

The Bridge Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100320
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	335520
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Bill (William) Stoneham

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Seamus Oates
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2007
School address	Finlay Street London SW6 6HB
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The team observed 21 lessons each taught by a different member of staff and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and carers, and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, its policy documents, governors' minutes, external reports, school publications and questionnaires returned by staff, students and 15 parents and carers.

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

- the extent to which leaders monitor and accurately evaluate the school's performance to secure further improvements in its effectiveness
- the quality of teaching and learning and how well necessary improvements are identified and then managed
- how effectively the curriculum meets the needs of all students
- the quality of care, guidance and support offered to such a diverse and vulnerable cohort of students.

Information about the school

The Bridge Academy is based on three sites. It provides for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools, those on 'managed moves' to prevent exclusion, and those out of school. All students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, with a significantly above-average number having a statement of their special educational needs. The special needs and/or disabilities frequently involve social, emotional and behavioural needs. Most students are educated at the main Bridge Academy site. Up to 20 are educated at The Childerly, where intensive support is provided for students as part of the secondary schools' partnership to reduce fixed-term exclusions. Education is also provided at the Cobbs Hall for up to 15 students who require specialised and intensive one-to-one tuition. In addition, a number of students access the 'notschool.net' programme which uses online learning guides and home-based learning.

Most students 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 a well-above average number of students looked after by the local authority. There is a fluctuating population with referrals coming throughout the year. The Bridge Academy has been awarded the national Healthy Schools Award, a national award for information and communication technology (ICT) and has just successfully completed an Investors in People assessment.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Bridge Academy offers an outstanding level of education and care. Many aspects of its work are outstanding, reflecting the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the dedication and commitment of the staff. Morale is exceptionally high and all staff, plus the members of the excellent management committee, are determined to change and improve the life chances of young people, many of whom have faced severe difficulties and traumas in their lives.

Most students join The Bridge Academy with histories of disturbed education and with exceedingly low levels of prior attainment. Allied to this, many face severe barriers to learning, including emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. In these highly exceptional circumstances, the progress students make in their education, and in their social and emotional development, is quite staggering. The outcomes are far in excess of what might have been expected given the students' starting points.

The exceptional quality of the outcomes is enhanced by various aspects of its work, especially its outstanding care, guidance and support. Assessment procedures are detailed and thorough, covering all aspects of each student's well-being. Education and care professionals, including many external agencies, work in unison to ensure excellent outcomes. The school ensures students' safety and considerable emphasis is placed on encouraging healthy lifestyles. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding, including thorough risk assessments for off-site work.

Many other outstanding features are identifiable. These include the engagement of parents and carers, the quality of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the work to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination. The outstanding progress made by the students is further helped by the invariably good, and occasionally excellent, teaching. Staff tailor lessons well to meet individual needs and assessment procedures are strong. However, though significant stress has been placed on developing the students' competencies in literacy and numeracy, these skills are not consistently nurtured enough by all classroom teachers.

Since the previous inspection, significant improvements have been made in achievement, attendance and behaviour. It is successful in reintegrating students and has an outstanding record of improving the life chances of highly vulnerable teenagers. This record of sustained improvement amply illustrates the ambition and drive of the excellent management team. Through rigorous self-evaluation, it knows its strengths and areas for development and plans carefully to address these issues. This illustrates an outstanding capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the attainment of all students by ensuring greater consistency in the way literacy and numeracy skills are promoted in all lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In lessons, students usually behave well and respond well to the challenges set. On the rare occasions where a student shows signs of being disruptive, the disturbance is quickly and effectively handled by the teacher and support staff and the lesson is able to continue. In lessons, students make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress because classrooms are settled, staff are prepared well and the students respond favourably to the set challenges; the work is enjoyed.

Students join The Bridge Academy with very low levels of prior attainment reflecting the acute disruption to their education. Many are predicted to gain few or no qualifications. Data clearly show that those students who are reintegrated into full-time education return with improved records of attainment and are better equipped emotionally and socially to cope with the demands of mainstream school. All students who stay until the end of Year 11 leave with some qualifications. Many, including those with statements of special educational needs, gain GCSE accreditation, including grades at C or above. This is a remarkable outcome given their circumstances. The service has a proud and improving record of enabling Year 11 students to progress to further education or the world of work. Looked-after students do particularly well and the progress made by students at the Cobbs Centre, a particularly vulnerable cohort, is especially outstanding because they are enabled to stay in the education system.

Responsibility and enjoyment are actively encouraged. Through their own council, the students have a say in improvements and making a contribution to the wider community. They have helped to design their curriculum and have even been involved in identifying safety improvements to the main site. The garden project is an excellent example of how the students have made a major contribution to improving even further the success of their school.

Students make good efforts to pursue healthy lifestyles with a high number participating in physical activities, for example. Attendance is a bit below average but this outcome fails to reflect the hard work being done to reduce absence. Most students now have vastly improved attendance records, with a significant number attending almost all of the time. Greater consistency in lessons in the development of the students' skills in literacy and numeracy will improve their economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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?

Most lessons are interesting and succeed in engaging and motivating the students. Their learning is good because they are consistently well taught by staff with good subject knowledge. The working relationships between staff and students are excellent. Activities are very well planned to meet students' individual needs. The curriculum is outstanding. Students enjoy following programmes that have been carefully structured to meet their own requirements and curriculum innovation has significantly boosted attainment. The Opening Minds' Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is an enterprising innovation that is boosting confidence, enjoyment and self-esteem. The provision for ICT is particularly impressive with many students making great progress in their ability to use ICT applications. The curriculum is further enhanced by themes such as international cookery and by an extensive extra-curricular programme that offers activities as diverse as boxing, bicycle maintenance and gardening. Many of these activities are designed to promote safe and healthy lifestyles. They also boost confidence and contribute strongly to the students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The Bridge Academy provides an outstanding, caring and supportive environment. There are excellent trusting relationships with parents and carers. The individual needs of all students have high priority. Families and carers, even from difficult-to-reach groups, are fully involved in their child's education and care. Its outstanding work with an array of agencies greatly enhances the students' learning, confidence and social well-being. As one parent commented: The staff care for all children. When I first heard of the school, I was strongly against it, but I now feel that it's the best thing that's ever

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happened to my son.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, along with the committed and dedicated support of all staff, results in a clear focus on successfully driving improvement. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the excellent management committee, are ambitious for success and fully committed and involved in securing improvements. The beneficial working partnerships with many agencies help to secure excellent and individualised programmes for education and social care and successfully promote outstanding learning and personal well-being. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. The detailed risk assessments are thorough and all appropriate policies are in place and monitored. There is a passionate determination to ensure that the students enjoy an appropriate education in a safe setting; leaders and managers have been most effective in achieving this.

Students make outstanding progress because the management of teaching and learning is strongly focused on raising attainment. An emphasis on respect, rights, boosting confidence, self-esteem and encouraging responsibility underpins much of its work. This makes an excellent contribution to the promotion of equality and tackling discrimination. Good efforts have been made to promote community cohesion. The students make a good contribution to their own community and their support for various charities at home and abroad, including a school in South Africa, ensure that the students' knowledge and understanding of the wider world is developed well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Fifteen parents and carers replied to the inspection questionnaire. All responses were positive. The overwhelming message to emerge is that parents and carers believe that the school makes an excellent contribution to enhancing life chances by helping the students to overcome their problems and anxieties. Though the response to this questionnaire was small, the school's own surveys of parents and carers, which elicit far more returns, confirm extremely high levels of satisfaction. The highly positive views expressed by parents and carers reflect the inspectors' judgements that The Bridge Academy offers an outstanding and life-changing standard of education.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Bridge 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 fifteen completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 174 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	53	6	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	40	9	60	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	73	4	27	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	47	8	83	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	67	5	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	73	4	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	73	4	27	0	0	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)	11	73	4	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	87	2	13	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	67	5	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	60	5	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	87	2	13	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	80	3	20	0	0	0	0

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 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bridge Academy, London, SW6 6HB

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We have fond memories of meeting and talking with you and seeing your work. We are impressed with what you are all achieving. You told us about the high-quality education you receive and I am pleased to say that we agree with your views; the education and care you receive are outstanding. You are making excellent strides in your learning and personal development. The staff help you to do this but you also help by your positive attitudes, your good behaviour and the contribution you make to securing improvements. For example, your idea to develop your own market garden is a great success and we enjoyed the tasty salad you served us. We also enjoyed watching you develop your skills as circus performers. There are so many aspects of the school that are superb and this is underpinned by you having an excellent headteacher and highly committed staff who want you to do well and who help you overcome your difficulties. You also benefit from an excellent curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support.

Though the education you receive is outstanding and we are impressed with the way you are developing your skills in literacy, numeracy and, especially, computing, we have asked your staff to ensure that there is more consistency in lessons in the way that literacy and numeracy are promoted. For example, staff do not always display or explain key words or encourage you to spell them correctly.

Thank you again for making us so welcome. We enjoyed meeting you and would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham

Lead inspector

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