

Bacon's College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135401
Local Authority	NA
Inspection number	343134
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Gill Close HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1068
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eugene O'Keeffe
Headteacher	Tony Perry
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Timber Pond Road Rotherhithe London
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons, and spoke with governors, staff, students, parents and representatives of partner organisations. They observed the academy's work, and looked at a range of its documentation including analyses of students' attainment and progress, improvement planning and evaluation, lesson monitoring records and policies. They also evaluated 91 pupil questionnaires and 134 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- progress in English and mathematics, and of high attainers, to determine whether learning and progress are good
- progress in the sixth form, in particular at A level in subjects in which progress was previously below average
- how teaching, assessment and tracking contribute to achievement and preventing underachievement
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels ensure improvement in teaching and learning, in provision in weaker subject areas and in behaviour of groups of students.

Information about the school

Bacon's College became an academy in September 2007, sponsored by the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and The Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust. It has an Anglican religious character but does not base admission on any faith criteria. Its specialism is digital media. In 2009, it achieved the full International Schools Award.

Half of the students are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being African. One in five speaks a first language other than English and 25 of these are at an early stage of learning English. A quarter of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of which the main one is behavioural, emotional and social. Two out of every five pupils are eligible for free school meals. These proportions are above national averages.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

Bacon's College provides a satisfactory standard of education. A number of features are good or better but attainment and progress slipped in 2009 from their previously higher levels. The academy has correctly recognised that lack of rigour in its monitoring systems contributed to this and has begun to introduce changes. Although there are signs of improvement this term, achievement has not risen consistently enough to be good. At each key stage, there is too much variation in teaching quality and between outcomes in different subjects. While students make good progress in some subjects, they make satisfactory progress in others, such as English. This is because some teaching is good but other lessons do not always involve students actively in challenging activities, or use assessment well enough to help them improve. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is hampered because not all students study it during Key Stage 4.

The academy's great strength is the caring ethos that permeates its provision. Through outstanding care, guidance and support, and sensitive knowledge of individual circumstances, students are helped to develop into confident young people who feel safe and follow healthy lifestyles. Students are deeply committed to equality, very understanding of cultural and religious diversity, and express reasoned views on moral issues. They are very proud of the academy, behave well and enjoy participating together in the many activities available. The academy promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. For example, through partnership with the local authority and police, the sixth form peer mediation service has made a real difference within the academy and in the local community. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their contribution to the community in the academy and beyond, including through year councils, junior sports leadership awards and the range of activities that have contributed to the full International Schools Award. One of these involves the whole academy in raising funds for the Swaziland Charitable Trust each year and some students travelling there to help out with projects in link schools.

The academy's self-evaluation is broadly accurate and has identified key areas for development. Its actions have met with some success in improving the range of courses for sixth form students and their progression to higher education, the proportion of students reaching the highest grades at GCSE in core subjects, and attendance. Nevertheless, improvement planning, evaluation, monitoring of lessons, target setting and tracking were not rigorous enough to prevent achievement falling in 2009. The academy has put new systems in place to improve these, and there is good practice across subjects that it can draw upon. This demonstrates its satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and raise progress to consistently good at each key stage
 - particularly in English
 - through the provision of ICT for all students at Key Stage 4
 - by more rigorous target setting and tracking.
- Sharpen improvement planning and evaluation of its impact, in particular to raise the quality of teaching and learning to consistently good, so that teaching provides more challenge, engages students more actively, and uses assessment more effectively to monitor and extend students' progress.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most students work hard in lessons. The progress they make varies greatly. In some lessons, where they are challenged well, they make good or better progress, but in too many others their progress is no better than satisfactory. This results in them making inconsistent progress across subjects at each key stage and in some able students not attaining the high grades of which they are capable.

In 2009, attainment at Key Stage 4 fell, particularly for White British students, but remained above average. Most groups attained more highly than similar students nationally, including students with special educational needs, who are eligible for free school meals, or have Black African heritage. More students attained the higher grades A* and A in English and mathematics, so standards rose to above average in mathematics, but other students did less well, so attainment fell in English to broadly average. Attainment remained well above average in science, but below average in history. Progress fell to satisfactory during Key Stage 4. It was stronger during Key Stage 3 where it was good in science and mathematics but satisfactory in English. The academy's challenging targets for 2009 were not met. Its records show that attainment is expected to improve in 2010.

There are students with special educational needs who receive additional support that has contributed to them making good progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, leading to places at university. Even so, the substantial group of students with special educational needs makes progress similar to their peers.

Students show mature respect towards each other and conduct themselves well around the academy, but there is occasionally some restlessness in lessons. They say that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with well. Attendance has improved to above average for most groups. It has also risen for White British students but not reached average, so is satisfactory. Students show strong confidence and ability to express themselves cogently, and have high aspirations. Through workshops delivered by

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partner organisations they develop a clear understanding of enterprise and business. Allowing for some gaps in ICT skills, their standards in English and some weaknesses in punctuality, these attributes prepare them satisfactorily for their futures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory. Its quality varies between lessons, and is outstanding on occasions, but too much of it is satisfactory for students to make consistently good progress. In the more successful lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to convey high expectations and plan challenging activities. They ask questions that make students think hard and ensure that everyone joins in with group work, listening carefully to each other. In the less effective lessons, students sometimes spend too long listening to the teacher or working on activities that are not matched to their needs so they do not have enough time to develop their skills. Assessment is not used well enough to plan demanding work for everyone, check on students' progress throughout lessons or provide specific guidance on how to improve.

The broad Key Stage 4 curriculum meets students' needs. It offers a wide choice of

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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academic subjects to higher and middle attainers and a mixed vocational and GCSE programme for others, through partnership with a local college. ICT is provided as an option; it is not compulsory for all. The Key Stage 3 curriculum prepares students appropriately for their future through grouping by ability, including some integrated subject teaching for the lowest attainers. Provision such as accelerated reading and a summer school were introduced to meet identified need. There is a vocational course in the academy's media specialism at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

There is a wide range of excellent provision that helps students' personal development and well-being, including peer mediation, counselling and mentoring. Emotional health lessons and the personal, social and health education programme are effective. Support staff work well with students in lessons and outside, increasing their confidence and helping those with behaviour difficulties to manage their feelings and actions. Vulnerable students are given thorough support, working closely with families and other agencies. The academy settles in new students very well, but there is room for fuller advice about some courses and careers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They are strongly committed to making improvements and have tried a number of approaches to overcome weaknesses. They have motivated staff and worked with other leaders to do so successfully in some areas, but the quality of action planning and evaluation of impact is not sharp enough to ensure this in all areas in which it is needed. Monitoring of lessons has led to some improvements, although it has not been sufficiently rigorous to raise satisfactory teaching to consistently good. A new tracking system has just been introduced to increase challenge and calculate progress against targets, but it is too early for it to have made an impact on students' progress. The governors know the academy well, challenge it about performance, and have begun to collect first hand evidence from students and staff. However, they have not ensured through a regular review of policies and provision that statutory requirements for delivering ICT or for the Disability Discrimination Act are fully in place. Development of the specialism has been limited. Technical support is provided to primary schools and plans for building dedicated facilities are under discussion.

The promotion of community cohesion is excellent. Its impact is recognised within the

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academy where religious and cultural differences are openly explored and this underpins strong respect and relationships between students. In the wider community, the peer mediation service provided by students is contributing to the resolution of conflict. The promotion of equality is central to the academy's Christian ethos. For example, vulnerable students are well supported. A looked after child and five students with statements of special educational need have recently progressed to university, and almost all Year 11 students continue in education. The academy has well established safeguarding procedures and works effectively with external agencies.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress in lessons. At GCE A level, progress is satisfactory because it is above average in about half of the subjects and below it in the others. Progress is good in the vocational courses, which are taken by one third of the students. The curriculum has been improved by dropping some GCE courses in which achievement was below expectations and adding new ones that better match students' needs and interests. There are more than 20 subjects to choose from. Students make an excellent contribution to the community, for example through mediation and buddying. Good leadership and management have improved the ethos, attendance, range of courses and numbers progressing to higher education. These include some students with special educational needs. Students readily identify these changes and praise them. The standard of education in the sixth form has markedly improved. The sixth form is satisfactory overall due to inconsistencies in teaching quality and underachievement in some subject areas.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are very happy with the academy. Most agree with all statements on the questionnaire. A few think that the academy does not help their child to have a healthy lifestyle, that their suggestions and concerns are not taken account of or that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors find that behaviour is good but there is some inattention in lessons. The academy provides many ways to encourage physical exercise, and supports well the development of emotional and sexual health, although some lunch options are not very healthy. Various suggestions made at parents' evenings have been gathered by the parent support worker and acted upon, but there is room for improvement in this area.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bacon's College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 134 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1068 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	43	66	49	3	2	4	3
The school keeps my child safe	53	40	75	56	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	40	68	51	7	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	38	67	50	7	5	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	47	35	77	57	9	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	27	76	57	13	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	19	83	62	20	15	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	30	73	54	10	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	29	69	51	14	10	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	35	65	49	17	13	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	17	73	54	20	15	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	45	34	78	58	9	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	46	61	46	6	4	3	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Bacon's College, London SE16 6AT

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited Bacon's College, and for taking time to tell us about it and answer our questionnaire.

The main strengths of Bacon's College are:

- the excellent way staff care for you and keep you safe
- your strong respect for cultural and religious differences and ability to talk about them openly
- the outstanding way you help each other and those in the wider community, such as in Swaziland and through peer mediation.

You told us that you enjoy Bacon's College and learn a lot. A few of you said that behaviour was not good. We found that most of you worked hard in lessons and behaved well, but occasionally somebody's behaviour held up a lesson. Some teaching is good, but in other lessons you do not have enough opportunity to work with others on challenging activities. This means that you do better in some subjects than others. Attendance has improved, but some of you still need to make sure your attendance and punctuality increase.

We have asked the teachers to

- help you to make good progress in all subjects, especially English
- improve teaching so that it challenges you in all lessons and involves you in more group activities
- check your progress towards targets more carefully so that you meet them
- provide the teaching of ICT to everyone in Key Stage 4.

You can help out by thinking hard and making sure you know what to do to reach your targets.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close

Her Majesty's Inspector

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