

The City Academy Bristol

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134221
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381635
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	James Sage HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1170
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Laycock
Headteacher	Gill Kelly (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
School address	Russell Town Avenue Bristol BS5 9JH
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Sage	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clare Saunders	Additional inspector
Selby Thomas	Additional inspector
Lisa Fraser	Additional inspector
Judith Goodchild	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 39 lessons, ten of which were undertaken with members of the school's senior leadership team, and 35 teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and with one other governor. Five formal meetings were held with groups of students and with a wide range of members of staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, a range of policies and the school's analysis of data about students' progress and reviews of the quality of teaching. Account was also taken of the views of parents and carers in the 30 parental questionnaires returned. However, because the number of parents and carers returning questionnaires was very low, no clear picture of their views is possible, although none raised any significant concerns. Inspectors also took account of the views presented in 111 questionnaires completed by students and by 28 staff in the academy

Information about the school

The City Academy Bristol is larger than most other secondary schools. The academy is a specialist sports college and ten per cent of the academy's intake is selected by sporting aptitude. Many of the students live in the local communities. Almost half of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is three times the national average. Over two thirds of students are from minority ethnic groups and more than half speak English as an additional language. The number of students at an early stage of learning English is much higher than normal and increasing. Students represent a wide range of faiths and more than 60 different countries of origin; 42 different languages are spoken by students. There is a significant and increasing proportion of Traveller and Roma students in the academy. Student mobility is much higher than average.

The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average. The academy houses a specialist resource base for students with complex physical disabilities or severe emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The students are taught in mainstream classes with additional support. The academy also runs a Youth Achievement Foundation providing alternative provision for those students in Years 10 and 11 in danger of permanent exclusion. About 60% of

students in the sixth form are from the academy; the rest join from a range of other schools in the city.

The academy works with a very wide range of partners and plays a central role as a host centre for a wide range of community engagement initiatives. It offers extensive community-centred provision, including a privately-run children's centre and a very wide range of adult learning courses. The academy is an Arts Award School and has an Arts Mark Silver Award.

The Principal took up her post in September 2010. The academy meets the government floor standards.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good and improving school. Students enter with very low levels of attainment, but make good progress and achieve well. The academy nurtures students' all-round personal development and develops their independence and self-esteem well. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral and social development is good, and of their cultural development outstanding. There is a strong trend of improvement in the achievement of all groups of students and in their attendance. Notably, the attendance of students who had been persistent absentees has risen and they are more effectively involved in lessons.
- The sixth form is good. Students have access to a good curriculum that meets their needs well, are taught well and also make good progress.
- The school provides a noticeably harmonious and well-ordered environment where behaviour is good, diversity is valued and students feel safe. They show great respect for each other and for the adults in the school. The academy rigorously monitors any incidents of bullying or disruption, deals with them effectively and has reduced the number of such incidents significantly.
- Much teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. However, a small minority is still not good enough and students do not make enough progress in these lessons. The academy is not outstanding because the proportion of lessons where students make at least good progress is not sufficiently high enough or consistent across all curriculum areas.
- The academy's leaders have accurately identified where further improvements are required. The actions already taken have led to significant improvements in students' achievement and attendance. As a result of good leadership and improved management of performance, the overall quality of teaching has risen markedly. Currently, further improvements in students' achievements are inhibited by their very low levels of attainment on entry to the academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise students' achievement further, increase the proportion of teaching that is consistently good or better to at least 80% by the end of this academic year (July 2012), and even higher in the following year, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers carefully monitor students' progress in lessons and over time
 - all teachers set high expectations and provide all students with work that challenges them and ensures that they are fully involved in the lesson
 - there is greater clarity in the next steps set for students
 - all teachers more effectively develop students' skills in literacy, numeracy and oral communications through their teaching.
- Develop more formal arrangements with partner primary schools to work together to raise students' attainment by the time they enter the academy, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In the large majority of lessons students make at least good progress. Students generally have very good attitudes to their work and want to do well. They respond well to teaching that is interesting and engaging, and often work with enthusiasm. Their enjoyment of success is noticeable. This is particularly the case for students with lower prior attainment and those who have special educational needs. Inspectors focused on this group of learners and, where they are integrated into lessons, they mostly make good progress. Their progress is enhanced significantly by the wide range of specialist support they are given. Inspectors also focused on the progress made by the highest attaining students, particularly girls, because of previous underachievement. These students now make at least the progress expected of them and this has led to improvements in overall attainment.

In all cases, students are making better progress than similar groups nationally. Significant improvements have been made to ensure that current Year 11 students will exceed the government floor standards for the proportion of students making at least three levels of progress in English and mathematics. Improvements in the performance in mathematics has lagged behind that in English but, as a result of a range of actions recently taken, students' progress in mathematics has accelerated significantly.

A noticeable strength of the academy is the progress made by many of the large number of students at early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language and by those who join the school at different points in the year, often with limited prior education. The provision for these students and their careful integration into lessons is highly effective.

Despite making good progress, students' final attainment has been low, although above the government floor standard, as a result of their very low attainment on entry to the school. Improvements in the progress they make have led to

significantly raising their attainment. The school is well on track to exceed its challenging targets for the current Year 11 students, bringing it much closer to the average.

The progress made by sixth form students in lessons and their overall achievement are also good. Success rates are in line with the national averages, although retention rates are low in some areas. The academy achieves a good balance between providing post-16 education for those that want or need it, and ensuring that students have a good chance of success. As levels of literacy and numeracy on entry to the sixth form rise, the academy is tightening entry requirements to increase success rates further.

Quality of teaching

Much teaching is at least good and some is outstanding, including in the sixth form. In these lessons students do not just make good progress, they also show enthusiasm and enjoyment of their learning, supported by a curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations well. The quality of the discussions between the teacher and students in an English lesson about *Of Mice and Men* was highly impressive. The way that students' understanding of the principles behind simultaneous equations and Pythagoras theorem was developed in two different mathematics lessons ensured great depth of learning. Students' enthusiastic involvement in games and physical education lessons results from skilful and engaging teaching. Well-planned use of peer-assessment, with perceptive feedback given by the students, enhanced learning in several lessons.

However, students do not make enough progress in a small minority of lessons, overall and in a number of curriculum areas. In these lessons, teachers do not monitor students' progress rigorously enough to set high expectations and work that challenges all students sufficiently. Some students in these lessons are not fully involved in the learning while others find the work too easy. While work is marked, and this is often done well, there is inconsistency in making clear to students the next steps to ensure their further progress.

Systems for monitoring students' overall progress are rigorous. As a result, where their achievement slips, a wide range of interventions is used to effectively support these students through extra lessons, out-of-school support and good deployment of teaching assistants. This compensates where there are weaknesses in teaching and contributes to the overall good progress of all students. Recent improvements in teaching mean that this additional support is increasingly better targeted on those students who need it most.

Because of the low levels for many students on entry to the academy, good attention is given to providing a curriculum and support to raise students' levels of literacy and numeracy, as well as raising their self-esteem and developing their skills of independence. In many lessons teachers support this through their teaching. However, not all evaluate the levels of literacy and/or numeracy required for the tasks they plan, match this to the students' levels and use strategies to enable all students to have full access to the work.

The curriculum, and many lessons, supports the good academy-wide promotion of students' spiritual, moral and social development and outstanding cultural development. Lessons are planned to ensure that opportunities to do this are taken, such as the lively discussions in a Year 10 physical education lesson about cultural influences in sport and incidents of racism and homophobia.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The population of the academy is extremely diverse and it provides a noticeably harmonious and well-ordered environment where students' behaviour is good, diversity is valued and where students feel safe. The few parents and carers who returned the questionnaire agree. They show great respect for each other and for all adults, and have a good awareness of keeping safe and avoiding unsafe situations. Good behaviour in lessons supports the good progress made by the large majority of students. On the few occasions where disruption occurs in lessons, usually when the teaching does not engage students' interest sufficiently, they are generally dealt with well with minimal disruption to learning.

While there is a problem with the punctuality at the start of the day for a minority of students, once in the academy students move to lessons with a clear sense of purpose and are on time to lessons. During the short lunch period, despite the large number of students, the academy is extremely well-ordered and behaviour is sensible. Students have a clear understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying or prejudice-based bullying, and how to avoid it. The academy rigorously monitors any, including very minor, incidents of bullying or disruption and deals with them effectively. This has reduced the number of such incidents significantly.

Attendance has been low over a number of years and persistent absence a problem. Some of this is due to the complex lives of, and demands on, a significant proportion students. However, the academy has successfully reduced the amount of persistent absence and raised overall attendance to be broadly in line with average. Effective use is made of the unit on site to make sure that the most vulnerable 14 to 16 year old students remain in school.

The care shown to all students is a clear strength of the school and makes significant contributions to students' all-round personal development, their well-being, improvements in their behaviour and attendance, and to raising their achievements.

Leadership and management

The academy's Principal, who took up post in September 2010, the recently re-structured senior leadership and management team, and the governing body have accurately identified where further improvements are required in the school. The actions they have already taken have led to significant improvements in students' achievement, attendance and in the overall quality of teaching. Comprehensive and rigorous systems have been introduced to monitor students' progress and the quality of teaching, and for the performance management of teachers. This allows effective interventions to be made to support students and teachers when necessary. The academy's procedures for the professional development of teachers are

comprehensive, supportive and rigorous.

Senior leaders have a clear view of where improvements in teaching are necessary and of the actions that need to be taken. Since the start of the current school year, there has been a noticeable improvement in the proportion of lessons where students make at least good progress. The need for improvements in the quality of curriculum leadership has also been accurately identified and appropriate actions taken. The improved systems and procedures are being embedded across the academy to give good capacity for the required further improvements to be secured and sustained. Improvements in students' achievement have been supported well by the increasing emphasis of heads of house on raising achievement, as well as continuing to provide high quality care, guidance and support focused well on the diverse needs of individual students.

The academy, including the governing body, fully recognises that further improvements in students' achievements are inhibited by their very low levels of attainment on entry to the academy. They are working hard to develop more formal arrangements with partner primary schools to work together to raise students' attainment by the time they enter the academy, particularly their levels of literacy and numeracy.

The academy provides a curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of all students, including those in the sixth form, well. It takes full account of the diversity within the school and has sufficient flexibility to ensure that this diverse range of needs is catered for. The sixth form curriculum provides a rich variety of course at levels one, two and three. Good attention is given to progression routes from 14 to 19 and beyond.

The promotion of equality and the manner in which the academy tackles discrimination is a strong feature. Its place in the community is a significant aspect of its success; for example, the very wide range of adult and community activities on the site and the involvement of the wider community in the life of the academy. It is also very outward looking; for example, in working with other schools to explore ways of improving teaching and students' learning. It also strives to provide rich experiences for students through, for example, setting up a children's university and validating a range of 'learning destinations' for out-of-hours learning across the city. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all current statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



23 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The City Academy Bristol, Bristol, BS5 9JH

Following our visit, I should like to thank you for your extremely friendly welcome. We were impressed by your very positive attitudes, your politeness and how willingly you talked to us. We judge the academy, including the sixth form, to be good overall and improving. These are some of its strengths.

- You all make good progress and achieve well; your achievement is improving significantly.
- Recently, there have been significant improvements to your attendance, although some of you could do more to be in school at the start of the day.
- You are punctual to lessons and move around with a clear sense of purpose.
- The academy cares for you well and supports your all-round personal development. The promotion of your spiritual, moral and social development is good, and of your cultural development outstanding.
- The school provides a noticeably harmonious and well-ordered environment where your behaviour is good, diversity is valued and you feel safe. You show great respect for each other and for the adults in the school. Senior leaders carefully monitor any incidents of bullying or disruption, deal with them effectively and have reduced the number of such incidents significantly.
- Teaching has also improved so that much teaching is now at least good and some is outstanding.
- For those of you in the sixth form, you have access to a good curriculum that meets your needs well, you are taught well and make good progress.

We have asked the academy's senior leaders to make further improvements to the quality of teaching to improve the proportion of lessons where you make at least good progress and to ensure that this is consistent across all subjects. You can help by getting fully involved in your lessons, making sure you work to the best of your ability and are clear about what you need to do to make more progress. We have also asked senior leaders to work even more closely with partner primary schools to make sure you have higher levels of literacy and numeracy by the time you enter the academy.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector

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