catch up. The curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 is broad and balanced and includes lessons which assist students' understanding of their own personal learning styles. Opportunities, which are continually being enlarged, are offered for Years 10 and 11 to study a range of subjects which are most suited to their individual needs and abilities. These include academic, vocational and work-related courses. However, despite recent improvements there is not a wide enough range of vocational courses on offer to Years 10 and 11. A recently introduced modular curriculum, together with enhanced assessment, is helping to improve learning. Work experience opportunities and careers guidance are good. There is a wide range of after school activities at both primary and secondary level. These enhance learning and enjoyment and have a positive effect on students' attitudes.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Learners receive good support and guidance. Vulnerable learners and those who have additional learning needs are given particularly good support by staff, the academy's mentoring programme and through effective links with a range of external agencies. This ensures that they make satisfactory progress in their learning and are not disadvantaged.

Good relationships are evident at all levels and students are confident that there is always someone they can turn to, and that adults or other students will help them if they are worried or distressed. They feel safe and they report that instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with fairly and effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are robust and effective.

Appropriate systems for child protection are in place and good induction procedures and appropriate training ensure that staff have current knowledge of procedures.

Students are guided well in choosing options and making decisions in preparation for future studies or employment. Sixth form students spoke positively about the careers advice they receive and the mentoring provided by university undergraduates.

The academy sets challenging targets for all learners and their progress towards these targets is monitored well. Appropriate and timely support is provided to those learners who are identified

as at risk of underachieving. These systems are becoming embedded and are making a positive impact on raising achievement within the academy.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are good. The acting executive principal, ably supported by his senior colleagues in all parts of the academy, provides good leadership. Senior staff and governors have identified the strengths of the school and they are aware of where further developments are needed and they are applying appropriate remedies. There have, for example, been significant recent changes in the academy's management structure, and results are already showing an improvement. Monitoring procedures are good and senior and middle managers are working hard to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is improved, though they acknowledge that further work still needs to be done. Governance is good. The good governing body shares the academy's commitment to enhancing learning and to promoting good quality personal development, care and guidance of all learners. Under the astute guidance of a visionary chairman, the governing body is helping to drive the necessary changes, but many of the initiatives are recent and have not yet had sufficient time to make an impact. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good, and focuses on using as much information as possible to identify areas for improvements and to take appropriate action to secure higher standards. The impact of the leadership is seen in the improvements that are taking place and in its commitment to working in partnership with many outside organisations to boost learning. All these factors contribute to the academy's good potential to improve further.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Business Academy Bexley, Yarnton Way, Erith, DA18 4DW

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome and a special thank you to those of you who spoke to us about the academy and told us about what has changed since the previous inspection. We judge that the academy is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education.

You told us that you enjoy being at school and feel safe and well looked after. We were pleased to see that most of you get on well together and you like eating healthy food and understand the benefits of exercise. Most of you attend regularly and are keen to learn and enjoy your lessons and the range of activities that the academy offers.

The people who have responsibility for making decisions about your academy are clear about what it does well and what needs to improve. They encourage you to play your part in continuing to make the academy a better place to learn and achieve.

There are many things which are already improving rapidly but there are two things we think you need to focus on.

Your academy needs to:

- make sure that all teaching is good enough to enable you to work as hard as you can in every subject and learn as well as you can
- develop the curriculum so that the things you learn are interesting and provide a clear path for you to follow to achieve the skills and qualifications that you will need in the different stages of your life.

I am sure that if you all work together you can make these improvements.

Thank you again for helping us with our work and making our visit to your academy so enjoyable.

Robert EllisHer Majesty's Inspector