

Bristol Brunel Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135300
Local Authority	Bristol City Council
Inspection number	348698
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
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	989
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Guy Keith-Miller (Cabot Learning Federation Board)
Headteacher	Brigid Allen (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Speedwell Road Speedwell Bristol
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors saw 29 lessons or parts of lessons with 28 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, governors and groups of students but not with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at samples of students' work, and some of the academy's documentation including plans for improvement, data on students' attainment and progress, examples of departmental reviews and information about keeping students safe. Inspectors analysed questionnaires returned by 105 students, 29 members of staff and 82 parents and carers.

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

- the quality of teaching and whether it is improving the rate of students' progress
- the impact of the work of leaders and managers on raising standards
- the quality of care, guidance and support being provided in the academy.

Information about the school

Bristol Brunel Academy opened in September 2007 in new buildings on the site of its predecessor school, Speedwell Technology College. It is an average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are also well above average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or difficulties is below average and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is well below. The academy has communications as a specialism and has a Healthy School award. From September 2007, it has worked in a formal federated partnership with John Cabot Academy, with Bristol Metropolitan Academy joining in September 2009. Each of the three academies within this Cabot Learning Federation has its own principal with an executive principal for the federation as a whole. A sixth form was established in September 2008.

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

2

Main findings

Leaders and managers have steered the academy well since it opened nearly three years ago. They know that further work remains to be done before all students routinely reach the standards of which they are capable by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Standards are still low for many students, especially in English and mathematics. There is no doubt, however, that standards are rising and the rate of students' progress is being speeded up securely. The academy's overall effectiveness is satisfactory but some elements of educational provision are good and even outstanding. The new sixth form has some positive features but outcomes in it are not yet high enough overall.

The attractive new building, a good curriculum and staff committed to helping students get the best out of the opportunities available all serve to lift students' aspirations and encourage positive attitudes to learning. Students enjoy being at this academy. They are respectful and courteous to each other and visitors. The vast majority behave well. Students recognise and value staff for the outstanding care, guidance and support being provided.

Teaching and learning, while satisfactory overall, include some good and occasionally outstanding features. The good or better teaching sets high expectations and good pace, engages the students' interest, and makes use of perceptive questioning to check on students' understanding. Students are often animated in their learning but they are also sometimes too passive when tasks lack challenge or interest. The flexible curriculum arrangements play a significant part in boosting progress in all year groups. Project based learning in Years 7 and 8 generally supports well the development of students' skills in literacy and numeracy through interesting and relevant contexts, but these skills are not always promoted routinely and consistently well in all lessons and in all other years.

The academy benefits from its collaboration with the two other academies and local primary schools as well as from its partnerships with a wide range of external agencies and services. The academy's specialism of communications is woven into teaching and learning but to date has not emerged as a highly distinctive feature in other specific ways. Governors and senior leaders work with tremendous integrity, honesty and accuracy of judgement to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the academy's work. In view of the improvements already visible in raised standards, coupled with some strong features in educational provision and in leadership and management, the academy has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Increase the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics; strengthen the contribution made by all staff to developing students' skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Support staff in further enhancing their skills so that teaching in many more lessons is good or better:
 - raise teachers' expectations of what students can achieve in a lesson or series of lessons
 - ensure teaching is suitably challenging and engaging and learning is undertaken purposefully and with good pace
 - develop further teachers' skills in assessing the extent of students' understanding and learning in lessons through effective questioning or other means, and in adjusting tasks accordingly.
- Improve outcomes for sixth form students so that the vast majority of them reach the grades expected given their starting points.
- 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**

Learning takes place in a calm and well-ordered setting. Students' behaviour is good in the vast majority of lessons and is only less than this where teaching lacks pace or interest. Relationships are supportive and students are developing well the skills of collaboration and teamwork because this is being encouraged. A large majority of students say they enjoy being at the academy and feel safe and cared for. Younger students in particular are generally developing well their competence as learners through project based learning but this varies with the quality of teaching. There is also considerable variability in the care with which students present their written work; work in some exercise books is neat with writing of good quality but there are examples of poor work done with little care and with many spelling and other errors.

Examination results in 2009, based on the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, were not far below the national average. However, such GCSE results including English and mathematics were low but are set to improve in 2010. In the vocational applied science course, results in 2009 were above the national average. Given the GCSE results in 2008 and 2009, it cannot be said that students' learning and progress have so far been better than satisfactory. However, the academy's data on students' current attainment and progress show an improving picture and notably so for mathematics. The data also show that the various groups of students, such as those with special educational needs and/or difficulties, are making similar progress overall. Through an effective reading programme, good progress is made in reading by students whose reading skills on entry were low.

Attendance has improved and the number of persistent absentees reduced. There are no exclusions because the academy makes every effort to overcome any barriers to

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learning a student might have. Students are developing well many personal attributes, for example in the work on rights and responsibilities and through the daily 'thought for the day'. In spite of some shortcomings in literacy and numeracy for a significant proportion of students, in view of many other positive personal qualities and skills, including good cooperation and attitudes to work, students are reasonably well prepared for their next stages in life and education. Students are very competent users of computers.

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	4
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	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

There are many strong features of educational provision most notably in the outstanding care, guidance and support provided to students. Although outcomes for students by the end of Year 11 are still only satisfactory overall, these very positive features in provision are successfully improving achievement throughout the academy. Significant contributions in care, guidance and support come from the Personalised Learning Centre, and from staff such as year achievement mentors and coordinators. Work to log and improve attendance is good and has been successful. Students who speak English

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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as an additional language, including many from Somalia, are helped to settle and learn. The academy welcomes students whose progress has faltered in other schools for various reasons and is rightly proud of some notable successes in restoring attitudes and learning. The systems for keeping a check on students' attainment and progress are robust with some well-focused attention on students in Year 11. Students receive good guidance on courses to study and future careers.

The curriculum is well-organised and innovative but has still to show a full impact on standards. A creative, flexible approach enables students to move forward to the next phase of their learning at an appropriate point, in line with their capabilities and via pathways to meet individual needs and interests. The curriculum contributes well and in many ways to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All Year 9 students complete a BTEC course within a chosen area of study. The curriculum is further enriched by focus days and through the family learning groups, and by many optional and well-attended activities.

Making teaching consistently good is seen by leaders as paramount. Roughly two-thirds of teaching is good or occasionally better; the rest is mostly all satisfactory but rather too often barely so. Teachers' have good subject knowledge. Students' basic skills, such as presentation, handwriting and spelling are fostered well by some teachers in their subjects but this is variable. In weaker lessons, teaching is over-directive, or does not establish what students already know and build on that, or maintain pace and interest; in such cases, students become bored and listless, cover little ground, or do not have to think for themselves.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Through great drive, shared clarity of purpose and high quality team work, leaders and managers in the academy and within the Cabot Learning Federation are ensuring the academy's work is increasingly effective. The highly inclusive ethos of the academy was established from the outset. Plans for further improvement in teaching and in other areas are entirely appropriate. For example, the academy's document 'Quality Standards for teaching and learning' sets out succinctly and helpfully minimum expectations and the academy's vision; it underpins work on supporting staff to develop and hone their teaching skills. Having placed an initial main focus on provision and outcomes in Years 7 to 11, leaders are rightly and rigorously addressing the needs of the sixth form because

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outcomes there are still not good enough for all students. The academy works well to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination; the impact of this work is seen in students' supportive attitudes to each other and to learning, and in the fact that standards and aspirations are rising.

Within the academy and in the locality, community cohesion has been carefully nurtured and is strong, based on a firm understanding of the nature and needs of families in the area, and on evaluations of work done thus far to promote it. Plans exist to extend the work to forge educational links with communities in other parts of the world. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students are good. Staff are well trained to deal with child protection issues. Statutory requirements are met.

The governing body works within the federation. Lines of accountability are clear and key indicators of performance and other means are used well by governors to keep the academy's effectiveness under review. The academy benefits from expertise that can be drawn from across the federation. The work of the federation as well as that of academy leaders has, for example, enhanced significantly the skills of middle managers in evaluating provision and outcomes and adjusting provision accordingly to raise standards.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The sixth form is still at an early stage of development and is about to undergo further changes through increased collaboration with the other academies in the federation from September 2010. The academy awaits its first set of A-level results this summer

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and these are expected to show improvements on the generally disappointing results in the AS-level examinations in 2009 that showed less than expected progress for many students. Results in vocational courses, however, showed students made good progress in these. A little over half of students in Year 13 are not currently meeting their target grades whereas in Year 12 two-thirds of students are meeting or exceeding them. Several students enrolled on courses that have not been fully appropriate for their needs. The academy is now providing much better guidance to students on suitable courses, as well as giving them good advice about higher education or employment. Attendance is significantly below that of the main school. Students make a valuable contribution to the academy and are positive role models to younger students. All engage in some form of voluntary service; this work makes a very strong contribution to students' personal development as responsible adults.

Educational provision is broadening and is currently satisfactory. There is a growing range of vocational courses that suit many students' preferred learning styles. The curriculum is enhanced by the Critical Thinking course and the Extended Project, both of which develop transferable study skills. The quality of teaching is similar to that in the main school. Students receive regular feedback on their progress and personal targets are set to aid them in understanding their next steps in learning. Some classes are very small and while this might allow students to receive considerable attention from the teacher, opportunities are missed for wider discussions and exchange of ideas.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with support from the Cabot Learning Federation. Systems for keeping a close check on students' progress are in place. Some students feel that communication might be better and say some organisational issues are not always briskly resolved. Pastoral care is a particular strength and students really value the support they are provided with.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A relatively low proportion of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded are satisfied with their child's experience at the academy and feel their children enjoy school, make enough progress and are kept safe. A small minority of parents and carers feel not enough account is taken of their views and unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Few written comments were made and these included both praise and some concerns; these

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match to a large extent with inspectors' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bristol Brunel Academy 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 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 989 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	39	42	51	6	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	34	41	43	52	5	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	40	44	54	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	41	44	54	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	35	44	54	6	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	27	48	59	8	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	23	52	63	6	7	0	0
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)	22	27	42	51	1	1	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	34	46	56	4	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	23	44	54	11	13	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	23	44	54	13	16	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	26	32	44	54	8	10	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	39	42	51	6	7	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



14 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Bristol Brunel Academy, Bristol, BS15 1NU

Thank you for your welcome and help to inspectors when we visited the academy. We valued the conversations with you, in planned groups and in lessons and break times. I am writing to let you know about the inspection outcomes.

Leaders and managers have steered the academy well since it opened nearly three years ago so that learning takes place calmly in the new and attractive environment.

We found you to be respectful and courteous to each other and visitors. In the vast majority of lessons your behaviour is good. Your learning and progress are satisfactory. Some of you achieve well but examination results in 2009 were still too low for many of you. There is, however, no doubt that standards are rising and your progress is being speeded up securely. The sixth form is just under two years old and is still being developed in partnership with other local academies. Provision in the sixth form is now satisfactory, but outcomes are not yet good enough overall.

There are some strengths in what the academy provides, especially in the care, guidance and support you receive which are outstanding. Some teaching is good and occasionally even better but some is just satisfactory and occasionally inadequate. The curriculum is good with many flexible arrangements so that you can study the courses and subjects best suited to your needs and capabilities. There is also a good range of enrichment activities that many of you participate in.

We have asked the academy's leaders and managers to:

- increase the proportion of you gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics
- work with staff to lift further the overall quality of teaching so that more teaching is good or better
- improve outcomes for students in the sixth form.

You can help raise standards by all attending regularly, working hard and letting staff know if the work is too difficult or too easy for you.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector

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