

Bristol Metropolitan Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135959
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381982
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Karl Sampson 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	573
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	81
Appropriate authority	The Academy Council and the Cabot Learning Federation Board
Chair	Jon Gould and Ron Richie
Principal	Steve Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Snowdon Road Fishponds Bristol BS16 2HD
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pauline Robins

Her Majesty's Inspector

Suha Ahmad

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors carried out observations of two full lessons and 26 part-lessons taught by 27 teachers. Fourteen of the lessons were jointly observed with a member of the academy's leadership team as well as the Executive Principal of the Cabot Learning Federation. One inspector undertook a learning walk which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for lower-ability students and students with special educational needs. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons to look at the quality of marking. Discussions were held with: senior and middle leaders, staff, the Executive Principal and Chair of the Federation board, the Chair and a member of the Academy Council and different groups of students. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at the academy's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the academy's work, policy documents and students' work. They analysed 99 inspection questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, questionnaires completed by a sample of students from each year group and 36 completed by staff.

Information about the school

Bristol Metropolitan Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The academy opened in September 2009 and holds modern languages specialist status. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The majority of students are of minority ethnic heritage, most frequently Black African, with a broad range of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally. There are relatively high numbers of in-year admissions and many of these students are new to the country. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. Of these, the majority have emotional, social and behavioural needs.

The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which sets minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The Cabot Learning Federation, sponsored by Rolls Royce PLC and the University of the West of England, has been the sponsor of Bristol Metropolitan Academy since 2009 when the Academy opened. The federation consists of a group of four local primary and six secondary academies who work together to share effective practice and leadership strategies to accelerate school improvement. This work is led and coordinated by an Executive Principal.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good academy. It is not yet outstanding because greater consistency in the practice of individual teachers over time and a stronger overall quality are required to move good teaching and learning towards outstanding. The sixth form is satisfactory and is improving quickly and securely.
- Actions arising from the Principal's pursuit of excellence have had considerable impact on improving academic outcomes, behaviour and students' personal development and well-being. Support for students who speak English as an additional language is outstanding. One parent summarised the views of many as follows: 'The Principal and his staff have transformed the school and have given the community a school to be proud of.'
- The academy has high expectations of its students and places a strong emphasis on their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Students are encouraged to work and socialise together and this fosters good behaviour, positive relationships and tolerance.
- Historically, attainment has been low, reflecting students' very low starting points. However, there has been strong and steady improvement in students' achievement because of targeted professional development focusing on high-quality teaching and the improvement of literacy skills across the curriculum. Consequently, students make better progress than their peers nationally, regardless of background, starting point or special educational needs.
- Teaching is good overall, and some is outstanding. The development of classroom practice through 'Theory Thursdays' and the increasing influence of an effective federation-wide 'learning community' are being used well to drive further improvements in teaching. Staff performance is managed effectively. The academy council and the federation board support the academy well.
- The academy has an inclusive approach to promoting further studies for all students and this has been effective in raising their aspirations to join the sixth form. However, in the past a significant minority of students underachieved because they were inappropriately matched to their courses. The academy has taken swift and concerted action to remedy this and updated procedures are now firmly in place. Although inspectors could see the positive effect of these changes, they have not yet had time to have a full impact on students'

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achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the effective foundations laid to raise students' aspirations in the sixth form and improve achievement further by:
 - extending and developing a curriculum adapted in response to students' learning needs that maximises and supports the progress of all students regardless of starting point.

- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching and, at an individual teacher level, achieve greater consistency of good and outstanding practice by:
 - ensuring that the quality of all teaching and learning matches the best in the academy through effective dissemination of exemplary teaching to help others to understand how to improve their own practice
 - ensuring that teachers are equally effective in checking the progress of all learners during lessons and are, therefore, able to reshape learning activities to meet individual needs, provide high levels of challenge and secure consistently good or better progress
 - developing students' numeracy skills more systematically in all subjects
 - ensuring consistency in the use of high-quality subject-specific verbal and written feedback and providing routine opportunities for students to respond to teachers' verbal and written comments and engage in a dialogue of learning and assessment.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry to the academy is low, but there has been a dramatic rise in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades or equivalent and this is now significantly above the national average. The academy has also been effective in the action it has taken to raise achievement in English and mathematics, which has risen well since the academy opened. Students' literacy is being developed effectively through a successful emphasis on the use of subject-specific terminology and common approaches to develop the quality and structure of writing. It is complemented by excellent provision for students who speak English as an additional language, of whom some are at the early stages of learning English. Many of these students make outstanding progress. The academy's literacy strategies are becoming effectively embedded and bearing fruit as shown by the accelerated rate at which students are closing the gap towards what is attained nationally. However, leaders recognise that the development of mathematical skills is a weaker aspect of students' development and while the academy knows where different subjects might contribute, practice is as yet unsystematic. Although good overall, progress in mathematics is not as strong as in English and science. Science is a particular strength, partly because the department provides a variety of courses to meet most

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needs and partly because it promotes learning successfully. The large majority of parents and carers are pleased with the progress made by their children. A wide range of inspection evidence confirms the accuracy of this view.

Expectations of students' capabilities have been raised through more stringent use of assessment data to set challenging targets and inform teachers' planning. All students know their targets and the academy tracks their progress rigorously. The best learning takes place when students are challenged to think issues through for themselves and engage with a variety of interesting and stimulating activities. Students work well together in pairs and groups and learning and progress are maximised when tasks are planned to develop their communication and literacy skills, whatever the subject content. In the majority of the lessons observed, students from all groups made good progress. This is confirmed by an analysis of students' achievement over time which shows that almost all groups of students make better progress than their peers nationally. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers. The progress made by a few students supported at school action plus is less rapid than their peers and the academy has implemented good plans to meet these students' specific needs.

Intra-federation support is being used well to develop the range of courses and refine entry requirements so that all sixth form students are provided with good opportunities for progression to further education and training. Systems for monitoring the performance of students and subjects have been significantly strengthened and improved teaching is accelerating the rate at which sixth form students are making progress over time.

Quality of teaching

The overall quality of teaching across the academy is good, and improving over time. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations for students' achievement. Good relationships and behaviour in classrooms add to an atmosphere conducive to learning. The most effective teachers know exactly where students are in their learning, understand when they are ready to take the next steps and convey clearly how this can best be achieved. They communicate their enthusiasm for the subject and design activities that engage, stretch and challenge all learners regardless of starting point so that their progress is consistently good or better. For example, in a Year 12 English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) lesson, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and understanding of each individual were used deftly to adjust and structure learning opportunities so that all students made excellent progress. An analysis of students' work showed the outstanding progress they had made since beginning the course. The students took great pride in describing the impact that the teaching was having in developing their confidence in applying their newly found skills in written and spoken English to 'real life' situations. Teachers and the curriculum provide good opportunities for students to celebrate their individuality as well as fostering a strong appreciation of cultural diversity.

Elsewhere, good practice prevails, although inspectors observed as much satisfactory

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teaching as that which was outstanding. In weaker lessons, teachers do not sufficiently reshape the learning planned in the light of students' responses, and progress slows because learning activities are not matched well enough to meet individual needs. Students and their parents and carers rightly express confidence in the quality of teaching overall, but recognise that there is still some variation in quality at individual teacher level. Evidence gathered from a review of some of the students' exercise books across a range of subjects showed some variation in the quality of marking and feedback. While students receive written feedback through 'two stars and a wish', in some instances the comments are too general and lack clarity to identify precisely the next steps in learning, for example, in mathematics. Teachers are beginning to expect students to engage in a dialogue of learning and respond to their comments. An outstanding product design lesson demonstrated the impact that such an approach was having over time as a result of precisely focused and individually planned learning. All students were comfortably exceeding their challenging targets and able to talk explicitly about how regular dialogue with the teacher through their 'learning logs' had helped to develop their skills, extend their thinking and build their confidence in relation to the forthcoming examination. However, where students are not expected to respond routinely to written feedback and/or engage in a dialogue of learning the impact on progress is diminished.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In this extremely diverse community, students and staff treat each other with respect. Differences are accepted as a matter of course and mixed-age tutor groups support harmonious social relationships. Students new to the academy are sensitively integrated into the community, which respects and values cultural diversity both within its boundaries and further afield. Students say that they feel safe and well cared for and their parents and carers strongly agree. Lessons typically proceed well and, as students said, there are relatively few interruptions. This was a view supported by staff and most parents and carers, although a small minority indicated that there are occasions when learning in lessons can be disrupted by others. This was explored by inspectors and found to be linked to where teaching is less secure and often where there have been temporary teachers. On most occasions, where the staff are skilful and lessons are well planned and interesting, difficult behaviour is managed well. The academy has systematically and effectively tackled previously low attendance so that it is now average and improving; it has been particularly successful at reducing the high level of persistent absence, although this still remains a priority for a few students supported by school action plus.

Academy records show that incidents and exclusions have reduced dramatically since the academy opened. This is due to effective behaviour systems now in place that are usually consistently applied across the academy; the 'Metropolitan Way' sets high expectations and clear consequences so that any inappropriate behaviour is swiftly dealt with. Effective steps are taken to ensure that students understand their role in tackling prejudice and bullying of all kinds and they speak knowledgeably about contemporary issues with respect to homophobic and cyber-bullying. Students are confident that when problems do occur they are resolved quickly if reported to staff.

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The academy works hard to support those students who arrive from other schools where they may have had problems. Increasingly, students at risk of exclusion are being successfully managed and supported through strategies which focus on raising self-esteem, on anger management and in providing support through mentoring. The work of the student support base and the federation's 'CLF studio' are valuable aspects of provision in which previously disaffected learners and/or those whose circumstances make them vulnerable can thrive.

Leadership and management

The dynamic leadership of the Principal has been pivotal in transforming provision and outcomes in the time leading to the academy's first inspection. He has assembled a good team of senior leaders who know the academy's strengths, plan appropriately for improvement and have the confidence and trust of staff, students and parents. Performance management of teachers is linked closely to their professional development and this is having a good impact on improving the quality of teaching in many subjects. Teachers appreciate time each week for collaborative planning and sharing of effective practice within and across departments. Senior leaders recognise that the impact is not consistent across all departments and are continuing the process of further strengthening middle leadership and teaching quality as the next significant step on the journey to excellence. The academy is outward looking. Links with other agencies and with other schools within the federation add value to the academy's practices as they evolve. For example, the academy's work is enhanced by a range of leadership development programmes and commissioned academy peer reviews which are accessed through the federation and coordinated by the Executive Principal. It clearly shows the burgeoning 'community of practice' that is helping to sustain the academy's good capacity to improve through effective succession planning and shared school improvement strategies.

Equality of opportunity sits at the heart of the academy's work and manifests itself in the good achievement of students in the main school, and a sixth form that is now well placed to maintain its upward trajectory. The curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 has been carefully refined to meet students' needs, raise achievement and support progression. Along with a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, it deepens and broadens students' experience and makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The actions of the academy council and its links with the federation board make a worthy contribution to continuing improvement. The Executive Principal acts as an effective bridge between these aspects of governance and senior academy leaders to ensure that they are challenged and supported to improve students' achievement. Safeguarding arrangements are robust, effective and meet requirements. Feedback from parents and carers is very positive; most say they would recommend the academy and this is supported by the significant year-on-year increase in first choice applications for Year 7. A number of parental contacts to the team by telephone highlighted the significant improvement that they had seen since the academy opened.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Bristol Metropolitan Academy, Bristol, BS16 2HD

I write on behalf of the inspection team that recently visited your academy. Thank you for being so welcoming and for sharing your thoughts with us. You said you feel safe and enjoy life at the academy. We were impressed with the harmonious social relationships which exist between all members of your school community.

Mr Taylor, the academy council and staff have worked tirelessly to significantly improve the quality of your education since the academy opened. All of you achieve well and you are well equipped for the next stage in education, training or work. You appreciate the good range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities available to you. Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors are right to be happy with the rate of improvement and rising standard of education you are provided with. Teaching is good in the majority of lessons and allows you to make good progress in your learning. We have asked Mr Taylor and his team to continue to improve your achievement and ensure that teaching continues to improve by:

- ensuring that the sixth form curriculum is further adapted in response to need to ensure the right mix of courses exist so that all students are able to maximise their progress and achieve to their potential
- enabling teachers to share their best ideas across all subjects and learn from each other so that all teaching is consistently good or better
- developing your numeracy skills more systematically in all subjects
- ensuring that teachers consistently give you high-quality feedback in lessons and on your work to stretch and challenge your thinking, better meet your individual learning needs and enable you to demonstrate your improvement.

All members of the academy's community have together made a considerable journey to become a good and improving secondary school. Through good behaviour, improved attendance and trying your best, you have played your part in that process and should feel proud of your achievements. I wish you all well in your continuing journey to excellence.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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