

The Langley Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135631
Local Authority	Slough
Inspection number	364410
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
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	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Bragg
Headteacher	Peter Blewett (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Langley Road Langley, Slough SL3 7EF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Thirty seven lessons were observed and an equivalent number of teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors also spoke to one of the academy's sponsors and the School Improvement Partner by telephone. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at, among other things: the academy's improvement plan; self-evaluation documents; records of lesson observations; case studies of vulnerable students; and students' achievement data for 2011. The inspection team also examined 95 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The current achievement of White British, those from Any Other White Background, more-able boys, school action and school action plus students at both key stages to determine whether teaching is sufficiently meeting their needs to enable them and all other students to make improved progress.
- The effectiveness of care, guidance and support, especially for those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of the action taken by leaders and managers to raise achievement.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form, particularly students' achievement.

Information about the school

The Langley Academy is an average-sized academy which opened in September 2008. It is housed in a new building in Langley. Its specialism is science. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is significantly above the national average, as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, the largest being White from any other heritages. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The academy is the first museum learning school in England, which has used models developed in a New York City school. The Acting Principal assumed his role in May 2011.

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 Acting Principal and the senior leadership team have worked hard to galvanise all staff after recent turbulent times. Students overwhelmingly feel that staff are supportive of them and that they are kept extremely safe. The academy's procedures to safeguard the well-being of its students are exemplary. The good care, guidance and support, together with effective teaching and the good curriculum, have enabled students to make improved progress in their GCSEs and A levels after a disappointing year in 2010. The school data for the current year show an improved performance on the first two years of the academy's life, and will close the gap between the academy and national performance. White British students and those from Other White Backgrounds have considerably improved their attainment. While the more-able and those students with special educational needs are improving their attainment, it is not been as significant as their peers.

Effective teaching is enabling most students to make good progress. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory although improving well, especially those students at school action and school action plus. In the strongest lessons seen, there was good use of the 'no hands up' technique which enabled teachers to choose students who they had assessed to have a weaker understanding of the learning objectives. Students' performance data are used well in these lessons to plan activities that are targeted and tailored to suit the differing needs of the class. There was skilled use of questions by teachers to support learning. A recurring feature in the minority of weaker lessons was that they were too teacher-led. The limited planning for students' needs contributed to the slow pace of these lessons as there was too little variety and insufficient challenge, especially for those who were more able. Students' learning in these lessons was insufficiently checked. The quality of assessment varies throughout subjects and within the academy. The rigour of marking to accelerate students' learning is inconsistent. The level of detail of some marked work gave students a precise understanding as to what was required to improve their work. Other work seen demonstrated a clear contrast to this because it was sparsely marked, giving no indication to students of what they had achieved and what they needed to do to next.

Students enjoy the benefits of the academy's science specialism and the museum learning. Not only does the curriculum develop themes that integrate science and museum learning, but they also experience attending a museum everyday. This has contributed well to students' good development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Good decisions by senior leaders have been made to improve the curriculum provision, especially for students at risk of not achieving in Key Stage 4. Leaders' attention is now directed to improving the curriculum for students in Key Stage 3. They have recognised that more needs to be done to improve the development of literacy skills in all subjects in this key stage. Students' attendance is improving, although it remains broadly average.

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The attendance of students in the sixth form is low and leaders have not closely analysed the reasons for this. Some subjects in the sixth form continue to perform less well compared to others and leaders have not fully evaluated subject performance in order to identify the appropriate steps required for improvement.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses as self-evaluation in the main is accurate. They have clearly focused on improving subjects that were underperforming. Actions implemented by the middle leaders in these subjects have resulted in improved GCSE results for 2011. These actions, along with the improved attainment of most groups of students and the improvements to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, enable leaders and managers to demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly for more-able students, and increase the proportion of good and outstanding learning by September 2012 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information effectively to tailor activities to meet the needs of all students
 - ensuring that the quality of written and verbal advice to students on how to improve their work is consistently as good as the best in the academy
 - incorporating the development of literacy skills into all teachers' lesson in planning in Key Stage 3 and monitoring the impact of this across the curriculum.
- Sharpen the quality of evaluation to increase the attendance of students in the sixth form and to improve their achievement on their courses.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the academy with below average levels of attainment. The good progress that they make has enabled the school to raise attainment this year to close to the national average. The proportion of students set to achieve five or more GCSEs at A* to C is set to be higher than the national average after being low for the last two years. The academy's leaders are aware that there is a need to improve the proportion of high grades and have identified measures to improve the attainment of more-able students. In the stronger lessons seen, students worked well together to discuss and evaluate their work. They used peer assessment to identify their own and other students' levels of attainment. In some lessons, there were insufficient opportunities for students to evaluate how well they had learnt or to work with others or independently.

Students behave well in lessons and around the academy. They have developed a good awareness of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle: some have acted as ambassadors at national conferences to support healthy living. Students have successfully responded improving opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology and business enterprise. Older students develop their leadership skills as mentors and in their house tutor groups well. They make a good contribution to their academy and local community.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	4
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching is good or better, teachers are successful in creating a motivating atmosphere in which learning is enjoyable and lessons proceed at a swift pace. In these lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching styles and well-adapted learning activities that enable most students to make good progress. In particular, they make good use of information and communication technology to support students' preferred styles of learning. In weaker lessons, there is little evidence of the provision for students' diverse needs and more-able students are not always challenged by tasks set.

There has been much work to improve the quality of the curriculum, especially for Key Stage 4 students who start their programmes in Year 9. The 'Vision to Learn' programme has proved very successful for such students at risk of not achieving, giving them the opportunity to take programmes that will equip them more suitably for life after The Langley Academy. Courses include: health and nutrition; cookery; and money and finance. The opportunities for the more-able students are developing as links with prestigious independent schools is building improved aspirations and confidence. There are also opportunities to take additional GCSEs in Year 11 as well as early GCSE entry in subjects such as English, mathematics and science.

There are good systems for monitoring the students' academic and personal development. These enable the school to provide effective early interventions for students who need

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additional help. This is contributing significantly to a rise in standards as student tracking is helping to direct academy support, especially for more vulnerable students. The school provides good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students based in the learning impaired unit have equally good support. A multi-agency group is particularly effective in responding to the needs of students, especially those in danger of exclusion or who are otherwise vulnerable. This has contributed well to improvements in behaviour and attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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 Acting Principal and his leadership team have put clear actions in place to improve students' achievements and to guide the school through challenging circumstances. Safeguarding of students' well-being is highly effective, with the review of child protection arrangements extremely robust. Middle leaders are closing the gap between the academy and national performance and there is an improved vocational provision in the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Leaders are aware that their actions have not been swift enough in improving the proportion of good or outstanding teaching and learning. However, senior leaders have introduced a rigorous process for reviewing standards and checking the quality of teaching and learning. This has also resulted in a reduction in the amount of inadequate teaching.

Members of the governing body understand the key priorities of the school well and are robust in their challenge to the school's performance in most areas. However, the governing body does not always provide appropriate challenge to the school's work in relation to students' achievement. The academy recognises further work needs to be undertaken to analyse its contribution in relation to different faiths within the school and in the local community. However, the academy is a harmonious community and leaders have worked hard to provide a learning environment where students from the diverse ethnic heritages appreciate their differences and similarities and work well in the local community. The barriers to learning have been removed for most groups of students and the large majority are achieving well. Prudent measures have been introduced to ensure that the more-able students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as they can. The academy promotes equality of opportunity well.

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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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Retention and achievement rates were significantly below national averages in the first two years of the sixth form but are now improving. Attendance was also low during this period: this is showing improvement this year following sound interventions by leaders and managers. Students' progress in relation to their starting points is satisfactory. The proportion of students who progress to higher education is showing satisfactory improvement and the number of students not in employment, education or training after leaving the sixth form has reduced. The care, guidance and support for those students to overcome difficulties to progress to higher education have been effective.

The curriculum and the guidance arrangements from the start of the sixth form were not sufficiently supporting students to join programmes of study most suited to their needs and capabilities, leading to a high proportion of students leaving or being re-directed onto new courses. While they obtained suitable qualifications in the end, those students had lost time in their learning. Leaders and managers have developed more robust measures to improve this. The current quality of teaching and learning seen is good. Students are encouraged to learn independently and, in some cases, lead their own learning owing to a range of well-targeted learning activities. Students take on responsibilities within the academy well and are supportive of peers in lower year groups. They behave well and they make a good contribution to the academy in roles such as mentors. The sixth form has experienced several changes in leadership since its establishment three years ago, which has contributed to actions to address some key priorities being slow.

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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

The response to the questionnaire was low compared with other schools. Most parents and carers agreed that the academy kept their child safe, that their child enjoyed school and that the academy kept them informed about their child's progress. A minority of parents and carers felt that the academy did not take account of their suggestions or concerns and that the academy is not led and managed effectively. The inspection team looked in to parents' and carers' concerns. They found that the academy's engagement with parents and carers and the effectiveness of the leadership and management are both now good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Langley 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1100 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	23	65	68	6	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	33	35	54	57	8	8	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	33	56	59	4	4	4	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	19	62	65	12	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	14	15	63	66	14	15	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	18	53	56	21	22	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	11	60	63	18	19	3	3
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)	18	19	65	68	9	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	16	60	63	14	15	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	19	56	59	13	14	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	18	51	54	13	14	6	6
The school is led and managed effectively	15	16	50	53	13	14	6	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	25	56	59	12	13	0	0

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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



24 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Langley Academy, Langley, SL3 7EF

I am writing to let you know what we thought about the school. We would like to thank you for helping us when we came to find out how well you are getting on. We particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. We judged that your school is satisfactory and that the Acting Principal, the senior managers, governing body and other staff within the school are working hard to improve the quality of education that you receive.

You achieve satisfactorily throughout the school. The good curriculum, teaching and care, guidance and support that the school provides enables you to make good progress in developing personal skills, and your good awareness of other cultures. Your attainment in GCSEs is low although it is set to significantly improve this summer. The science specialism and museum learning has added additional enrichment to your curriculum. The good relationships you form with one another are a strength of the school. The good partnership links the school has forged within the community have helped to improve your learning experiences, attendance and behaviour. The increase in vocational courses has given you more appropriate curriculum choices in Key Stage 4. The school has created a harmonious atmosphere and leaders and managers have done really well to achieve this.

There are some things that the school can improve upon to help you achieve well. We have asked leaders and managers to raise standards, particularly for more-able students, and increase the proportion of good and outstanding learning. We want them to make sure that all teachers make good use of information about your performance to create activities that suit your needs. At Key Stage 3, we have asked teachers to include ways of improving your literacy skills in their lessons. We have also asked that all teachers mark work up to the high standards we saw on our visit. In the sixth form, we have asked leaders and managers look more closely at ways of increasing attendance and achievement. All of you can help the school achieve these goals by attending regularly and contributing to your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price

Her Majesty's Inspector

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