

The Business Academy Bexley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133769
Local Authority	133769 N/A
Inspection number	341411
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price HMI

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1606
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Garnham
Headteacher	Christina Moon (Executive Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	Yarton Way Erith Kent
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The number of lessons observed was 44, taught by 44 teachers. Meetings were held with strategic and senior leaders, staff, groups of learners, the Chair of the Governing Body and the chief executive officer. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the academy's self-evaluation documents, lesson observation records, curriculum documentation, achievement and attainment data, financial analyses, school improvement documentation and governing body minutes. Inspectors analysed 270 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Inspectors also analysed questionnaires from students and academy staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of high attainers, students who require significant school intervention and students with statements in the secondary phase and in mathematics, science and for pupils who require significant school intervention in the primary phase to determine whether teaching is meeting the needs of all students
- the effectiveness of care, guidance and support for all learners especially more vulnerable learners and those in the sixth form
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers actions in raising achievement especially in poorer performing subjects and for particular groups of learners.

Information about the school

The academy is a non-maintained 4 to 19 school with a business and enterprise focus. It is one of only a few academies that provide an education for this age range. At the last inspection in 2007 the school was removed from a Notice to Improve. The proportion of learners known to be eligible for free school meals, students for whom English is an additional language and the proportion of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. The proportion of learners who start or leave the academy outside the start of the year is high. The academy has a learning development centre with provision for those students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. The academy provides accommodation for a pre-school facility for children aged 0 to 5 which is managed by an outside agency.

All strategic leaders are relatively new in post. The headteacher for the secondary phase was appointed in January 2009. The Executive Principal and the consultant headteacher for the primary phase, the latter of whom is a National Leader of Education, were initially appointed for a period of twelve months in September 2009. Both appointments have now been extended.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The academy is emerging from troubled times. Since the last inspection, two Principals have resigned their post and the academy has had a period where there was no substantive headteacher of the primary phase. The proportion of teaching staff who have left the academy since 2007 has been high. The very low attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 had not improved during the period of 2007 to 2009. However, since the appointment of the extremely able Executive Principal, and a skilled consultant headteacher for the primary phase, attainment in the primary has started to rise. The headteacher for the secondary phase has effectively maintained the rising trend in attainment at GCSE and in the sixth form. The pace of improvement in the last year has been rapid. The consultant headteacher for the primary phase has significantly improved the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Validated data for 2010 indicates that children at the end of Reception made good progress.

The strategic leadership team are working together extremely well and have galvanised the staff within the academy. There is now a strong focus on improving learner outcomes and the quality of provision offered to them. Children join the Reception year with skills and experiences that are low for their age. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 to achieve standards that are low. However standards at all key stages are rising, rapidly in Key Stage 4. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2010 is good. The proportion of pupils set to achieve high levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is set to rise for the first time in three years. In 2009, students achieved improved results in their GCSEs. More students achieved five or more A* to C results compared to previous years. Although attainment is low, it is set to rise further. The attainment of students in the sixth form is set to show good improvement on previous years but remains below national averages. There are no discernible differences in the achievement of different groups of students in 2010. More able students, learners requiring significant school intervention and those with statements of special educational needs are predicted to achieve as well as their peers.

Learners' achievement is improving because the academy provides good care, guidance and support in all phases of its work. The learning development centre provides equally good support for vulnerable learners. The nurture centre in the primary school has had a positive impact on the behaviour and inclusion of pupils. The good curriculum, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 4, is addressing the needs of learners including the more able. Although teaching is improving, and there have been significant improvements in the primary phase, it is not yet of a sufficient standard to enable learners to learn well. In the better lessons, teaching is lively and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. In these lessons, teachers assess learners'

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progress and understanding well and provide a variety of activities to stimulate their enthusiasm and move the pace of learning on quickly. Learners enjoyed these lessons. In the weaker lessons, teachers had a tendency to talk for long periods of time and learners were not given a variety of tasks to gain their interest. When the work did little to motivate learners, poor behaviour ensued. Teachers' use of learners' assessment data to plan lessons, to target learning or to support those learners who are underachieving is not well developed. Learners' behaviour is satisfactory although behaviour of pupils in the primary phase is good. They make a good contribution to academy community. The exceptionally good initiative of the student leadership scheme enables students of all years in the secondary phase to assume leadership responsibilities well.

Under the direction of the Executive Principal, strategic leaders have worked hard to stem the underachievement in the primary phase and improve outcomes in the secondary phase. Academy leaders' use of data enables them to have a sound understanding of how well learners are achieving. However, the use of data by subject leaders and managers is not yet precise enough to enable them to assess learners' achievement and to put actions in place swiftly. The work to create a cohesive academy community has been highly effective. Leaders continue to review their strategies to further contribute to the local community. Leaders and managers know what their next steps are, as self-evaluation is accurate and they have taken effective steps to improve learners' achievement. The academy demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

The Executive Principal and the headteachers have created a culture where middle leaders can assume responsibility. Leaders are monitoring their actions well. However, some middle leaders' subject management skills are underdeveloped which has led to slower improvements in students' achievement in some subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise learners' attainment by:
 - focusing on how students learn and increasing the range of teaching and learning styles they experience
 - making effective use of learner performance data by teachers to support planning, teaching practice and learning intervention.
 - increasing the effectiveness of middle leaders to drive improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now obtaining standards that are much improved on previous years. The academy predicts that attainment in the primary phase is set to rise. The proportion of students in the secondary phase set to achieve five or more good GCSEs demonstrates good improvement and exceeds the school's own challenging targets for 2010. The academy is closing the gap in attainment in the secondary phase well. In 2009, students achieved AS level standards in the sixth form that were low. The head of sixth form has put in place better strategies to guide

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students which have resulted in the academy predicting improved outcomes for this year. The proportion of students who will achieve higher grades at A level is also set to rise.

Learners generally feel safe, especially in the primary phase. The level of learner attendance has improved to satisfactory in both the primary and secondary phases. In the secondary phase there were a few instances of poor student behaviour although students' behaviour overall is satisfactory. The good house system in the secondary phase provides students with opportunities to assume positions of responsibilities well. Older students support younger pupils well. The impact of the business and enterprise focus results in students developing sound business and entrepreneurial skills to prepare them for the next stage in their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is yet to provide the best platform for students to learn well. Inspectors observed some good use of assessment of students learning in lessons, especially in English. In the better lessons, students worked well and some displayed good

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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independent skills to enable them to take charge of their own pace of learning. The lack of learner involvement in some lessons gave rise to students becoming disinterested in their work.

The academy's curriculum is improving and is contributing well to the rise in standards. It is currently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The primary curriculum in Key Stage 1 and 2 is developing well. The good Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is having a positive impact on children's attainment. The Key Stage 1 curriculum proposed includes the introduction of the 'Big Writing' scheme to develop pupils' skills in writing. The academy is refining the four pathways that already exist in Key Stage 3 for September 2010. The Key Stage 3 curriculum will be delivered in two years instead of the traditional three. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is well matched to students' needs with a good range of courses available for the most able as well as students who require support in their learning. There are very good enrichment and extra-curricular activities, for example activity clubs held every Wednesday afternoon, after school and in the school holidays. Activities include street and contemporary dance, judo and street hockey.

The house and tutor system for sixth form and secondary students provide them with a strong sense of belonging to a community. There are good support systems, including learning managers who are there for students when they have problems. Looked after children are attending and achieving well due to the effective support and liaison with external agencies. Attendance in both the primary and secondary phases has improved due to the academy's systems and procedures it has in place, including links with the education welfare officer and attendance officer, and senior students involved in peer mentoring with vulnerable students. In the primary phase, identification and support for vulnerable students has promoted good involvement from pupils' parents or carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The accurate and realistic evaluation of the academy's performance by the strategic leadership team has enabled them to move quickly in improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students. Leaders and managers ensure that learners are kept safe. The academy's safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Overall, the academy's contribution to community cohesion is good. The house system in the secondary phase provides good opportunities for students to work together. The family learning week and

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the International Day are successful in encouraging parents and carers from different communities to become involved in school life. The academy hosts the liaison group of local residents and businesses that are seeking to develop better relationships between the police, the local council, community, faith groups and local housing associations.

The school is narrowing the gap between students' performance in Year 11 and has made good improvements in the primary phase, with standards predicted to rise after a hiatus. No students at the end of any key stage underachieve and the school has worked hard to improve the attainment of learners who were not achieving as well as their peers in 2009. The academy promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily.

The governing body has recognised that it needs to be in a better position to challenge the academy's performance. There has been an increase in the number of governors in the last six months and those who have joined come from a range of backgrounds with appropriate skills to develop the governing body. Training has been provided to governors on analysing school performance data. The Chair of the Governing Body has taken steps to implement a succession plan to enable the academy to maintain its capacity at senior leadership level when the Executive Principal and the consultant headteacher for the primary phase leave. The Executive Principal has acted swiftly to manage the proposed overspend. Good actions have been taken to secure the academy's finances.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with levels of skills that are well below expectations for their

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age. In 2010 children made significant improvements in their achievement and the academy's validated data indicate that they have achieved standards that are average. The academy has successfully closed the gap for its current children.

The improved tracking and monitoring of children's achievement has led to swifter actions to ensure all children are achieving well. The improved layout in classrooms to allow for focused areas of the curriculum has had a positive impact on children's learning. Children are well cared for and their progress is monitored well. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has a clear focus on raising achievement and has put effective actions in place that have improved the quality of provision and children's outcomes.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with attainment that is low. They achieve satisfactorily to attain standards in their AS and A levels that are low. The standards that students achieved at AS level fell in 2009 as compared to the previous year. The proportion of students who achieved grades A to E at A Level rose in 2009 as did the proportion of students who achieved high grades. Not as many students achieved distinction grades in 2009 in their BTEC National course. The academy's data suggest that student attainment is set to rise, particularly at AS level. Leaders' analysis of the reasons for the weaker performance at AS level has led to effective actions to improve the initial guidance that Year 11 students are offered to enable them to make informed choices about their post-16 course. Students make an effective contribution to the academy's community, serving as 'head students' of each of the houses.

The academy has made improvements to teaching in the sixth form to enable a better focus on learning. The impact is yet to be secured. There is a good and improving range of courses to match students' needs. Students can elect to take a combination of academic and vocational courses and a combination of levels 1, 2 or 3. Good information, advice and guidance help students to make good decisions about their courses and life after the academy.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers are of the opinion that the academy keeps their children safe. A similar proportion of parents and carers are of the view that the academy informs them of their child's progress. A small minority of parents and carers felt that the academy did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors did observe some poor behaviour which, in the main, was dealt with effectively by staff. A very large majority of parents and carers stated they were happy with their child's experience at the academy.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at iThe Business Academy Bexley to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 270 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1606 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	104	39	140	52	19	7	7	3
The school keeps my child safe	89	33	159	59	15	6	4	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	81	30	155	57	30	11	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	26	151	56	38	14	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	74	27	158	59	23	9	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	25	150	56	41	15	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	26	154	57	36	13	4	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	63	23	144	53	36	13	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	24	153	57	34	13	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	72	27	138	51	43	16	14	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	20	156	58	34	13	10	4
The school is led and managed effectively	75	28	141	52	31	11	7	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	31	141	52	30	11	6	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Business Academy, Erith, DA18 4DW

Thank you very much for welcoming us when we came to inspect your academy. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing what you feel about the school. Your views are important in helping the school to improve.

We judge that your academy is satisfactory. It provides good care, guidance and support and a good curriculum, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form. You felt the academy made you feel safe and that you worked together harmoniously. The academy has enabled you to make a good contribution to your academy community. We judged that the work of the senior leaders in the school gave you excellent opportunities to develop leadership skills. Overall, we judged that you gain low grades in your national examinations because your progress is satisfactory. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage now make good progress and have gained average standards. The Executive Principal and senior leaders understand what they need to do to improve your achievement, and the inspection team have recognised that there are always things that could be better.

We have asked your leaders and managers to raise your levels of attainment by:

- focusing on how you learn and increasing the range of teaching and learning styles you experience
- using data about how well you are doing to support teachers' planning, classroom practice and how they help you learn better
- increasing the effectiveness of the subject managers to drive improvement.

You can help the academy by continuing to attend well, being attentive in lessons and behaving well at all times.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price

Her Majesty's Inspector

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