

Lambeth Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134815
Inspection number	302780
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Brenda Cusdin HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	540
Academy	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John O'Farrell
Principal	Mr Stephen Potter
Date of previous academy inspection	Not previously inspected
Academy address	Elms Road Clapham London SW4 9ET
Telephone number	020 7819 4700
Fax number	020 7819 4701

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the academy

Lambeth Academy is a 'local school for local children' and is a very popular choice with parents. The United Learning Trust, an educational charity, runs the academy. The academy has joint specialisms in modern foreign languages, and business and enterprise. It opened in September 2004 when the first cohort of students was admitted into Year 7. Currently there are students in Years 7 to 9 only. The full age range of 11–19 will be achieved in September 2008. The number of staff continues to grow as the number on roll rises. A new principal took over the leadership of the academy in September and two members of the senior team also started this year.

The students' economic and social backgrounds are mixed but most live in areas that are considerably disadvantaged. Far more students are entitled to free school meals than in many other schools. The student community is ethnically diverse. Twenty-four different home languages are spoken. The largest groups are Black Afro-Caribbean and White British. The academy specialises in provision for visually impaired students. A relatively high proportion of students have learning difficulties or disabilities, and more than usual have statements of special educational need. Standards on entry are well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the academy

Grade: 3

'Lambeth Academy has improved considerably since the new head took over, so continue to improve and keep up the good work.'

This parent's observation is correct. Much has been achieved thanks to the new principal's expert leadership skills. He astutely reviewed practice in the term before he took over and made substantial changes on a wide range of fronts at the beginning of this year. The academy now has a well-reasoned framework of policies and this means that staff and students know what is expected of them.

The academy's overall effectiveness is satisfactory with good features. Care, guidance and support for students are working really well. A very positive feature within the curriculum is the provision made for those students who have learning difficulties and disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language. Many Year 9 students are excited about their choice of Year 10 courses and are proud of their academy. Personal development and well-being are good.

Students' rates of progress have varied. Year 9 students started this year from a low baseline. They made good progress this year because staff carefully identified gaps in their learning and put in place well-designed measures to boost achievement in the core subjects. The academy's assessments indicate that standards in Year 9 are close to national averages and that challenging targets may well be achieved when Year 9 results are published. Progress is slower in Year 8 where students are mainly making satisfactory progress. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lessons are thoughtfully planned and the vast majority work well. A significant number of classes experience consistently good teaching. The academy has sound behaviour management strategies. The number of lessons affected by low-level disruption has reduced considerably this year. Some parents are concerned that unsatisfactory behaviour spoils learning at times. However, the number of lessons affected by low-level disruption has reduced considerably this year. In a few lessons observed by inspectors, teachers tolerated distracting behaviours for too long and the pace of learning suffered.

From day one of his leadership, the principal has wanted the whole academy community to play their part in moving the academy forward and has thoughtfully set up strategies to ensure that more 'voices are heard'. The new senior team clearly works together well and is playing a key part in the improved pace of developments this school year. Many staff are working hard to 'do the day job' and finalise plans for the new age ranges and courses starting in a few months time. The academy knows where it wants to go and what it needs to work on. Lambeth Academy has good capacity to improve further.

What the academy should do to improve further

* Raise achievement by ensuring that students make steadier progress over time.* Ensure that all staff maintain the same expectations of behaviour and successfully implement strategies to reduce low-level disruption in lessons.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' rates of progress have varied over time. Very effective steps were taken this year to accelerate students' progress in the core subjects in Year 9, following a careful analysis of their subject knowledge. Staff were thrilled that there was 100% attendance for the Year 9 national tests. Assessments show that the current Year 8 students are mainly making satisfactory progress. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

The academy's assessment information shows that standards in Year 9 are close to national averages. It suggests that boys and girls in Year 9 have made broadly similar gains from their starting points in Year 7, and that the gains made by Year 9 Black or Black British students match that for the whole year group. As yet, the academy has not evaluated thoroughly the progress of other groups, for example whether higher attaining students are reaching their full potential. Thanks to the very good support they receive, students identified with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those in the earliest stages of learning English as an additional language, have made good gains in the individual skills they need most urgently. Looked after children are making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good because the academy has good systems and strategies for promoting it, and because students are keen to accept advice and guidance. From the outset, attendance rates have been above national averages.

Many students say that they enjoy school. Students make positive contributions to the academy and wider community as 'ambassadors' to primary schools, in sporting and performing arts activities and in many other ways. They typically treat teachers, visitors, each other and the attractive new buildings with respect. These positive relationships reinforce the academy's welcoming and calm atmosphere.

The academy places a strong emphasis on personal responsibility. 'It's down to me to behave and get on with learning', said a girl who admitted to some poor behaviour last year. She was keen to tackle her own problems and was developing the skills to do so. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Generally pupils behave well in lessons. On occasions, unsettled and noisy behaviour from a small minority of students is not remedied quickly enough. Instances of bullying or name calling occur sometimes. Students say that it is generally dealt with swiftly when reported. The vast majority of students move around the site and buildings purposefully.

Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Many walk or cycle to school, and participate in sports. They enjoy the healthy food in the canteen that provides a free salad bar with hot meals. The students appreciate the many avenues for learning about the beliefs and values of individuals, nations, different cultures and religions. Their progress in developing the skills necessary for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. Basic skills are acquired reasonably well as are the skills of working in teams or groups.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Currently much of the teaching is good enabling students to make satisfactory and often good progress in their learning. However in the few lessons where disruptive behaviour is not managed effectively, learning suffers.

Lessons are well planned and carefully structured to help students build on their knowledge and understanding. In lessons observed by inspectors, teachers used their interactive white boards to get lessons off to a brisk start. These, and other resources, provided refreshing variety in learning approaches within a lesson, although students were not given many opportunities to develop their skills of working with each other. Teaching assistants, and other adult helpers, knew what students should be learning. Their patient responses to queries, and their careful questioning of individuals, helped these students to make headway in their tasks.

In the most effective lessons, teachers posed searching questions and they really encouraged students to think things through for themselves. Most teachers listened carefully to students' responses and adapted their teaching where needed, for example by explaining in a different way. There is inconsistency in the quality of feedback given to students on their written work. Some teachers clearly identify the next steps each student needs to take to improve the standards of their work and set careful targets. In a few classes, however, there are long periods where exercise books have not been marked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and supports students' personal development through providing opportunities, for instance in citizenship, for them to reflect on many life issues. Students have a wide choice of extension activities. The academy promotes the arts very well and has recently been awarded Artsmark status.

There are good facilities across the range of subjects taught. In September, detailed programmes of study were introduced to improve sequencing of tasks over Years 7 to 9. The impact of this new planning will be reviewed shortly. Staff have worked productively to outline courses that will run in Years 10 and 11. Students are pleased to get their first choices. Parents applaud staff for taking account of their views.

Work on developing the specialisms has gathered momentum in the last two terms. Staff support language learning in local primary schools and less common languages, such as Chinese, will be taught next year. The academy now has partner schools in countries across the world and has just been granted International School Status. Business education is taught in Years 8 and 9. A recent business and enterprise week supported students' learning in this area.

The provision for those students who have learning difficulties or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language, is a strength. The mix of individual support and targeted supplementary programmes works very well. Students, who have challenging behaviours, learn how to cope better through the carefully planned activities with learning mentors and sessions in the flexible learning centre.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The student services team are well-organised and very effective. This team makes every effort to ensure that the right form of support is provided for the specific needs of individual students. They collaborate closely with parents and a wide range of outside agencies. Teachers and support staff work in very good partnership to keep a close check on students' behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Systems for doing this have been designed well. Not all staff, however, implement systems for managing behaviour consistently. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are sound.

Students receive good information and advice on how well they are doing, what they should be aiming for and how to make future study choices. Sensible steps have been taken to ensure that all recent reports to parents provide relevant and helpful information about the standards achieved by their children, the progress they are making and targets for future learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The principal's skilled leadership has driven through improvements on many fronts this year. The senior team are managing developments very well. The middle management has real strengths in some curricular areas but, as with classroom practice, this is not fully consistent as yet.

There is much to be initiated in a new academy in a short time and the management load is heavy. The principal's fresh approach has inspired many. Morale amongst staff, governors, students and parents is high. The principal has set up focus groups to find out what students and parents think. Staff working groups are beginning to contribute their ideas about particular improvements. Governors' committees focus more closely on reviewing progress with the development plan.

This widespread spirit of teamwork is reinforced by clarity about roles and responsibilities. Workforce reforms have been managed creatively and improvements in staffing structure are well reasoned. Day-to-day organisation runs very efficiently. The academy is working productively with other institutions to widen 14-19 provision.

Strategies to evaluate the impact of current practice are moving along the right lines but the tracking of pupil performance was not underway well enough until this year. Nevertheless, the senior team identified the most urgent priorities to address and inspection evidence confirms the school's current self-evaluation. The major thrust on boosting achievement in Year 9 was expertly managed. The senior team commissioned guidance from external consultants to ensure that the review of Year 9 students' performance was thorough and led to focused revision packages.

The chair, and other governors, worked with impressive commitment to get the academy up-and-running. There is a good range of expertise and backgrounds on the board. The governors have been alert to strengths and weaknesses in the development process. They took appropriate steps to ensure that progress and provision are much more effective this year.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	Academy Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this academy require special measures?	No
Does this academy require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Lambeth Academy, London, SW4 9ET

Many thanks for our warm welcome. We learnt a lot from joining your lessons and activities. We enjoyed chatting with many of you about your experiences in school.

Everyone told us that your new principal has made a really big difference. You and your parents are thrilled that he takes your views seriously and that there are many improvements this year.

Those of you in Year 9 are looking forward to new courses in Year 10. You have been given good opportunities to boost achievement in English, mathematics and science with extra revision sessions etc. Your staff are really pleased because you have made good progress this year. Your teachers recognise, and we agree, that it is important that all year groups make steady progress all the time.

We thought that you are developing personal skills well. Most of you take responsibility for your actions and contribute positively to the welcoming atmosphere in the academy. Nearly all of your lessons are taught well but sometimes learning is spoiled by silly behaviour from a few. Your academy has good behaviour management systems but occasionally teachers are slow to use them.

Your student support services team works very well. You very much appreciate the extra support that you get from them.

There are very many things to do when you set up a new school. Your staff are working very hard to improve what they do now and plan for the new year groups in September. We said that your academy's overall effectiveness is satisfactory with good features. There has been huge progress this year and more improvements are in the pipeline.

Very best wishes

Brenda CusdinHMI