

The Bridge Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100320
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	285766
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	154
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Seamus Oates
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002
School address	Finlay Street London SW6 6HB
Telephone number	020 7610 8340
Fax number	020 8576 5469

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Inspection number	285766

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Bridge Academy provides for learners who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, those on 'managed moves' to prevent exclusion and those out of school. It also provides 25 designated places for learners with social, emotional and behavioural needs, all of who have a statement of special educational need. For some this may mean a short stay prior to reintegration, whilst for others it might mean involvement throughout their secondary schooling.

A significant reorganisation has taken place since the previous inspection. The Bridge Academy now operates on two sites less than half a mile from each other - the 'Bridge' and the Childerly Centre. At the latter intensive support is provided for up to 30 learners from local secondary schools as part of the local authority's Behaviour Improvement Programme to reduce fixed term exclusions. The Bridge Academy is in its third year of the 'notschool.net' programme, which provides for up to 60 learners and uses online learning guides and home based learning. It has been awarded the national Healthy Schools Award.

All learners have a range of emotional, social or behavioural difficulties on entry and a growing number are also presenting specific learning difficulties (SpLD). Most learners receive free school meals. Six out of ten learners are boys. The ethnic background of learners is mixed and reflects that of the local community. There are nine looked after by the local authority (LA). There are also a large number of vulnerable learners living in stressful home circumstances and environments. There is a fluctuating population with referrals coming throughout the year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Bridge Academy provides very effectively for all its learners and successfully develops their educational and personal potential in a safe, stimulating and supportive learning environment. A parent commented: 'Since my son has started attending the Bridge he has changed immensely. He is confident, happy and enthusiastic for the future. To see a daily smile as he makes his way to school is such a blessing.' The care, guidance and support of learners, the multi-agency approach and partnerships with other providers that promote learners' well being further are real strengths. The Bridge Academy also works closely with parents and carers, who are very appreciative of its work. There are highly effective partnerships with secondary schools that are very appreciative of the preparation and support for learners on reintegration programmes. A further strength is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning, to help deliver an improving and personalised curriculum and to enhance the quality of day-to-day management of the Bridge Academy. Underpinning this is the highly effective leadership of the headteacher and the dynamic senior leadership team.

Achievement is good. For many learners attainment is well below what is expected when they arrive. However, the Bridge Academy successfully rekindles their enthusiasm for learning and, as a result, the vast majority leaves at the end of Year 11 with some form of accreditation in a wide range of courses. Some achieve better than expected levels in the end of Year 9 tests. Learners following the 'notschool.net' programme all achieved accreditation at the end of the school year in 2006.

Learners' personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects is good. In a morning registration session, led by a learning mentor, all reacted well to the focus on improving their confidence and self esteem. A Childerly learner commented: ' I feel I have been successful here because everyone has made me feel confident about my work and myself.' During the inspection learners behaved very well in lessons and around the school, some being very confident in welcoming visitors to their lessons. Attendance varies but is well below average overall. However, for most it is much higher than in their mainstream schools. Nevertheless, in spite of the Bridge Academy's best efforts, the number of unauthorised absences remains a concern because it affects the rate of achievement these learners make.

Teaching and learning are good overall and as a result learners make good progress. Teachers and support staff know their learners very well. Learners are managed well and occasional outbursts of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with calmly, consistently and effectively. Excellent ICT resources are routinely used to enliven learning and improve learners' capabilities in their use. The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of learners well. However, the planning and delivery of key literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects is not yet fully in place. This the Bridge Academy recognises. Enrichment activities are good and support learners' personal development very well.

Leadership and management are good. The highly effective headteacher has been instrumental in developing the strong ethos for learning and achievement. Effective self-evaluation processes have enabled the Bridge Academy to clearly identify what developments are necessary to improve further. All the issues from the previous inspection have been successfully dealt with. The management committee works closely with the Bridge Academy and is very effective as a supportive and critical friend. The highly effective leadership of the headteacher and innovative

developments in provision, together with the Bridge Academy's improving track record since the reorganisation in January 2005, show there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Reduce the number of unauthorised absences to ensure improvements in the achievement of these learners.
- Ensure greater consistency of support for literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most learners start with attainment that is well below average. They arrive with a history of poor attendance and a negative attitude to education. As a result, they have to work hard to catch up. They achieve well from their starting points. Though the focus is on reintegration for learners in Years 7 to 9, those who stay make good progress in improving their National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11, learners have the opportunity to take a broad range of accredited courses including GCSE. In 2006, only one learner left without any formal accreditation. The proportion of learners achieving either 5 A* to G grade passes improved as did the proportion of 1 A* to G grade pass. Predicted results for the present year suggest further improvement, particularly in higher grade passes, and bear witness to the Bridge Academy's focus on improving standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The difficulties learners arrive with at the Bridge Academy diminish as their confidence and self-esteem improve and their motivation for learning. As a result, many younger learners are successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools and those attending the Childerley site are enabled to return to their home schools. Learners have a good awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles. They are enabled to eat healthily at the Bridge Academy, where meals are prepared on site, and increasing numbers take part in organised physical activities both on and off site. Learners are also confident in attending the weekly sexual health drop-in service offered by the teenage pregnancy project. They say they enjoy their education, feel safe and get along well with each other, adding that the small group sizes are particularly useful in this respect. However, the attendance of a significant minority of learners could be better. All feel confident that there is an adult to speak with should they feel the need to seek personal advice, mentioning in particular the learning mentors. Learners are beginning to make a positive contribution to the community. The school council is developing well and learners feel they are listened to. Some have been involved in local community projects such as the Thames 21 River Foreshore Clean Up Project as well as raising money for charities. Older learners are prepared very well for their future economic well-being because of very effective work-related learning activities, including work experience, and a comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance. As a result, numbers of learners who are continuing their education or work based training are growing. Learners' ICT skills are well developed but literacy and numeracy skills less so.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff work very well together, classes are well managed and there is a caring and supportive learning atmosphere. Detailed and focused planning ensures the needs of learners are met, thus ensuring progress is made towards targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs) and in the personal education plans (PEPs) of those learners looked after by the LA. However, due to the erratic attendance of some learners, the number in lessons and the interactions between them can vary. This means that teachers and support staff have to work hard at ensuring there is appropriate progression in learning for all. Good working relationships between learners and staff underpin the quality of learning in lessons. The quality of teaching and learning is systematically monitored and best practice is beginning to be shared more effectively. Activities are made interesting, resources are used well and effort and achievement is consistently rewarded. This encourages learners' enthusiasm for learning and their aspirations to make progress. A learner remarked: 'Teachers respect you, I learn more in small groups and I am more confident about my work and myself.' Ongoing feedback and support in lessons makes it clear how learners might improve and information on their progress is increasingly being used to good effect in the planning and delivery of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum offers a broad and relevant range of experiences that support learners' good personal and academic development and enables successful reintegration into mainstream schools whenever possible. Learners have access to a good range of GCSEs and an increasing range of vocational subjects. Through forward looking and innovative thinking and developments, the Bridge Academy strives to ensure that every learner has access to individual learning opportunities either on site or at home in order to meet their precise needs. The use of ICT to support these opportunities is excellent, for instance, through the newly introduced 'Bridge Academy Online' facility for Year 9 learners. ICT use also forms the foundation of effective systems of monitoring, recording, evaluating and developing the curriculum. The Bridge Academy recognises, however, that there could be more focus on supporting literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), and citizenship make a significant contribution to learners' growing self-confidence and the progress they make in their attitudes to learning. Through the curriculum they learn to feel valued, be independent, to show respect and tolerance for the views of others, and understand how to live a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum is enhanced further by a range of enrichment activities both on site and elsewhere.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The Bridge Academy provides a particularly strong, caring and supporting environment where learners feel safe, develop their personal qualities and make good progress towards the targets set for them. Those with particular learning difficulties and other vulnerable learners are really well supported. IEPs and PEPs are regularly reviewed and discussed with learners and their parents. A special programme is also provided for those with ongoing behaviour difficulties to ensure they can continue to follow accredited courses successfully. Learners also receive very

effective support from the Bridge Academy during their settling-in period on reintegration programmes. Provision for ensuring health and safety is very strong. Child protection and risk assessment procedure are securely in place and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. Incidents and physical restraint records are carefully annotated when appropriate.

There is a comprehensive induction programme for new arrivals at the Bridge Academy. Over two weeks this enables staff to obtain as full a picture as possible of learners' academic and personal strengths. This then enables them to plan an individualised programme for learners that meets their precise needs. Information on attainment and progress against baseline information is analysed carefully so that the Bridge Academy is clearly aware of how much progress learners make. This enables staff to support and guide learners very effectively in terms of their academic progress. Older learners are particularly appreciative of the high quality advice they have received, which has led to increasing numbers opting to continue their education when they leave.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has high expectations of himself, and others, and leads by example. Visions for improvement and innovation are clear and the dynamic and effective senior leadership team has been enabled to put these into practice. Self-evaluation is continuous and reflective with good monitoring and evaluation of the Bridge Academy's effectiveness. Improvement planning is robust, areas identified for development being very appropriate with a focus on improving standards and achievement even further. Leadership is fully aware that some of the more recent innovations have yet to fully impact upon learners' achievement, for instance the 'Bridge Academy Online' facility and the newly created post of literacy coordinator. All staff are highly committed to ensure every learner really matters, improving their motivation for learning and ultimately enabling them to achieve their full potential. The management committee, with key local representatives, and including local residents, is very effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend of the Bridge Academy.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bridge Academy, London, SW6 6HB

A colleague and myself recently spent two days at your school visited you in lessons and saw some of you taking part in other activities. We also chatted to groups of you, including some Year 11 learners who have recently left, about your opinions on the education provided for you. Thank you all very much for being really friendly and making us feel welcome. We were impressed with your honesty and openness when explaining your views. You receive a good education at the Bridge. This is because:

- the headteacher and his senior team lead the school particularly well
- on the whole, you behave very well and get along fine with each other and all the adults you work with. You are also pleased with the way the Bridge has enabled you to settle down and improve your skills
- teaching is good, which means you all make good progress towards your personal targets
- all adults who work with you make sure you are safe and really well cared for
- they are very dedicated, have your best interests at heart and want to make sure you do well in the future
- the curriculum and other activities during the day make your education very interesting
- ICT is used really well to help you learn, make the curriculum interesting and to enable the Bridge to keep track of your progress.

There is one thing you could do to and one thing the Bridge Academy could do to make things even better for you:

- some of you need to make sure your attendance improves in order to make even better progress and improve your prospects after you leave
- the Bridge Academy needs to make sure that you improve your literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.

Once again, many thanks for your welcome and we would both like to wish you all the best for your future.

James Bowden

(Lead inspector)