

Bristol Brunel Academy

Speedwell Road, Speedwell, Bristol, BS15 1NU

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal and his team provide clear direction and work relentlessly to drive improvement. They have energised staff in establishing a culture and ethos of high expectation and aspiration through striving for excellence.
- Students achieve well. Although below average, GCSE results are improving strongly and securely year-on-year. Students make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is typically good and occasionally outstanding. Targeted professional development, an effective programme to improve literacy skills across the curriculum, and regular opportunities for staff to share and develop classroom practice are used well to drive further improvements in teaching.
- Students behave well and feel safe. They have a good understanding of the academy's high expectations of behaviour and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders analyse strengths and weaknesses in teaching precisely so that staff performance is managed effectively.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well with a good balance of academic and work-related subjects.
- The academy council and Executive Principal play a key role in supporting and challenging academy leaders to raise standards.
- The depth and range of expertise that exists across the Cabot Learning Federation is used well to enhance the academy's current trajectory of improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to raise achievement higher. Teaching in some subjects is of mixed quality and does not enable every student to excel.
- The attendance of a small number of students is not good enough and this inhibits their progress and achievement.
- There is too much variation in pupils' achievement across sixth form subjects and between AS and A level. Although appropriate systems are now in place to swiftly reduce this variation the sixth form requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons, three of which were joint observations with the Principal.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair of the Academy Council and two other councillors, the Executive Principal for the Cabot Learning Federation and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- By the end of the inspection visit, 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) had been collected and analysed. The academy’s analysis of its own parental and staff surveys were also taken into account.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the academy’s own data on students’ current progress, its self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and students’ work.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Karl Sampson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jeremy Plumb	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector
Hilary Green	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy is a member of the Cabot Learning Federation which is sponsored by Rolls Royce PLC and the University of the West of England. The federation has been the sponsor of Bristol Brunel Academy since September 2007 when the academy opened. The federation consists of a group of five local primary and six secondary academies who work together to share effective practice and leadership strategies to accelerate school improvement. This work is led and coordinated by an Executive Principal.
- There is a small sixth form, although many pupils may attend any one of the four sixth forms within the Cabot Learning Federation.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage although a significant number of students are of minority ethnic heritage, most frequently Black African, with a broad range of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families, is well above that found nationally.
- The proportion of school action pupils (those who require extra help with their learning) is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The academy shares alternative provision, called the Studio, with four of the other secondary academies within the Cabot Learning Federation. This provides support for a small number of students, who are at risk of permanent exclusion, to help them re-join their home academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide appropriately challenging and stretching work for the more able students so that all achieve as well as they can
 - enable students to explain their ideas fully and use key vocabulary to produce more detailed and sophisticated written responses which show how much they have understood and attain the highest levels
 - fully exploit opportunities to develop students' skills in writing, reading, communication and mathematics
 - give students frequent opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback and make the suggested improvements
- Build upon the effective foundations already in place to raise students' aspirations in the sixth form and improve achievement further by eliminating the variability in progress and attainment between sixth form subjects so that all students make at least good progress regardless of their ability or starting point.
- Improve further the attendance of the small number of students who are persistently absent so that they are able to make more rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' standards of attainment on entry to Year 7 in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly below the national average. From these low starting points, their attainment has been rising faster than in other schools nationally over the past three years. The number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C rose sharply during this period.
- The proportion of students who achieve five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics is below average but is also rising at a good rate. The performance of students in 2012 shows the academy to be amongst the 100 best improving schools in terms of the progress students make between Key Stage 2 results and their GCSEs.
- Detailed information provided by the academy offered firm evidence that students make good progress in most subjects. In the past, progress in mathematics has not been as strong as in English. Targeted professional development, focusing on high quality teaching and a more rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation, is successfully reducing the variation in achievement that remains.
- Lower- and average-ability students are entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics as a means to raise their motivation and confidence and to increase their chance of success when they take the examination again in the summer. This practice has had mixed success, with lower ability students benefitting most in 2012.
- Strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills are well planned and mostly promoted effectively by different subjects. Planned strategies to improve numeracy across the curriculum are more recent and are yet to show their full impact on students' progress in mathematics.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported very well and make good progress. Carefully targeted activities and a range of extra help are proving increasingly effective, for example in improving the accuracy and fluency of students' writing and reading.
- Year 7 catch-up premium funding and the academy's accelerated reader programme have been well targeted in helping younger students to develop a love of reading while ensuring that they gain quickly the skills they need.
- The academy monitors the progress of individuals rigorously. Effective use is made of additional funding received through the pupil premium. The average point scores for these students in English and mathematics are below those of other students, but are improving rapidly. Information for Year 10 students shows these students are closing the gap faster than in previous years. They are one third of a grade behind their peers in English and mathematics.
- Students from minority ethnic groups, particularly Black African students and students who speak English as an additional language do very well and their progress is at least as good as their peers.
- More-able students are sometimes not given work that stretches them enough to achieve the highest grades.
- There is too much variation in achievement of pupils in the sixth form. Despite improvements at

A level, pupils' performance at AS level was weak in 2012. Achievement in vocational courses was more consistent and pupils made good progress overall in their BTEC courses.

The quality of teaching is good

- The proportion of good lessons has increased significantly in the past year and the quality of teaching across the academy is now good and improving. Students, parents and carers rightly express confidence in the quality of teaching overall.
- Inspectors agreed with the academy's evaluation of the quality of teaching. Teaching in most subjects, including in English, is mostly good and a small amount is outstanding. The quality of teaching in mathematics is improving strongly and securely. This is as a result of the good range of support and training for teachers within the academy and across the federation.
- Students' learning and progress were maximised when teachers supported them to answer questions fluently and to use key vocabulary to produce high-quality written responses. However, when students are not routinely required to turn short oral answers into full sentences, they find it harder to convey the depth of their thinking and to construct a written argument that explains their ideas clearly and shows how much they have understood.
- The most effective teachers are skilled in tailoring activities that stretch and challenge all learners, regardless of their starting point, so that their progress is consistently good or better. For example, in an outstanding Year 9 science lesson, students enjoyed being challenged to think critically by analysing graphs to evaluate the 'best conditions' for plant growth. They enjoyed working together and with the teacher, and their engagement was exemplary.
- Good teaching engages students fully in their learning. Teachers in these lessons ensure that students understand what they have to do and regularly check their understanding during lessons. Individual students who find work difficult are supported extremely well by teaching assistants to learn independently and keep pace with other students.
- In the small minority of lessons where teaching was less effective, there was a tendency for teachers to over-direct proceedings. Consequently, opportunities to stretch and challenge all learners within the lessons were limited and progress was slowed. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge the more-able students and to model what work of the highest quality will look like.
- Marking offers a good level of feedback for students through positive comments and by highlighting clearly what they need to do next. Not all teachers follow up marking by insisting that students improve a specific aspect of their work, for example by responding to a question, re-drafting an answer or by re-doing a problem they found difficult or did not complete.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it has not resulted in consistently good progress for pupils across the full range of qualifications. Sixth formers report that they receive good support from teachers, who provide extra help when needed. They also appreciate the good quality of relationships with staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy. Staff and students are unanimous in their view that behaviour is much improved as a result of changes made to behaviour systems which

are more consistently applied across the academy.

- Behaviour is not outstanding because in the lessons where teaching is weaker, some students lose focus and are easily distracted from their work.
- Students have responded well to the introduction of the 'BBA warning ladders' which set clear parameters for behaviour. Academy records show a significant drop in recorded incidents of poor behaviour when compared to a similar period last year.
- An emphasis on the 'right to learn' through the development of students' attitude and approach to learning in lessons is beginning to pay dividends as shown by the increasingly positive attitudes to learning for the majority of students.
- Attendance is improving slowly but is not yet high enough. The academy is working extremely hard to improve attendance and academy records show that the new procedures are having a positive impact with some marked successes. However, despite this work the attendance of a small number of students is not good enough.
- Students feel very safe and extremely well supported in school; their positive views are supported by those of parents and staff. They have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying and are confident that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students were particularly positive about the 'zero tolerance' approach to the use of racist or homophobic language.
- The way in which staff support pupils who face problems or particular challenges is a significant strength. Inspectors observed numerous examples of how the academy has linked with other agencies and families to improve the life chances of students in difficult circumstances.
- Exclusions are very rare and well below the national average. The Studio and the Personalised Learning Centre (PLC) are excellent examples of the extensive care and support that the academy provides to help pupils to overcome significant difficulties. As one pupil stated, 'Without the extra support of the PLC, I would not have made it this far in school.'
- Leaders monitor the range of alternative provision closely to ensure its effectiveness and safety for pupils. The few students who attend off-site provision at the Studio achieve and behave well.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the new Principal and his ability to 'bring out the best' in other people is a significant factor in the academy's growing success. He is well supported by a strong senior team who are developing a highly systematic and thorough approach to ensuring that improvements become fully embedded across the academy.
- There is a palpable sense of pride among those who work and learn here. Teachers are ambitious to improve and describe the Principal and senior team as active, visible leaders, constantly visiting classrooms, and listening to their views and those of students.
- The introduction of improvement plans built around the 'five destinations' and their clear focus on improving student outcomes, are transforming the work of the academy. Middle leaders and teachers have been energised by the opportunity to shape and drive improvement through their involvement in the 'destinations' teams. As a result, the academy is improving steadily and rapidly in some aspects, but academy leaders know that there is still some way to go.

- The quality of teaching and the tracking of students' progress are monitored regularly and with increasing rigour. Both are now linked closely to teachers' performance management and pay increases.
- Academy leaders' assessments of strengths, impact and weaknesses in teaching are accurate and precise. They have an active interest in educational research to help identify 'what works best' for students. This information is combined to create an innovative professional development programme that is having a good impact on improving the quality of teaching. However, academy leaders recognise that this impact is not yet consistent across all subjects.
- Leadership of the sixth form has been strengthened through clearer systems of monitoring, evaluation and accountability. This is beginning to enable senior staff to evaluate the quality of all aspects of the sixth form, including teaching, more rigorously. Students now have better qualification choices to prepare them for the next steps of their education or employment.
- Leaders have taken bold decisions to reshape the curriculum so that it provides a coherent set of academic and work-related courses for students of different aspirations and abilities. It is complemented by a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities that deepen and broaden students' experience, and make a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The Executive Principal meets fortnightly with the Principal and/or academy leaders to review performance. His knowledge of the academy is used to good effect to develop leaders' skills and signpost leaders to outstanding practice within the federation. The ability to broker support from other parts of the federation is a significant strength. Its impact can be seen in the successful deployment of a lead practitioner to work with the mathematics department to improve the quality of teaching.
- The academy is not maintained by the local authority but they still work together to ensure that the needs of vulnerable and looked after children are fully met and that there are sufficient places across the authority. All other aspects of the academy's performance are monitored by its sponsor, the Cabot Learning Federation. The local authority has a representative on the academy council and on the Cabot Learning Federation Board of Trustees.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Strong relationships between academy leaders and the academy council are underpinned by excellent support from the Cabot Learning Federation. Together they have successfully established a vision and drive for high quality learning, underpinned by an unswerving commitment to equality of opportunity for all students. Council members know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy, based on a secure understanding of the analysis of students' achievement and the quality of teaching. They utilise this information to make sure that pupil premium funding is allocated to enable those students who require extra support to make good progress. However, they recognise the need to use these skills to evaluate more frequently how well other groups of pupils make progress over time when compared to similar students nationally. The academy council holds senior leaders to account and supports senior leaders' decisions in managing the performance of staff and dealing with weaker teaching. It fulfils its statutory duties with regard to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135300
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	400354

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
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	1073
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Guy Keith-Miller
Principal	Dan Nicholls
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2010
Telephone number	0117 377 2700
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