



The City Academy Bristol

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134221
LEA Bristol, City of
Inspection number 283101
Inspection dates 6 December 2005 to 7 December 2005
Reporting inspector Brenda Cusdin HMI

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

Type of school	Academy	School address	Russell Town Avenue
School category	Community		Bristol
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		BS5 9JH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 955 8199
Number on roll	1095	Fax number	0117 954 0962
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Laycock
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr Ray Priest

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	6 December 2005 - 7 December 2005	283101

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The City Academy Bristol is a new, technologically advanced school. The academy opened in September 2003, initially using the buildings of the school it replaced. The attractive new accommodation was finished this September. The academy has specialist status in sports. Up to 17 students each year are selected because they are very good at sport. The academy is much larger than most other schools. It acts as a lead partner for post-16 provision in the area, working with five other schools.

The academy is a very popular choice with parents and students. Many students live in neighbouring communities which are socially disadvantaged. More students than usual are entitled to free school meals. A large number are either refugees or the children of asylum seekers. Three in every five students are from minority ethnic groups. Over a quarter of the students learn English as an additional language and forty are in the earliest stages.

There is a special educational needs resource base for students with complex physical disabilities or severe emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The students are taught in mainstream classes with additional support. Over a quarter of all students have some learning difficulties or disabilities and over forty hold Statements of Special Educational Need. The skills levels of students at the start of Year 7, particularly in literacy, are much lower than usual.

The academy is playing a key role in the local New Deal for Communities project. A community advisory group works closely with the governors. The academy has forged strong links with local groups through additional programmes such as its two supplementary schools for minority ethnic students. Over 1200 adult learners are enrolled on courses on the site.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Already the City Academy Bristol is a good school with some outstanding strengths. There is excellent teaching in sports and fantastic facilities. The quality of care, support and guidance for students is quite remarkable and their personal development is excellent. The students are really proud of the academy. They know that their views are sought, valued and used.

The leadership of the principal is outstanding. From the start he had clear, inspiring aims for the new academy. The senior team and governors play their part very effectively. The academy provides very good value for money. The accommodation is excellent. Outstanding access to information and communication technology (ICT) helps the students gain independence in learning. The clever strategies to develop the students' skills as learners have worked exceptionally well.

The academy has shown an outstanding capacity to improve and has successfully worked with the local communities. Standards in Year 11 rose impressively in 2005. There was good improvement at post-16 and in English at Year 9. Attendance rates have gone up and behaviour is much better. The staff know what they should improve and good teamwork helps this to happen.

The senior team has accurately evaluated the academy's effectiveness and pinpointed weaker aspects. The 2005 Year 9 results in mathematics and science showed only a little improvement and a few post-16 courses had poor results. Improvements are already underway in these areas.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Although achievement was satisfactory last year, there were a few weaknesses that were not spotted early enough. The management of post-16 is vastly improved now and provision is much better. Inspectors agree with the academy's evaluation of post-16 provision. It is now adequate but rightly staff are focused on improving teaching in post-16 courses as a top priority.

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to improve teaching and achievement post-16
- continue to improve teaching and achievement in mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The 2005 GCSE results rose impressively, shattering the challenging targets. Achievement in 2005 was very good given the students' starting points at the beginning of Year 10. Standards broadly matched national averages. Over a half of the students

gained five or more A* to C grade passes. The focus on black minority ethnic achievement paid off and these students' results improved hugely.

Standards in the 2005 Year 9 tests rose significantly in English but the academy was disappointed with the results in mathematics and science. Challenging targets were achieved in English but not in mathematics and science. Standards in all three subjects are well below national averages. The students achieved very well in English, given their weak literacy skills in Year 7, and achievement in mathematics and science was satisfactory.

Standards in post-16 examinations rose considerably in 2005 but were well below the national average. Achievement was broadly satisfactory given the students' starting points at the beginning of Year 12. A few results were poor, mainly due to weak teaching which was not tackled speedily enough.

Students with significant learning difficulties and disabilities make particularly good progress thanks to the high quality care and support they receive. Overall, students who find learning difficult and those learning English as an additional language cope well in lessons. The senior leaders are aware that the Year 9 girls achieved less well than boys in mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The students' personal development and well-being are outstanding across the age range. The students value the excellent facilities, especially in ICT and sport. They recognise and appreciate good teaching and feel that they are working much harder. In lessons, most students listen well, collaborate willingly and participate with enthusiasm.

Behaviour is good and has improved substantially since the academy opened. There is very little bullying and incidents are dealt with effectively. Exclusions have fallen and involve few students currently. Behaviour in post-16 is outstanding. As one student said, 'We are all role models all the time'. Attendance has improved significantly and is now good, reflecting the students' enjoyment of learning. Most students arrive punctually for lessons.

The great majority of students are developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding superbly.

This reflects the academy's core values that permeate lessons, the teaching programme about beliefs and values, and the wide range of other experiences, such as faith groups, residential opportunities, links with the wider community and the emphasis on taking responsibility.

There is strong encouragement to adopt a healthy lifestyle and safe practices. The students behave responsibly and make healthy choices. They said that the healthy lunches help them understand what is appropriate to eat and they supported the ban on fast food or snack options. Many take part in out-of-hours sports activities.

The students' contribution to the community is outstanding. They support local community work through health and social care programmes and link activities with the voluntary sector. Students organise their own conferences and express their views publicly. They have produced videos made in the community. They have taken part in talking history projects, television programmes and public performances of music and drama. They are prepared very well for their future economic well-being and for taking their place as good citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is good. From the start, the academy placed as much emphasis on learning as teaching. The students are becoming good learners as a result of thoughtful approaches to developing their skills over time. The attitudes of good learners are discussed, illustrated and assessed regularly. This helps the students to build up resilience and resourcefulness, and to take responsibility for their own learning. The academy's creative renaming of traditional roles, for example, using the term 'learning villages' rather than 'houses', reminds everyone that good learning is central to the academy's goals.

There is clear, sensible guidance about teaching. Lessons are planned thoughtfully. Resources, including impressive access to ICT facilities, are used cleverly to make key learning points and to encourage students to think things out themselves. The teachers ensure that their approaches are varied and interesting. In the most effective practice, the teachers have high expectations of what the students can achieve. They set challenging tasks. They skilfully spot whether anyone needs more support and they have productive techniques to judge how well the ideas have been understood across the group. There is a very small proportion of inadequate teaching. The academy is appropriately focused on improving this through careful monitoring and support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is very good. It offers a balanced range of courses including a wide range of vocational subjects. Most lessons last for 90 minutes, longer than is typical elsewhere. The students said that they preferred this pattern as it allowed them to study in greater depth. The sports team has led effective projects that promote themes, such as communication and independent learning, across the academy.

A range of revision and study sessions are provided in twilight sessions, on Saturdays and during school holidays. The out-of-hours programme is strong, with a wide range of clubs, activities and educational visits. The balance of sports, music and drama is a good feature of the programme.

In 2005, almost three quarters of the Year 11 students chose to enrol on post-16 courses. The increase in numbers staying on post-16 has led the academy to review its range of courses. A satisfactory range is currently offered with the exception of provision at Level 1 (foundation level) but courses at this level will run next year. In addition to the formal post-16 curriculum, support and teaching is offered to students wanting to take a Level 3 (advanced) course in their community language. There has been innovative work in business studies and in educating students about financial management. Personal, social and health education is provided and further developments in this area are underway.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support for learners are outstanding in the main part of the school and good post-16. 'Learning families' are small groups of students led by a teacher or 'learning facilitator'. They are a key part of the academy's careful and comprehensive support systems, which safeguard students very well.

Close monitoring of the students is managed through an electronic log that gives a comprehensive profile of their achievements and attitudes. Students are highly motivated by the rewards system and the financial incentives to achieve well. The targets that they are set are challenging. Unhelpfully, targets were set too late into the courses for the 2005 Year 13 students. This is not the case for the current post-16 students.

The academy is determinedly committed to working with the local communities to raise achievement and aspirations and to respond to particular needs. Much energy has been put into forging and sustaining these links. Parents are kept well informed about their children's behaviour, attendance and achievement. Classes are provided to help parents give their children support with their learning. There is excellent provision for minority ethnic groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, through additional classes and community involvement. As a result, their achievement has been boosted. Responses in the parents' questionnaire were very positive.

The facilities for students with complex physical difficulties are excellent. The care provided for them and for the students who have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is very good.

There are constructive links with other agencies and institutions. Teenage mothers are encouraged and helped to engage in the post-16 provision. There is a strong link to institutes of higher education and the number of students in the area going on to university courses has risen significantly since the academy opened.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The principal has proved to be an excellent leader. His skilled leadership has ensured that staff, students and the community understand the goals of the new academy and play their part in realising them. The academy is serving the needs of its students and the local communities very well. There have been impressive strides forward since it first opened, especially the outstanding improvement in standards at Year 11.

The governors have worked very productively to ensure that the academy has started so well. They encourage improvements and challenge constructively. The academy actively seeks, and secures, additional funding to help the shared vision become a reality. Finances and resources are used efficiently.

The senior leaders are managing their areas of responsibility very effectively. The strategies for improving teaching and learning are secure, productive and valued by the staff. The processing of information and the use of ICT for communication are very well managed. This innovative system ensures that the exchange of messages between the staff, and with the students, is speedy and based on up-to-date information. The senior leaders set out determinedly to review the academy's effectiveness from the students' perspective. The consultation with students, parents and community groups is impressive and beneficial. The students really enjoy reviewing practice and have many good ideas about what to do next.

The senior leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of the academy was confirmed by inspectors.

The academy judged leadership and management to be good rather than outstanding because strategies for monitoring and evaluating post-16 provision were not good enough last year. Rightly, the new director of post-16 has tackled weaker aspects of this provision quickly and rigorously.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The City Academy Bristol, Russell Town Avenue, Bristol, BS5 9JH

8 December 2005

Dear Students,

Thank you for welcoming us to your academy. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you about your experiences and joining in your lessons.

Your very good attitudes impressed us greatly. In so many useful ways, you take responsibility within the academy and contribute to the community.

You think very highly of your principal. We also think that he is an excellent leader and has set up your new academy very well.

The sports facilities are outstanding and teaching in PE is excellent. The new buildings are superb. You have such good opportunities to use ICT and this helps you to become more independent in your learning. The staff care for you and support you very well indeed. Your academy is working closely with your families and the communities where you live. Teaching is good.

Your teachers cleverly help you to become good learners. The Year 11 pupils achieved very well last summer, shattering the challenging targets set for them. Mostly, standards are getting better and better.

Your staff were disappointed that the mathematics and science results in Year 9 last summer did not reach the challenging targets they had set. Most of you achieved reasonably well in mathematics and science and you did really well in English. At post-16, your achievement was generally fine but there were a few courses which were unsuccessful.

We agree that mathematics, science and post-16 are not as good as they should be. Your staff are already focusing on these areas because they want the best for you.

You are very proud of your academy and we can see why. Your academy is good and there are some things which are excellent, including your personal development!

Very best wishes from all of us,

Brenda Cusdin Her Majesty's Inspector