

The UCL Academy

Adelaide Road, Swiss Cottage, Camden NW3 3AQ

Inspection dates	23–24 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders set high expectations of pupils and staff. This has resulted in a culture of respect, which is evident across the school.
- The governing body supports and challenges leaders rigorously. Governors have benefited from external support which has sharpened their understanding of information about the school.
- Pupils are proud of the school. They are keen to come to school because they are well cared for.
- The academy sponsor provides a range of academic opportunities for pupils through the development of the 'Encounters with Excellence' programme. This offers pupils exciting exposure to university life.
- Leaders have developed a robust assessment system using 'I Can' statements, which pupils and parents understand and find easy to use.
- School information shows that progress for almost all groups of pupils is good or better. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs or disabilities make good progress.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- The school has developed a rigorous system of training for staff, which ensures that teaching and learning are constantly improving.
- Students' progress in the sixth form is improving as a result of good teaching.
- Safeguarding is effective. There are some aspects of exemplary practice in the recruitment process for staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all leaders monitor the implementation of the school's feedback policy sufficiently sharply. As a result, a few teachers do not follow the policy, and this limits the progress of some pupils.
- The use of reflection time for pupils to respond to teacher feedback is variable. Pupils do not always take advantage of the opportunity to improve their work.
- Assessment arrangements for the most able pupils are underdeveloped. As a result this group of pupils is not making progress as strongly as other groups.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure greater consistency in the way teachers follow the school's policy for feedback to pupils.
- Use assessments more effectively to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to think hard about their learning and thus make better progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Areas for improvement in the previous inspection have been addressed. For example, the new assessment system is helping pupils to see clearly how they are doing and challenge themselves to improve. The leadership team have made swift changes to secure good progress for pupils.
- The headteacher provides detailed information to governors. Governors use this to challenge leaders and drive further improvement.
- The headteacher, together with the senior team, sets high expectations. Staff and pupils respond to this with enthusiasm. As a consequence, attitudes to learning and behaviour around the school are very good.
- Leaders provide effective training for staff. Middle leaders and teachers say that they are well supported and given opportunities for further development. This is evident in the classroom practice across the school where teaching is mostly good or better.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. Leaders monitor teaching rigorously. From this, they gain clear information in order to provide the right level of support and training for individual teachers. This improves their teaching still further and results in effective learning for the majority of pupils. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Leaders use effective systems to check that all areas of this provision are covered. As a consequence, these aspects of pupils' development are threaded throughout the school curriculum. Inspectors saw this reflected in the positive attitude of pupils towards other members of their school community.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is strong. The leader has secure knowledge of the pupils and their needs. Good systems for tracking and supporting pupils are in place. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities make good progress.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding very well to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. They check and evaluate how well interventions for these pupils are working. Hence disadvantaged pupils make good progress and in many areas make better progress than other pupils.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced with a strong mathematics and science element. The extra-curricular programme is extensive and provides both support and enrichment for pupils. One teacher said, 'There is a focus on heart, body and spirit in this curriculum'. Pupils told inspectors that they liked the additional opportunities offered through this extra-curricular programme to develop their employability skills. Pupils are given the chance to visit a range of workplaces such as University College Hospital and *The Guardian* newspaper, where they learn about the skills and qualifications they will need for jobs in those professions.
- Senior and middle leaders have developed a bank of 'I Can' assessment statements which staff and pupils use to set targets and measure progress. While this is having an encouraging impact on standards already, the system is not yet fully embedded across the school. As a consequence the most able pupils do not make the very good progress that other groups of pupils do.
- In almost all lessons behaviour is excellent. In a few lessons, particularly with teachers who are new to the profession, there is some low-level disruption. This is in contrast to the good or better behaviour seen in other classes across the school.
- Leaders do not track the impact of teachers' feedback to pupils rigorously enough. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on and respond to feedback are not provided consistently. Hence some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders make good use of external support to check their judgements on pupil progress and outcomes. The school does not yet have any published GCSE results. Nevertheless, leaders have worked with other local schools to ensure that teachers are making correct judgements on attainment. This has supported the development of good relationships in the local authority. The school exchanges good practice ideas and resources with other local schools to the benefit of pupils.
- The line management structure in the school is clear. Middle leaders say they are supported and challenged by their line managers. They receive good training for their roles and are confident in supporting the development of their teams.
- The 'Super Studios' in different parts of the school enable large groups of pupils to learn together. Teachers find this arrangement very effective, particularly when they are new to teaching, because it gives them the opportunity to observe and gain support from more experienced teachers. This helps them to develop their skills.

- A very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, said their child was happy at the school and would recommend the school to another parent. The large majority of parents consider the school to be well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors ensure that they regularly analyse the detailed information provided by the headteacher in order to challenge the school leaders. They also use external consultants to review this information and to help them develop further challenge.
 - Governors have developed a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are open and transparent about how they are addressing areas for further development.
 - Governors are rightly proud of the values, beliefs and attitudes they have established in the school. As a consequence, pupils’ behaviour around the school and in class is good.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils are safe and leaders work hard to maintain a culture of keeping them safe. All checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with pupils are recorded meticulously. Leaders ensure that all the stages of vetting for new staff, and agency staff, are completed well in advance of them joining the school. All safeguarding training for staff is up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- There is an excellent climate for learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan their lessons well for most pupils. As a result pupils report that they enjoy their lessons and that staff are willing to help and support them.
- There are high expectations for pupils’ conduct in the classrooms. Pupils generally settle to their work quickly, and continue to work hard during lessons. This means that pupils and teachers use every available minute for learning in class.
- In many lessons, pupils benefit from stretching and challenging activities. As a result, they engage well and make good progress.
- Teachers set out their expectations of what pupils should achieve in lessons so pupils are clear about what they need to learn. They all understand their ‘I Can’ statements and use them to monitor their own progress over time. Parents are provided with a clear explanation of this assessment system and so are able to support their child’s progress. The outcome is that most pupils make good progress. Expectations are not yet high enough for the most able pupils and so they do not make the high levels of progress that lower- and middle-ability pupils make.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and provide good-quality support to pupils. Teachers ensure that they are deployed to support pupils with the greatest need in class. Consequently, pupils who have special education needs or disabilities make good progress.
- Teachers make strong use of questioning in many lessons. This challenges pupils’ thinking and develops their understanding. This was particularly evident in English, humanities and mathematics lessons and, as a result, there are strong outcomes in these subjects for all pupils.
- The school’s innovative use of the ‘Super Studios’ group breakout spaces supports learning and enables pupils to develop good listening skills. Teachers offer effective support to pupils, which enhances their progress.
- There is a structured extra-curricular programme, which provides an additional three hours each week for all pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in clubs including one that supports engineering, ‘the Big Brain Club’ supporting spelling, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and first aid training. These clubs support pupils in their academic and social development.
- In the key stage 3 mixed-ability groups, pupils from the lower- and middle-ability bands make good progress. However, the most able are not consistently stretched to think more deeply and extend their learning. Several pupils told inspectors, ‘We are often taught things we already know’.
- In many lessons pupils are given time to review and respond to teachers’ feedback in order to improve their work. However, this practice is inconsistent across the school. Consequently some pupils fail to grasp key concepts and continue to hold misconceptions. This lack of common adherence to school policy has an impact on pupils’ progress.
- Teachers provide effective verbal feedback to pupils in lessons. Written feedback to pupils in their books is less helpful and this hinders progress for some pupils.
- Homework is used effectively to develop pupils’ learning and understanding.
- Pupils told inspectors they are guided well by the staff, particularly in their learning. Pupils are very articulate about their learning journey and the support they receive from the school. They said that the teachers support different ways of learning and ‘they don’t let you give up’. These positive attitudes have an effect on the pupils’ progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- There are robust safeguarding arrangements in place. The designated leader for safeguarding keeps detailed records and ensures that vulnerable pupils are given support from both the school and external agencies. Pupils say that there is an adult in school they can go to for support. They are aware of the dangers of the internet and radicalisation, and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are safe and say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils are very positive about the school. They say they are well cared for and they are keen to come to school. Pupils enjoy their lessons because they say teachers make lessons interesting. This is evident in their attitudes to learning, which are very good.
- Pupils say that any bullying is dealt with effectively. During the inspection inspectors did not hear any discriminatory or inappropriate language. There is good use of positive language around the school and pupils socialise well with each other at break and lunchtime. Pupils show respect for others and this creates a very tolerant environment.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. This provision is threaded through the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities. Pupils are very positive about the extra-curricular provision, especially the opportunities to visit and work with University College London, the academy sponsor. This enables pupils to develop and use a range of social skills and to investigate moral and ethical issues.
- Pupils value the opportunities to contribute to the development of the school through democratic processes such as the school council, or 'Senate'. This body of elected pupils meets regularly and raises issues with school leaders. As a result of this dialogue, new developments in the canteen provision and the physical education curriculum have been implemented.
- The school provides a wide range of visits for pupils and visitors to the school. Pupils' understanding of other cultures and viewpoints and British values is heightened through these experiences. Pupils benefit from the strong focus on employability in the curriculum which helps prepare them well for life in modern Britain. This includes several programmes to promote different career paths such as work experience and internships.
- Pupils achieved the Silver Award for Healthy Schools from the Lord Mayor. This was awarded in recognition of their positive attitudes to healthy eating and exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Attendance is above average and improving, and is now high for all groups in the school.
- Leaders use effective systems to monitor behaviour incidents and exclusions. This allows them to anticipate and often prevent potential problems. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour and fixed-term exclusion are declining.
- In some lessons a few pupils are not actively engaged and only a limited number of pupils respond to questions from the teacher. These less positive attitudes have an impact on the work, presentation and progress of this small group of pupils.
- Leaders set high standards of behaviour and all staff model this. Pupils are respectful to adults and treat each other with courtesy. As a result, most pupils enjoy attending and are punctual to school and their lessons. One pupil said, 'The teachers look after you'.

Outcomes for pupils **are good**

- There are rigorous systems in place to track pupils' outcomes and progress. Current outcomes for Year 10 have been subject to rigorous external checks. Therefore leaders have justified confidence in the information they hold about pupils' achievement. The school expects outcomes to be well above the national averages, when the first cohort of pupils take GCSE examinations in 2017. Evidence seen by inspectors supports this expectation.
- The use of pupil premium funding is closely monitored and evaluated. The progress of this group of pupils is carefully tracked by leaders and effective support put in place when required. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make better progress than non-disadvantaged pupils over time.

- Most groups show good or better progress over time. This is because leaders carry out regular monitoring and tracking processes and teachers use information about pupils' progress effectively to inform their teaching. However the most able pupils are not making the same gains in progress as other groups. The current progress for this group, across all their subjects, although positive, is below that of other groups of pupils.
- Information from the school and a review of pupils' books indicates that a greater percentage of pupils in the school are making good progress when compared with other pupils nationally. In addition, the percentage of pupils making more than expected progress is also above national figures.
- The school has a good programme of support for pupils who arrive in Year 7 with low starting points. As a consequence, these pupils are making very good progress.
- Pupils who have special education needs or disabilities make good progress. This was confirmed by inspectors' observations of their learning in their books and in class.
- The school's assessment policy, developed by middle leaders, is clear and concise. Assessment practice is, overall, having a good impact on outcomes. However, not all middle leaders yet ensure that their teams follow this policy and so outcomes for all groups of pupils are not yet outstanding.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The 16 to 19 study programmes are well designed and meet students' needs. The curriculum is good and includes a broad range of academic subjects. As a result students have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Students make good progress overall from their starting points because teaching is strong. This is particularly the case for A-level courses such as philosophy, biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics.
- Leaders mentor and monitor students closely. Current information shows that this is having a positive effect on students' progress.
- All students undertake work experience in the sixth form and it is very positive for most. Good, impartial careers advice and guidance are provided and most students go on to university, with almost half of students gaining places at Russell Group universities last year.
- Sixth-form students' attendance was low last year. Governors and school leaders have worked to address this. A director of sixth form was appointed in September to manage day-to-day issues. As a result, attendance has improved and is now at national levels.
- The entry requirements for the sixth form are high and as a consequence there are no students retaking mathematics or English GCSE.
- Students are clear that they are helped to catch up if they fall behind. However, as in the lower school, students do not always receive sufficiently helpful feedback on their work. This means that they occasionally cannot identify their areas of weakness. This is reflected in the variation in outcomes for students in the sixth form.
- All students in the sixth form participate in the house system and many of them support younger pupils with their reading. A few students do not consider themselves as role models or recognise their leadership role in the life of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	137181
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10011938

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	839
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	161
Appropriate authority	The trust governing body
Chair	Professor David Price
Headteacher	Geraldine Davies
Telephone number	0207 449 3080
Website	www.uclacademy.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@uclacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 May 2014

Information about this school

- The UCL Academy is a smaller than average school.
- The school currently has pupils in Years 7 to 10 and in the sixth form. A further year group will join the school in September 2016, taking the school to its full capacity.
- The UCL Academy opened on 1 September 2012.
- The school is sponsored by University College London.
- There are pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Currently around nine out of 10 pupils are of non-British ethnic heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special education needs or disabilities is above average.
- The school has a house system for tutoring. Tutor groups include pupils of all ages including the sixth form. There are five houses, each with their own space for meeting and a canteen area.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 25 lessons or parts of lessons. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out three learning walks and observed pupils' behaviour around the school at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority director of children's services.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including minutes from governors' meetings, school improvement plans, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work over time and listened to what pupils said about their learning during lesson visits. Inspectors also spoke to groups of pupils from all year groups including students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors considered 85 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Only a very small sample of pupil and staff responses were available to inspectors. There were only four responses from pupils and five responses from staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding information including the single central record of staff vetting checks and training records.

Inspection team

Dame Joan McVittie, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Doel	Ofsted Inspector
Lascelles Haughton	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Hallett	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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