

The UCL Academy

Adelaide Road, Camden, NW3 3AD

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good 2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too many students in Years 7 and 8 are not making good progress across most subjects. This includes some of the most able and some with low starting points.
- Gaps in the progress of Years 7 and 8 students are emerging. Many students supported by the pupil premium funding and some with special educational needs are making less progress than others.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Leaders' efforts to improve achievement have been successful for some students, but too many have not made good progress over time.
- Not enough teaching over time has provided the correct level of challenge for students of different abilities.
- Assessment in lessons and marking is too variable in quality. Teachers' assessments are not consistently well used to decide what students should learn next.
- Some subjects in Years 7 and 8 do not provide sufficient opportunities to develop students' writing skills.
- Leaders' impact on improvements to teaching and achievement require improvement because plans for improvement are too imprecise. They do not make it clear how much impact leaders hope to have as a result of their actions.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account enough. They are not always given detailed enough information about students' achievement to help them understand how well the school is doing.
- Leaders do not use the pupil premium or Year 7 catch-up funding effectively enough. Leaders do not put enough consideration into which activities support students best.
- Leaders' systems to record students' progress need improving. Though improvements have been made to assessment in the sixth form, systems in Years 7 and 8 are less effective in supporting the progress of all students.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal, other leaders and governors are open and clear about what the academy must do to improve.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have secured improvements to teaching and achievement in the sixth form.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- Students' behaviour is good. Leaders have very high expectations of students' behaviour.
- Arrangements to keep students safe are good.
- Leaders make good use of links with the academy's sponsor to support students' development and ambition.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 22 lessons to observe teaching, learning, scrutinise work and talk to students. Inspectors visited four lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of students and had informal discussions with other students around school.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors met with five members of the governing body including two representatives from the academy’s sponsor.
- Inspectors considered 44 views of parents and carers through the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View.
- Inspectors considered nine views of staff through the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the academy’s improvement plans, self-evaluation records and the governing body minutes. Inspectors also scrutinised records of students’ progress, anonymised performance management records, records of professional development, the single central record, incident logs and attendance data.

Inspection team

Michael Pennington, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gill Bal

Additional Inspector

Ramesh Kapadia

Additional Inspector

Anna Ljumovic

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The UCL Academy opened on 1 September 2012. It is sponsored by University College London (UCL).
- The academy currently has students in Years 7, 8, 12 and 13.
- Students in Years 7 and 8 follow the International Middle Years Curriculum.
- Students in the sixth form follow academic pathways with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school because it currently does not have students in all year groups.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is much smaller than the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The academy takes students from a wide range of ethnicities including White British, Other White, Other Mixed, Black African and Bangladeshi backgrounds. About a half of the students speak English as an additional language.
- A little over half of the students at the academy are eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, students who are looked after and those from service families).
- The academy is not currently using any alternative provision.
- There is no information about whether the academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - all students are challenged with work that is well matched to their levels of ability
 - assessment in lessons, including questioning, is used consistently by all teachers to inform the next steps in students' learning
 - the quality of marking in Years 7 and 8 is consistently good across all subjects and teachers, and comments are used by students to improve their work
 - all subjects provide suitable opportunities for students to develop and apply their writing skills
 - support from teaching assistants focuses on developing students' depth of understanding.
- Improve the achievement of students in Years 7 and 8 by ensuring that:
 - the progress of all groups of students, including the least and most able, is speeded up so that they quickly achieve in line with leaders' expectations
 - disabled students and those with special educational needs make the same amount of progress as others in mathematics
 - gaps between the progress of students supported by pupil premium funding and their peers are quickly closed.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders' views about how well the school is performing are more closely linked to checking systems
 - improvement plans are more specific about the intended impact of actions on the quality of

teaching and achievement

- governors are regularly provided with more detailed information about the progress of students and the quality of teaching, so they can hold leaders to account more rigorously
- pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up plans are more rigorously reviewed and evaluated, so that leaders at all levels, including governors, can better evaluate the impact of actions taken
- systems used to measure progress are more effective, so they can be used by all leaders to raise the achievement of students in Years 7 and 8.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Too many students in Years 7 and 8 are not making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Recent school records show that in some cases, over a quarter of students are not making the progress expected by leaders.
- Some students are not making good progress in other subjects in Years 7 and 8. Leaders' checks show that in most areas of the curriculum, about a half of students are below senior leaders' current expectations for good progress. Some middle leaders are not fully aware of this.
- Students in the sixth form achieved much lower than expected outcomes in their AS-level results in 2013. The achievement of female students was worse than that of males. Students of different ethnic backgrounds achieved consistently disappointing outcomes. As a result, a significant number of students had to change their sixth form options at the end of Year 12. However, the academy's records suggest that current Year 13 students are on track to achieve as well as expected. Leaders have ensured that more robust procedures are in place to check students' achievement in the sixth form. Consequently, the achievement of current students, including females, has improved in both Years 12 and 13.
- The progress of many disabled students and those with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 is behind their peers in mathematics. The school's data suggest that the proportion of students with special educational needs making expected progress is lower than their peers.
- In February 2014, it became apparent that the progress of students in Year 7 eligible for the pupil premium funding was falling behind that of other students. More recent progress checks show that gaps have not been arrested or closed by the additional support provided.
- Not all students who joined the academy with low attainment are catching up with their peers quickly enough. Leaders' efforts to support these students with summer-school provision have not had sufficient impact. While some have moved on, too many have not made good enough progress.
- The progress of students in Years 7 and 8 who speak English as an additional language is similar to the progress of other students. Leaders' systems support equality of opportunity by checking the progress of all groups of students.
- Too many of the most-able students do not progress in line with expectations. Consistently, over a quarter of students who joined the school with Level 5 in English and mathematics are identified by systems as not making the progress that leaders expect.
- Despite some students' limited progress in English and mathematics in Years 7 and 8, their application of literacy and mathematics skills in other subjects is not impeded. Students' reading ages are developing and they are confident oral and written communicators.
- No students are currently at the stage where leaders would consider the appropriateness of early examination entry.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching ensures that all students are appropriately challenged. This is because not all teachers are successful in supporting the learning of the most- and least-able students. Sometimes, pupils, especially the most able, do not learn quickly enough to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Most lessons last for two hours. Some lower-ability students find it difficult to maintain concentration for this length of time, and they become restless. The quality of their work suffers as a result.
- Teachers' questioning is varied in quality. Sometimes, questioning is not purposeful and adds very little to students' learning. Consequently, some students lose interest and their learning is then not quick enough.
- The quality and frequency of teachers' written feedback to students is varied. Students agree

that in some subjects it is much more frequent and useful than in others. Although some teachers ensure that their comments are used by students to make improvements, too many do not provide sufficient feedback for this to happen.

- Some subjects do not provide enough opportunities for students to develop their writing skills. Where this is the case, students are not developing their ability to apply their writing skills in a subject-specific context.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong in most subjects. Where teaching is good or better, well-thought-out activities are created which match students' needs. In a Year 7 English lesson, for example, the teacher changed the pace and direction of students' learning following checks on the level of their understanding.
- The support students receive from teaching assistants is mixed. In some cases, they are helped with a good balance of support and challenge. At other times, weak questioning and too much guidance mean that although tasks are completed, students' depth of understanding is not secure.
- Some aspects of students' social and moral development are strong. However, good opportunities are sometimes missed to develop their cultural understanding through curriculum subjects.
- Although inspectors were unable to observe any sixth form teaching, a scrutiny of students' work across a range of subjects indicates that most students are making expected progress. Students agree, and have positive views about their progress over time. Leaders' summaries of achievement information indicate a similar picture of progress.
- The best teaching motivates and engages students so that they learn exceptionally well. In a Year 7 physical education lesson, teachers used their strong subject knowledge to ask quick-fire, purposeful questions of students, which demanded their close concentration. Students of all abilities made progress because they were able to form strong links between previous and new learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. This is because leaders have good systems to tackle any issues when they arise. Students in Years 7 and 8 value the positive rewards systems and speak highly of the use of 'community service' when behaviour does meet teachers' expectations.
- Though many parents and carers agree that behaviour is mostly good, they are not all unreservedly positive. Occasionally, some behaviour falls below the normally high standards, requiring firm responses from leaders.
- Students' attendance in Years 7 and 8 has been above the national average over the last five terms. Though less strong for students in the sixth form, their attendance is in line with the national average.
- Students' attitudes to learning are mostly positive. The majority of students are well prepared for lessons and mostly keen to participate fully in learning. However, when teaching is weaker, a small number of students become disengaged and do not learn as well as they might.
- Attitudes to learning in the sixth form are good. Students are keenly focused on achieving well. They proactively seek support from teachers and are keen to benefit from the guidance of mentors provided by UCL.
- Students conduct themselves around school well. They are courteous to each other, teachers and visitors. Teachers and leaders provide good levels of supervision and take steps to ensure students move from break times to lessons calmly and safely.
- Students are proud to be a part of the academy; this is evident in the standard of their uniform. However, the presentation of some students' work does not always display equal levels of pride.
- Bullying is very rare. Behaviour systems promote positive student attitudes to equal opportunities. Consequently, most students demonstrate sensible attitudes and respect for their peers. Leaders' responses to bullying or any other unkind behaviour is good.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Leaders' strong systems to keep

students safe have been commended by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Students have a clear understanding of their own and others' safety in a wide variety of contexts. Students unreservedly say that they feel safe at the school, and parents and carers agree.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leaders' plans for improvement are not precise enough. Although plans are very clear, they do not specify how leaders will assess the impact of actions taken.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding is not well targeted. While some students benefit from support, some gaps in students' progress when compared with their peers are emerging. Leaders do not pay timely attention to how successful specific activities have been. In some cases, funding is not directed well enough at the students who need it the most.
- Leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching are overgenerous. Despite this, leaders have correctly identified where teaching needs to improve, and some improvements are evident as a result of their actions. Recent plans to ensure teachers' training are more closely linked to their needs, but these are yet to have the impact that leaders desire.
- Leaders' support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is having mixed impact. In some cases, leaders' actions show improvements to students' skills and reading ages. However, some students with special educational needs are not making sufficient academic progress in mathematics. Sometimes, this is because the support provided by teaching assistants in lessons is not effective.
- Arrangements for teachers' appraisal are still developing. Leaders understand that some targets are not sharp enough. In some cases, teachers' salary progression has not been closely matched to students' achievement.
- The Principal and senior leaders have high expectations for students at The UCL Academy. Though some of these expectations are yet to be realised, leaders have faced the challenges of leading a new academy with ambition and staunch resilience.
- Leaders are aware of what they must do to improve the academy. For example, they are developing their systems to check the progress of students. This is having a positive impact on the achievement of students in the sixth form. Leaders recognise the need to extend this improvement to other year groups.
- Leaders have ensured that their curriculum is well matched to the overarching aims of the academy sponsor. The STEM agenda permeates both the sixth form and lower years curriculum. Leaders ensure equality of opportunity by making good use of links with UCL to enrich and support curriculum opportunities for all students. While the curriculum is clearly having a positive impact on behaviour and motivation, it is too early to see the impact it will have on students' final achievement and next stages in education.
- Students have access to an impressive array of additional opportunities. Leaders make good use of the school day and links with the academy sponsor to ensure students' personal and academic development extends beyond the school day.
- Students' safeguarding is taken very seriously by leaders. They have very clear systems to ensure students are safe, and these are fully understood by staff. Leaders ensure that the school meets statutory safeguarding requirements.
- The leadership of the sixth form is improving. Leaders responded quickly with a detailed recovery plan following poor achievement in 2013. Students' progress has accelerated because of leaders' actions.
- Subject leaders and heads of houses understand senior leaders' expectations for students. They have responded effectively to some of the early setbacks in students' outcomes. For example, assessment practices and more timely support to students have improved, particularly in the sixth form. Leaders recognise their recent efforts have not focused equally on the progress and support of all age groups.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has rigorous procedures to ensure robust safeguarding and sound financial management. Governors are still developing their role of challenging and supporting leaders. Sometimes, their capacity to do so is limited by the extent of information received about the quality of teaching and students' achievements.
- Governors understand the purpose of the pupil premium funding and are aware of the range of activities provided for these students. However, they are not involved in checking how successful these activities are. Consequently, they are unable to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions on the achievement of eligible students.
- Governors are clear about the need to make better use of systems that hold leaders to account; for example where leaders' recommendations for teachers' salary increases have been agreed without a firm link to successful student outcomes.
- Governors are keen to improve performance management arrangements for the Principal. This is overseen by the Chair of the Governing Body with support from the governors' education adviser. Governors are not satisfied that the process is sufficiently clear and they are keen for it to be improved.
- The governing body is still establishing an understanding of its terms of reference with the sponsor after five terms. It recognises this has not assisted in establishing efficient and effective governance.

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	137181
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	425464

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	560
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Professor David Price
Principal	Geraldine Davies
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 7449 3080
Email address	g.davies@uclacademy.co.uk

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