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Mr Christopher Bowler  
The Langley Academy  
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Dear Mr Bowler

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection to The Langley Academy

## Introduction

Following my visit with Angela Corbett HMI to your academy The Langley Academy on 6 and 7 July 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, the headteacher and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, the chair of the student achievement committee, staff, the School Improvement Partner and groups of students.

## Context

The directorate structure is in place and all ten senior leadership posts have been filled. The directorate comprises of the principal, a headteacher, three vice-principals and five directors. The governing body has increased its composition by three members; two appointments are parent governors.

The academy serves a community that is more disadvantaged than most. There are 1294 students on roll in the academy of which 199 are in the sixth form. The largest proportion of students is White from other backgrounds or White British. The amount of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. A large proportion of students have a

special educational need and/or disability although those with a statement of special educational need are around the national average. The proportion of students whose home language is not English is above average. A third of the academy's staff left in the first year of opening. Senior leaders have had difficulty recruiting to posts in some subjects which include mathematics.

### Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students in the first year of the academy attained standards that were below national averages. The proportion of students who attained five or more good GCSEs in 2009 was low as was the proportion of students who achieved five or more A\*-C including mathematics and English. Students achieved above average results in art and design. The academy has made good progress in improving results. Data indicate that results are set to rise, especially for those students expected to gain five high grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. Students' attainment in the sixth form is also well placed to improve. Attainment in 2009 was low especially the proportion of students who achieved high grades. The academy is now in a strong position to exceed its challenging targets which would result in students making improved progress in their learning at the end of Year 11. Students made good progress in their learning in English and mathematics in 2009. In that year boys made better progress than girls especially lower attaining boys. The current data for the academy indicate that girls are making equally good progress.

Effective learning was observed when students were provided with a variety of stimulating tasks, which were challenging and linked to prior and future learning. Students worked well in groups especially when teachers had closely matched their skills and abilities to enable them to learn effectively from each other. In a mathematics class the teachers chose students with particular strengths in certain topics to teach their peers how to answer a range of mathematical questions.

### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students behave well and their attendance is improving, although it remains broadly average. Students like the new building and have felt that the open-plan layout enables them to feel particularly safe as teachers and managers have visual access to all areas of the academy.

### The effectiveness of provision

In most lessons observed, teachers used a standard proforma for planning which also identified key words linked to their subject. In some of the good lessons, teachers used group and paired work well to increase students' enjoyment. Clear

building blocks of learning enabled students to develop their learning as the lessons progressed. In the less strong lessons, teachers talked for long periods of time; this slowed the pace of learning and limited progress. In these lessons there were too few opportunities for teachers to hand learning over to students so that they could work independently. Planning in these lessons did not take account of the differing needs or abilities of students. Teachers did not always take the opportunity to recap on what students were supposed to have learnt resulting in them not always having a clear understanding of what they should have achieved. Some teachers used good questioning techniques to assess what students had learned and areas where they were not progressing as well; this was not always the case in weaker lessons. Teachers' marking is of variable quality within subjects and across the academy, resulting in students being unclear as to what specific actions they need to do to improve.

The academy has adopted a more holistic approach to the curriculum to enable students to gain an all round education. This approach has been further exemplified by the science specialism and the five key foci of: museum learning, internationalism, sustainability, cricket and rowing. This has also influenced the academy's house system as each house has a particular focus. The curriculum has been adapted to meet students' needs well, for example a vocational science course has replaced GCSE science. Leaders have also sought to obtain suitable provision from outside providers where some students' needs cannot be met. This is still in the early stages of development although it appears to be having some positive impact on engaging students who could potentially have been poor attenders. The profile of the specialism is increasing which has led to an increased uptake of science subjects at Post-16. The out-of-hours activities are enabling students to take a good range of programmes. Museum learning is having a good impact and is popular with pupils and is starting to underpin the curriculum across the academy.

The academy has given care, guidance and support high priority. There are good systems to intervene and provide support to more vulnerable students and those at risk of underachieving. The recording and monitoring of students' progress and the support provided is good. Students are highly confident and receive appropriate help to enable them to succeed; however, leaders do not at present systematically analyse the provision to assess how effective strategies have been. The sound measures the academy has adopted have enabled leaders and managers to maintain broadly average attendance rates. Leaders and managers are continuing to implement appropriate strategies aimed at reducing the proportion of students who are persistently absent and to help improve attendance rates overall.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good actions have been demonstrated by senior and middle leaders in improving outcomes across the academy. The Principal and the headteacher have communicated the vision of rapid improvement to staff effectively. There has been

good improvement in the attainment and achievement of students in Year 11 and in the sixth form. The work of raising students' aspirations and reducing the level of unacceptable behaviour has had good effect. The academy's self-evaluation is broadly accurate and targets set by leaders in respect of students' achievements are challenging. Management responsibilities are clearly defined at all levels of leadership, enabling the academy to scrutinise its performance in some areas effectively. Analysis and monitoring of students' performance data have enabled leaders to accurately identify underperformance in subject areas and to put in place appropriate measures to bring about improvement for individuals including those in the sixth form. Effective support systems are in place to improve the performance of students at risk of underachieving. Partnerships to improve outcomes for students including more vulnerable groups are developing well.

Leaders have made sound improvement on reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Action planning and coaching to improve teachers' practice is working well. The monitoring and action planning for teachers judged satisfactory is not as well structured, this has resulted in the slower reduction of satisfactory teaching. The impact of action plans resulting from lesson observations are not always monitored. The sharing of good practice found in the teaching of some subjects is not yet systematically implemented across the academy. The analysis of the effectiveness of some of the academy's initiatives is not yet embedded.

The role of the governing body is developing well. Governors are providing an improved level of challenge to the academy's work. New parent governors have been appointed and the skills of many governors are suitably matched to the needs of the academy.

#### External support

The School Improvement Partner has worked effectively to support improvements in the standard of teaching, and to provide a critical view of the academy's work.

#### Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- More effective use of data to plan for the differing needs of students in lessons and to improve the quality of teachers' marking to enable students to understand what they need to do to improve their attainment.

- Analyse the effectiveness of leadership actions aimed at improving outcomes for students.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price  
Her Majesty's Inspector