

The Bridge Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131609
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	343131
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	543
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Francesca Barnes
Headteacher	Anne Barton (Interim principal)
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and representatives from partnership organisations and students. They observed the academy's work, and looked at the academy improvement plan, assessment information and other academy documents. They also analysed 26 parent, 20 staff and 97 pupil questionnaires.

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

- Support and intervention for students who have special educational needs
- The impact of initiatives to raise attainment
- Transition arrangements for leadership and management.

Information about the school

This is a mixed, non-denominational school, which opened as a new academy in September 2007. It has specialisms of music and mathematics. In September 2008, it moved to its current purpose built accommodation on the site of the former Laburnum Primary School and is located in an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The majority of students live locally and 49% are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. At the moment it has only Year 7, 8 and 9 students, but by 2013 it is expected to have 1,150 students including 250 students in the sixth form. Over half the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and around two in five have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including 6% who have statements of special educational needs. Both these figures are well above the national average. The academy has previously had trouble in recruiting staff in some subjects, particularly design and technology. An interim principal has led the academy since April 2009. A substantive principal has been appointed to lead the academy from January 2010.

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

2

Main findings

The governors appointed an interim team to strengthen leadership and raise the pace of improvement. Since their arrival, they have established rigorous and systematic systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the academy. Prompt action was taken to remedy evident weaknesses. Consequently, there has been a recent rapid improvement in the academy's development. The beneficial impact of the actions taken demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. Most students make at least satisfactory progress in their learning but there is considerable variation across different lessons. The large majority of students are on track to achieve challenging targets and good improvements made to the support for students who have special educational needs is ensuring that they are not left behind. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and it is improving because of the recent training and support provided for teachers. Lessons generally engage students but there are sometimes insufficient opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning and to be involved in assessing their own progress. Good care and guidance contribute to students' good personal development. Student behaviour is satisfactory and improving and most students are developing positive attitudes to learning. The overwhelming majority say they enjoy school and feel safe, although a small minority of students have concerns about low-level distracting behaviour in lessons and inconsiderate behaviour when students are moving around the building. Inspectors saw no evidence of significant inappropriate behaviour during the inspection but noted that, although students move sensibly when adults are present, some students are more boisterous when unsupervised. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were generally happy with their children's experience at the academy but would like the academy to do more to enable them to support their children's learning

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- 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.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most students are keen to learn and apply themselves diligently in lessons but some need frequent prompting and lack confidence in improving their work without significant support and guidance from adults. Work seen in lessons and the academy's assessment data show that students make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and attainment is mostly in line with the expectations for their ages. The different groups of pupils say they feel safe at the academy and demonstrate that they know how to identify and respond to risks. They say that they would like the academy to involve them more in decision making and provide them with more opportunities to take responsibility. Most students behave appropriately and only gentle prompting is needed in most cases to maintain good order. Public spaces are generally calm and orderly although some areas quickly become congested when students move from one lesson to another. Students are responding positively to the academy's system of rewards and sanctions and there has been a reduction in the number of exclusions. Students understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and appreciate the range of healthy options available in the cafeteria. Attendance is satisfactory and improving and students are developing a good range of skills, which will be of use to them in the next stage of their education. They enthusiastically embrace the wide range of artistic, sporting and cultural enrichment opportunities, which are available to them. Students from different backgrounds mix well together and they are developing an understanding of each others' cultures and beliefs. The specialisms of music and mathematics are making a significant contribution to students' enjoyment and development through participation in performances and competitions.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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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The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in some respects. Most lessons provide tasks and activities which interest and engage students. Some lessons are too teacher directed and students become over reliant on the adults present and consequently do not make the progress that they should. In a few lessons, teachers do not accurately gauge the level of students' understanding and the degree to which they are engaged with their individual tasks, so time and learning opportunities are wasted. The well-planned, good curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' development and well-being. There is a broad range of enrichment opportunities and students particularly enjoy the extensive range of opportunities to participate in music. The academy provides a welcoming environment for its students and good quality care, guidance and support underpin its work. Clearly targeted intervention work is helping students who have fallen behind and there are good arrangements to support students who have needs that are more complex.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	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 interim leadership team are relentlessly focussed on securing improvement. Senior leaders monitor the work of the academy rigorously and systematically. They have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and have taken appropriate actions to develop the capacity of leaders and managers at all levels. Governors are well informed and provide a good balance of challenge and support. They recognise that transition arrangements need to ensure that the current good rate of improvement is not checked. The academy has a positive relationship with parents and carers but is not complacent and is seeking to develop ways of keeping parents and carers better informed about their children's achievements and of how they can support their

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children's learning. Outstanding partnership activity makes a strong contribution to developing student's self-esteem. It benefits pupils in ways that could not be provided otherwise. Volunteers from partnership organisations provide good role models that help raise students' expectations of what they might achieve. The academy is very inclusive and works hard to promote equal opportunities for all. There are effective arrangements to ensure that students are safe and well cared for. The academy makes a strong contribution to community cohesion within and beyond the academy and students from different backgrounds and different communities have good relationships with each other.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A relatively small proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The academy attributes this lower than expected level of response to the academy being given only one day's notice of the inspection. Several parents wrote positive comments about the support their children receive. A small minority of parents felt that the academy did not provide them with enough help to enable them support their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Bridge Academy 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 543 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	54	11	42	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	50	12	46	1	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	35	16	62	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	38	14	54	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	31	15	58	2	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	27	14	54	3	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	50	10	38	3	12	0	0
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)	6	23	14	54	0	0	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	19	18	69	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	38	10	38	2	8	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	31	15	58	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	23	16	62	1	4	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	42	11	42	1	4	1	4

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



9 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bridge Academy, Hackney, E2 8BA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with the inspection. I would particularly like to thank those of you who took time to talk to us about the academy and those who completed our inspection questionnaire. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and that you feel safe and well cared for. The academy has made a number of recent improvements and most of you are making satisfactory progress in your learning but some of you do not achieve as well as you should in a few subjects. I hope you will take time to read the full report which is available on our web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Here are some of the things you do best.

Most of you like learning and you get on well with each other.

You are well looked after and given good support to help you to develop as sensible and responsible young people.

You have good opportunities regardless of where you come from or how well you learnt in the past.

The adults who are responsible for running the academy have good ideas about how to make it a better place for learning and have developed outstanding partnerships which will help speed up the improvements.

Here are the things that need to be improved.

We would like the teachers to give you more opportunities to assess your own work and decide what you need to do to improve or develop your work.

We would like the academy to help your parents and carers to be better prepared to support your learning.

We want the adults who are responsible for running the academy to make sure that they maintain the recent good pace of improvement.

You can help by working hard and always trying to do your best. We really enjoyed our visit and look forward to hearing about your future success.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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