

Inspection of The UCL Academy

Adelaide Road, Swiss Cottage, Camden, London NW3 3AQ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Teachers have high expectations for pupils' academic achievement. These high expectations do not routinely extend to behaviour. Behaviour policies are not consistently followed by leaders and staff. Some pupils do not wear their uniform with pride. Too many exhibit boisterous behaviour around the school. On occasion, they show a lack of respect for the school environment. On occasion, pupils' learning is affected by low-level disruption.

Pupils are safe at school. Typically, teachers challenge any use of offensive language in or out of lessons. Pupils can report incidents of bullying to a member of staff. They can send an email if they prefer. They are confident that teachers will deal with the issue in a timely way.

Pupils appreciate the school's specialist facilities, including the modern science laboratories and engineering room. Younger pupils value the extra-curricular activities and opportunities that take them out of their comfort zone. They take part in sports and visits to the theatre. Sixth-form students go above and beyond the curriculum they learn in class. They participate in a range of societies. Sixth-form students are good role models and mentors to younger pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have mapped out the curriculum with care. They have thought about what they want pupils to learn and the best order in which to learn it. For instance, geography teachers plan their curriculum around topics such as sustainability, climate change and globalisation. Teachers come back to these key concepts regularly to check pupils' recall. This helps pupils to remember these better in the long term. Teachers assess pupils' progress through the curriculum. They provide feedback on written work that pupils can act on. Pupils' pride in their work is variable when teachers review it less often.

Subject leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum. Where possible, this connects with the work of University College London (UCL) on the latest challenges to society. One of these is global health. Younger pupils have learned about the Black Death in history. They have studied the spread of disease in science. These topics give the curriculum a real-life focus.

Teachers use subject-specific terminology in lessons. They insist that pupils use it correctly to check their understanding. For example, in a Year 7 drama lesson, pupils used the terms 'genre', 'comedy', 'tragedy' and 'melodrama' correctly. By contrast, in a lower school mathematics lesson, the teacher used terminology that pupils could not understand. As a result, they became distracted and wandered off task. Sixth-form students use specialist language with confidence. Teachers encourage them to think for themselves by asking challenging questions. Teachers help students to make connections between the topics they study. They develop a love of learning and an independent approach, which prepares them well for university study.

Teachers provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They adapt their teaching or provide extra resources. They model the tasks they want pupils with SEND to complete. Teachers prioritise literacy in lessons, but not all pupils can access the texts that they provide. More could be done to engage weaker readers with literacy and wider reading programmes, and to encourage all pupils to read for interest and enjoyment.

Leaders have organised the relationships and sex education curriculum so that teachers revisit topics in an age-appropriate way. These topics include living in the wider world and making informed choices. Leaders provide reflection time for pupils in assemblies. Younger pupils have many opportunities beyond the academic curriculum through the self-directed learning programme. For older pupils, this time is dedicated to extra lessons. All pupils follow a careers programme. Plans are in place to develop this further in the younger years. Pupils learn about the world of work as well as the next steps in their education. Students in the sixth form appreciate the extensive help they get with university applications. They would like additional information about alternative pathways such as apprenticeships.

Teachers appreciate the collaborative approach to workload in their subject teams. They plan the curriculum together. A significant number of staff who responded to Ofsted's survey feel that senior leaders do not offer them enough help with the management of pupils' behaviour. They say that teachers have to rely on their own departmental strategies instead. For example, they send disruptive pupils to colleagues' classrooms. This takes its toll on some teachers' well-being. Governors and leaders recognise that more work is needed to improve behaviour in the school, especially outside lessons.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to recognise and act on safeguarding concerns. They are aware of the contextual risks to pupils, including child criminal exploitation and county lines. Leaders have raised staff and pupil awareness of harmful sexual behaviour.

Pupils know how to stay safe. They learn about online safety, unhealthy relationships and risky behaviour. Leaders make referrals to agencies such as social services and child and adolescent mental health services as necessary.

Leaders check that the school's records on the suitability of staff are well maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school behaviour policy is not applied consistently by all leaders or staff, especially outside classes. As a result, some pupils engage in boisterous

behaviour around the school. On occasions, this spills over into low-level disruption in lessons. Leaders should act as role models in helping staff to apply behaviour sanctions consistently. All staff must ensure that their expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct are as high as their aspirations for academic achievement.

- Teachers prioritise literacy activities in lessons where appropriate. However, not all pupils can access the texts that teachers provide. Leaders must do more to engage weaker readers with literacy and wider reading programmes. They must encourage all pupils to read for interest and enjoyment.

How can I feedback my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137181
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10216738
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,134
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	278
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Professor Lucie Green
Principal	Simon McBride and Robin Street (Co-principals)
Website	www.uclacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The UCL Academy opened on 1 September 2012.
- The school is sponsored by UCL.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school makes use of the following off-site provision: The Crib, Camden Centre for Learning and Westminster Kingsway College.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the co-principals, other senior leaders and a range of curriculum leaders. They met with representatives from the board of governors including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography, history, drama and sociology. They visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers, including those in their first few years of teaching.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and held discussions with leaders in a few other subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff to explore how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charlotte Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
David Hatchett	Ofsted Inspector
Jan Shadick	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Moore	Ofsted Inspector

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