

London Academy of Excellence

16–19 Academy

Inspection dates

4–5 October and 9–10 October 2017

Overall effectiveness			Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding	16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding		
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Leaders and managers have successfully established a culture of very high expectations throughout the London Academy of Excellence, (LAE), to which staff and students positively respond.
- Leaders and managers have successfully made improvements since the previous inspection; rigorous quality assurance, with students' progress at its heart, involves all staff in further improvement.
- Students' attainment of their qualifications is high; almost all students achieve their A levels, with most achieving A* to B grades.
- Students' progression to higher education is excellent, and a high proportion gain places at universities with very demanding entry criteria.
- Students very much enjoy their studies, make excellent progress from their starting points, and achieve consistently high standards on their courses.
- Governance is excellent, with highly productive strategic overview and rigorous monitoring of both educational and financial performance.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary and they treat their peers and staff with respect.
- Highly skilled and enthusiastic teachers help students to make excellent progress and achieve at a high level, through well-planned and highly personalised study programmes.
- Teachers provide excellent support to students, including the further development of their skills in mathematics and English.
- Teachers' very good promotion of equality and diversity in lessons develops students' understanding of social and cultural issues relevant to them, both at the academy and in their local communities.
- Leaders, managers and teachers have developed excellent partnerships with universities and employers, promoting students' success in higher education and their understanding of the world of work.
- Students achieve a wide range of personal, social and study skills by participating in a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Students receive excellent advice and guidance at the start of their programmes and throughout their studies, to achieve their higher education and employment aspirations

Full report

Information about the provider

- The London Academy of Excellence (LAE), founded as a free school in 2012, is an academic sixth form college. Its sole campus is in Stratford, in the London Borough of Newham. LAE recruits students from an increasingly wide range of secondary schools in other London boroughs, and is currently oversubscribed.
- The curriculum, of 16 to 19 study programmes with around 15 A-level subjects at the core, is designed to prepare students for university. Most students take three or four A-level subjects, alongside a broad additional curriculum.
- LAE works particularly closely with independent schools and with local Newham secondary schools, some of which were involved with its foundation. In keeping with its founding principles, LAE recruits many students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- To further raise attainment and to narrow any achievement gaps between different departments and subjects, further implement leaders' and managers' agreed strategies for improvement.
- Continue to develop and encourage the sharing of strong practice by teachers, to maximise opportunities for the further improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.
- To further enhance students' learning, continue teachers' development in the use of innovative learning technologies, including the best use of the planned expansion of 'blended learning'.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have ensured sustained improvement to the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. In their evident pursuit of excellence, leaders and managers have remedied all of the areas for further improvement from the previous inspection. Outcomes for learners and teaching, learning and assessment are now outstanding, as are students' personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Leaders and managers have been highly successful in establishing an aspirational culture throughout the academy. They continue to promote LAE successfully as a high-quality provider of academic A-levels for students who aspire to higher education and have markedly improved the progression of students in Newham to top universities.
- Since the previous inspection, many more students are now from other London boroughs, as well as from Newham. To enable more students to join the academy, which is currently oversubscribed, and to improve accommodation and resources for learning further, leaders and managers have agreed to relocate the college. Plans for this are well advanced.
- The effectiveness of LAE's work, in the best interests of its students, is very much helped by the close community of managers, teachers and support staff. All staff work well together to support students, and the working relationships between them and students are excellent. Students and staff work in a harmonious environment where individual differences and varying views are valued.
- Leaders, managers and teachers are rigorous in improving quality, including in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. At the heart of very effective quality improvement arrangements is the continuous monitoring and review of students' progress and performance. Teachers, tutors and their managers have a detailed understanding of the performance of individual students and of groups and subjects.
- Leaders and managers expertly use their detailed knowledge of the performance of students across different subjects to evaluate courses. They create accurate, relevant and effective action plans for improvement, both for the academy and for individual departments. The overall LAE self-assessment is understood by all staff and used effectively for improvement. Staff use a good range of evidence, including the views of students and partners, to help form valid judgements.
- Leaders' and managers' scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is rigorous and provides managers and teachers with reliable information about their quality and what needs to be done to improve. Teachers increasingly share their strongest practice and this needs to continue apace to maintain the highest standards in the future.
- The performance of teachers and other staff is well managed. Managers have successfully overcome previous high turnover of teachers, although leaders and managers are far from complacent in seeking ways to keep teachers in the highly competitive London market. Teachers are well supported by leaders and managers and have good opportunities for their professional development.
- The curriculum is particularly well managed. Staff ensure that each student receives

impartial guidance, and that they are on programmes of study that closely match their future higher education and employment aims. Managers continue to expand their partnerships with local, national and international businesses. They use the views of these partners well to develop the courses taught.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is excellent. Governors, including an impressive group of co-opted governors, offer an exceptional range of relevant skills to the work of the academy, including enormous senior educational experience. Their undoubted commitment to the academy and its students is reflected in their high expectations of the headmaster and his staff.
- Governors monitor academic and financial performance rigorously and they have a good understanding of what leaders and managers need to do to further improve. They play their full part in driving up standards to consistently high levels. The work of the education committee, in relation to performance, is particularly thorough.
- Governors are integral to the thorough safeguarding arrangements and a number have very relevant skills and expertise in this regard. They also ensure compliance with health and safety and equalities legislation.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and managers have ensured that they have more than kept pace with changes in approaches to safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, since the previous inspection. They take their responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously.
- With safeguarding securely managed within the overall support of students, managers and staff promote good practice well to their students and provide ready opportunities for them to raise concerns with staff. Students speak knowledgeably about aspects of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Safeguarding risks are identified well, including the 'Prevent' duty-related risks, and policies are comprehensive and up to date. Safer recruitment of staff is fully implemented.
- Staff have very good working relationships with the local and national safeguarding bodies, and their 'Prevent' duty leads. These links contribute positively to staff's understanding of 'Prevent' duties and risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment have a very positive impact on the excellent progress made by students, who are highly motivated and achieve well in lessons, producing work to very high standards.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their students. Through highly personalised and well-planned study programmes, building on students' prior attainment, they fully develop students' learning and skills. Teachers carefully support students to select academic subjects that prepare them well for progression to higher education.
- Teachers are highly skilled and enthusiastic and use their excellent subject knowledge

well, enabling students to develop a deep understanding of their subjects. Teachers set challenging tasks with an excellent range of complexity, based on students' capabilities. For example, in a mathematics lesson students tackled a range of mathematical problems, independently or with peers, which ensured that they were sufficiently extended and developed new knowledge.

- Teachers' highly effective promotion of themes of equality and diversity in lessons builds students' understanding of wider social issues and makes good use of the considerable diversity of students within teaching groups. For example, students in English lessons use their own understanding of the role of women within society, drawn from their own cultural experiences, when discussing attitudes to women, as presented in Shakespeare's his plays.
- Students are very well supported to achieve their learning goals. Each student has a personal academic and support programme, organised and closely monitored by tutors and heads of house. Programmes build on students' prior attainment in GCSE mathematics and English and address any personal and additional needs, such as second language needs. Students also benefit from an extensive range of work-related learning and non-qualification activities, including sports, lectures, clubs, societies and community outreach projects.
- The use of information learning technology contributes well to students' independent learning. Teachers encourage students to use technological devices in lessons to research and build their understanding. For example, in government and politics lessons, students use technology to research and to build their understanding of a range of political scientists, theorists and leaders, going on to arrange a global politics banquet and agree a seating plan. Students frequently use the virtual learning environment (VLE) to find resources and to complete and submit homework.
- Teachers use an excellent variety of assessments to ensure that students achieve high grades. They provide very detailed feedback to students following a thorough analysis of strengths and areas for improvement in their work. As a result, students are very clear about how to evaluate and improve their work. They are eager to know how they can improve and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills to high standards.
- Occasionally, when sharing and developing students' understanding of a specific topic, teachers' questioning of students does not always improve their learning or teachers intervene too rapidly and limit students' fully exploring and sharing their acquired knowledge. A very small minority of students complete their set work in lessons and wait too long for the teacher to check what they have done, hindering their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Students are particularly confident and self-assured. Their attendance is high, both in subject lessons and in 'intervention' meetings, where they receive additional coaching, and they are punctual. Students have a very high level of interest in, and excellent attitudes to, their learning. The very few who miss any learning systematically use the VLE and complete set work independently. As a result, they maintain high levels of progress and successfully achieve their qualifications.
- Students enjoy their studies and feel very safe. Managers and teachers ensure that they

are aware of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. They know whom to refer to should they have any concerns about their safety, including nominated staff, and students assigned to the role of prefects. Students are particularly knowledgeable about staying safe online.

- Teachers ensure that an understanding of British values is incorporated particularly well in learning and enrichment activities. Students confidently build their understanding and critical thinking skills by delivering lectures, debating current news and presenting arguments about tolerance and a range of political and social beliefs very effectively to their peers.
- Managers and teachers provide very extensive advice and guidance to students, from the point when they first make contact with the college, to the point when they leave for higher education or employment. Staff accurately ensure that students have the best study programme to meet their higher education aspirations, including in the choice of subjects they study. They provide a range of specialist guidance, including independent careers guidance, and support students very well in making ambitious decisions about higher education and future careers.
- With their teachers' overview, students are used to setting their own academic, study and personal targets, which they do well. They frequently self-assess and record the impact of participating in extra-curricular activities and are able to evaluate skills they develop and during their studies, such as building their health and well-being, teamwork and resilience.
- Managers and teachers ensure that students achieve a wide range of personal, social and study skills in preparation for successful progression to higher education. Since the previous inspection the work-related offer to develop students' skills for employment has been significantly improved, including the opportunities for work experience.
- Students receive excellent support in continuing to develop their English and mathematical skills. For example, teachers carefully integrate mathematics in the study of sciences and academic English in humanities. Students make excellent use of specialist online resources to develop their English skills, including punctuation, spelling and grammar.
- Support for students who have special educational and additional learning needs is highly effective and carefully organised.
- Students benefit from excellent specialist mentoring provided by three 'academics in residence'. This helps those who fall behind to catch up swiftly, and the most able to excel and succeed in their applications to the best universities.
- Students use the excellent range of library resources extremely well to further their knowledge of their subjects and to learn independently. Teachers set a good range of subject-specific tasks to help students develop a range of study skills and prepare for higher education.

Outcomes for learners

Outstanding

- Students' progress and achievements have continued to improve since the previous inspection. Based on their starting points, nearly all students make excellent progress on their level 3 study programmes, and successfully complete their courses.
- Students' achievement is high across all A level subjects, as is their achievement of high

grades. In 2016/17, almost all students achieved grades A* to C, the very large majority achieved grades A* to B, and nearly a quarter grade A*. The latter near-doubling of A* grades positively reflects leaders' and managers' work to challenge further students with very high prior attainment, while managing to reduce the proportion of students who achieve low grades.

- Students achieve well in the level 3 extended project qualification, with almost all students achieving grades A* to B, and around a third of projects graded as A*.
- Students perform well in all subjects, both in achievement and progress, but leaders and managers are alert to the need to continue to improve learners' performance, to achieve consistently high outcomes in all subjects.
- The proportion of students who stay on their two-year programmes is very high. Managers and teachers monitor the progress of all students particularly well and take prompt action, including significant additional academic support, when students are at risk of falling behind.
- Given their high prior attainment in GCSE examinations, students do not take additional qualifications in English and mathematics, other than for their A level choices. However, they successfully improve further their skills through the scheme for the development of 'academic literacy and research skills'.
- Managers' careful analysis of students' progress and achievement reveals no significant differences in performance by gender or ethnicity. There is a slight gap between outcomes for males and females in 2016/17, where females make marginally worse progress relative to their prior attainment. Students with identified additional learning needs perform at the same high levels as their peers.
- Managers and teachers secure excellent progression of students to higher education, with a large majority going to Russell Group universities. Applications to Oxbridge are particularly successful, as they are for medicine and related disciplines.

Provider details

Unique reference number	138403
Type of provider	16–19 academy
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	432
Principal/CEO	Scott Baker
Telephone number	020 330 11480
Website	www.excellencelondon.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	–	–	–	–	459	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	N/A							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy head (academic), as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

David Martin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon	Ofsted Inspector
Philida Schellekens	Ofsted Inspector

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M1 2WD

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