

The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy

Finlay Street, London, SW6 6HB

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Learners enter with histories of failure in the school system. Some had virtually dropped out of education. They are enabled to transform their attitudes to learning and show outstanding achievement.
- There is a strong commitment to helping learners return to mainstream schools when they can and local headteachers speak in extremely positive ways about their links with The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy.
- All learners who remain are on track to gain nationally recognised qualifications by the time they leave. All are determined to either go on to college, sometimes to follow courses of A-level standard, or to some kind of employment opportunity.
- Every learner has some kind of additional need, and some have very complex social, emotional or educational needs. Because of the knowledge and understanding of staff, coupled with the academy's outstanding links with other support agencies, this is not preventing rapid gains in learning.
- The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers have the highest expectations and work extremely effectively with other staff in the academy, such as the mentors, learning support staff and therapists. Outstanding teamwork supports and engages learners, who develop obvious trust in the adults they meet daily.
- There is enormous expertise about how to improve behaviour within the academy, both among staff and on the Board. This is used to excellent effect to transform learners' negative attitudes. Young people learn to work together well and support each other, a hugely different attitude to when they first arrive.
- The executive headteacher provides inspirational leadership, while leaders at all levels show an outstanding commitment to the academy and the learners who attend. This enables teachers to work effectively and to show how teaching of the highest quality can turn young lives around.
- The expertise and commitment of members of the Board, coupled with their detailed grasp of what is happening within the academy, enables them to support it extremely effectively and to ensure that this leads to outcomes of the very highest order.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a total of 10 lessons, including joint observations with senior leaders, and visited all three sites used by the academy.
- A formal meeting was held with learners and informal discussions took place in lessons and throughout the inspection. Samples of learners' work were looked at in detail.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers with responsibilities for specific subjects and with staff whose responsibilities are around the care and well-being of learners. Discussions were held with the Chair of the Board and with the chair of the management committee of the predecessor school.
- Telephone discussions were held with representative headteachers from local mainstream schools, the local authority and with The Lyric Theatre, with whom the academy collaborates closely.
- There were not enough responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to trigger an analysis of views but inspectors were able to look at the responses of parents and carers to the academy's own survey. A discussion was held with a parent who was visiting the academy.
- The views of staff were gathered from their questionnaires and from discussions held throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information on the tracking and progress of learners, planning for teaching and learning, the academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning and key policies and procedures, including those for keeping learners safe.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy converted to an academy on 1 April 2013. When its predecessor school, The Bridge Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- At the same time as the academy came into existence, the three London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea created a new collaborative arrangement for alternative provision within their area, which they named Tri-Borough Alternative Provision. The headteacher of the predecessor school is now the executive headteacher for all alternative provision across the three boroughs. Within The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy, a head of school takes day-to-day responsibility for the academy, which remains the provider of pupil referral unit provision for Hammersmith and Fulham.
- Teaching takes place on three sites, each aimed at different groups of learners. In addition to acting as the pupil referral unit for the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, The Bridge also supports groups who are at risk of exclusion, or who, for various reasons, are unable to attend mainstream schools.
- The proportion of learners at The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy who qualify for the pupil premium, additional government funding for learners known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or who have a parent in the armed services, is well above average. All such learners at the academy are from the first two of these categories.
- The proportion of disabled learners and those with special educational needs supported through school action is far below average. However, this is because the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average, with virtually every learner falling into this category.
- The proportion of learners who are from minority ethnic communities is well above average, reflecting the wider population in the local authority area. However, very few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The executive headteacher is a National Leader of Education and the academy is designated a National Support School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In line with emerging planning, ensure that The Bridge Alternative Provision Academy takes the lead in the development of alternative provision academies throughout the Tri-Borough area in order to raise the standards of provision for young people who need an alternative to mainstream school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- On entry, the attainment of learners is well below that normally expected for young people of their age. This is mainly because of their histories of disrupted education in other schools and settings, or other issues that frequently focus around social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Learners are re-engaging with the process of learning and, as a result, are in a position to make rapid progress. Although the academy has been in existence for less than two months, all its students attended the predecessor school and can demonstrate progress over time well ahead of that which might be expected. Progress and achievement far exceed that often found in similar establishments.
- When learners join the academy, a rigorous two-week induction using age-related on-line assessments enables staff at the academy to gain a clear and detailed picture of every learner's current levels.
- From the initial baseline, challenging targets are set and learners are immediately expected to start working towards them, so achievement starts to rise immediately and rapidly. The individual needs of every learner are addressed through an individual education plan and progress of all learners is checked in detail on a six-weekly cycle.
- Learners are clear about their targets, where they are currently and what they need to do in order to make progress. Excellent support from all staff at the academy creates a positive 'can-do' atmosphere that makes learners feel that they are successful.
- It is a clear aim of the academy that whenever possible, learners will be re-integrated into mainstream settings. Local headteachers speak in the strongest positive terms about the quality and impact of The Bridge. They are not afraid to describe provision as outstanding.
- The remarkable progress that learners make is reflected in the fact that the academy's information on learners' progress is showing levels of achievement that will enable all learners to gain some form of national accreditation. Some learners should gain GCSE passes at the higher levels and some have gained places to study A-levels or equivalents at college next year.
- The minority of learners whose needs are more severe and who possess a statement of special educational needs are monitored in even greater detail. They make outstanding progress as a result. There is a particular focus on literacy, reflecting the clear belief that if learners cannot read, they will struggle with every other element of learning. An on-line programme supports improved reading and communication, and it has immediately shown dramatic results in terms of 'plugging gaps' in understanding and promoting much-improved reading skills.
- A very large majority of learners attract the additional funding of the pupil premium. They make outstanding progress from starting points, much better than that found nationally. Much of the additional funding is used to provide mentors who work closely with learners. Strong and effective relationships help learners with the process of re-engagement and many told inspectors how much they valued the help and support they receive.
- Staff show total dedication to supporting every learner so that all can achieve their very best and this shows an outstanding commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. There is no gap between the attainment of learners eligible for the pupil premium and that of others. Clear evidence shows that learners of all backgrounds achieve just as well, irrespective of gender or ethnicity.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers have the highest expectations and work exceptionally well with the academy's mentors, learning support assistants and therapists to create outstanding support for learning. As a result, learners who had previously failed to demonstrate just what they could achieve become increasingly motivated, producing work that reflects their true capabilities.
- Teachers are held to account for the progress of their learners. Detailed information on learners'

individual progress, on a six-weekly cycle, ensures that their needs are being met and challenging targets realised. In every room, a clear declaration of what learners can expect from their teachers in terms of the entitlement to good teaching is displayed.

- In addition to the central pupil referral unit function, there is also support for those at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream who attend intensive six-week courses, while a small number who for various reasons cannot be educated in any type of formal setting are supported through an e-learning package known as 'notschool.net'. Specialist teachers work within these separate elements of the academy. A small group of the most challenging learners in the pupil referral unit are also taught at a separate site with their own highly skilled staff in order to reduce the risk of them being excluded. The skills needed in each setting are different but each provides the strongest support for learners to enable them to experience success.
- In every lesson, teachers' planning addresses individual needs and learners benefit from the small group sizes. This creates bonds between the teachers and their learners which does much to help the process of engagement. Planning is exceptionally rigorous and, while the clear focus is on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, a wide programme of subjects and activities is effectively pursued.
- Sometimes this involves exceptional learning opportunities, two very good examples being the recent trip by learners to Japan, and the liaison with The Lyric Theatre that enables learners to work alongside theatre professionals in putting on their own public performance.
- Marking is of a high quality and generally, although not always, in line with the exceptionally clear assessment policy. Learners are given excellent help in improving the quality of work and know what they have to do to meet their challenging targets.
- Learners' work is presented very well, reflecting teachers' high expectations. It is presented in such a way that it is easy to see progress over time. This motivates learners after years of educational failure and many were happy to share their work with inspectors during their visit.
- Teachers take care to engage their learners in positive discussions which lead to them being able to show skills in communication and good thinking. This is central to the rapid and sustained progress that learners demonstrate. They respond positively to the effective questioning of teachers and as a result become active learners.
- The outstanding quality of teaching and support for learners throughout the academy underpins the rapid progress they make and the newly acquired skills they are able to demonstrate.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- When they first arrive, a large majority of learners show extremely challenging behaviour, many having been permanently excluded from other schools. The clear and extremely well applied behaviour policy brings rapid and sustained changes for the better. Older learners especially are able to talk about how the academy has transformed their attitudes and behaviour.
- While there are many opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, and cultural development, the most positive thing is the way in which learners develop dramatically improved social skills, such as getting on well and helping each other.
- It is remarkable how quickly learners have developed a pride in their academy. As a strong sense of community develops, the learners themselves support staff in ensuring that this is a very safe place where bullying is rare and always frowned upon.
- Learners have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and the misuse of social networking sites.
- The wider emotional well-being of learners is exceptionally well supported by the academy's own therapy services. Trained staff deliver music, 'healthy touch' and play therapy alongside counselling. They also promote family support so that learners who experience wider social and emotional difficulties can be given help and support alongside other family members.
- Behaviours, both positive and negative, are logged throughout the course of every day and put

together in graphs alongside others that reflect attendance, achievement and the number of interventions made by teachers or mentors. This results in a clear picture on the performance of every learner over time being instantly accessible. It has helped to make this a safe environment for learners, where the occasional incident is extremely well managed.

- Every day starts with a staff meeting at which any behaviour issues, positive and negative, are discussed. Such a meeting observed during the inspection saw staff spontaneously applaud the achievement of one learner, reflecting their strong commitment to learners.
- Attendance is below the national average for all schools, but since a high proportion had attended their previous schools on an occasional basis, this reflects excellent progress. The academy works rigorously to improve individual attendance, including direct work with families when necessary.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher and the head of school both provide inspirational and visionary leadership that has brought The Bridge to national prominence. There are frequent visits from other schools or local authorities, anxious to see what lies behind its success. The outstanding quality of leadership at all levels is at the heart of this.
- All leaders have very clearly defined roles and they are proud of the parts play in increasing the success of learners. At the same time, their clear job descriptions mean that they are held to account for the successful carrying out of their job.
- The success of The Bridge means that it is exceptionally well placed to play a positive role in raising the effectiveness of alternative provision throughout the area, following the creation of the Tri-Borough Alternative Provision collaboration.
- Staff show tremendous commitment to learners and also to the institution itself. Many say that they are proud to work there despite the challenging nature of their work. They are held to account by the leadership but also given strong support to enable them to develop their expertise.
- Systems to check on the effectiveness of provision are detailed and effective, and all staff have clear targets for developing their work. These are based on the identified needs of the academy as well as supporting the professional development of staff. There is a relentless focus on helping learners to realise the true levels of their talents.
- There is an awareness of the links between teachers' performance and rates of pay, coupled with an acceptance that more is expected of those on higher pay scales.
- The academy's view of its strengths and areas for development is accurate, detailed and effective; this is an institution that knows itself very well. This enables it to prioritise areas for development and, despite the very high standards, the academy is always looking to improve itself, focused always on outcomes for learners.
- The range of subjects and activities across all the areas of provision is carefully developed to meet the needs of the learners. They can all gain access to learning at an appropriate level and go on to gain success.
- Although there are no longer formal links with the local authority, there are still close ties and the authority has been very supportive in promoting the emergence of the new academy. Both sides see the value of maintaining this positive relationship into the future.
- Links with parents and carers are exceptionally strong and huge efforts are made to engage widely with families. This is reflected in the parental questionnaires and in conversations held during the inspection. Parents and carers really appreciate the role that The Bridge Alternative Provision is playing in helping to transform the lives of their children.
- Similarly, the academy works extremely effectively with a range of external agencies, such as social services, adolescent psychiatry and psychology services and with a range of therapists and other organisations. These provide a wide range of support to individual learners that enhances

their chances of success in education, at home and in their futures.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The academy has been successful in maintaining links with the previous management of the predecessor pupil referral unit while attracting new Board members. Some bring skills in the area of teenage behaviour that enable them to provide consistent and effective challenge and support. Board members have a detailed understanding of academy life. Members can gain an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and the nature of what is being taught, as well as the quality of outcomes. They have clear policies for the management of staff pay, understand the process by which effectiveness of teaching is measured and the links between this and teachers' pay. They are fully involved in the financial management of the academy and have a detailed understanding of how resources are used to raise standards and achievement, including the use of the pupil premium. All their legal duties, including those around safeguarding, are carried out very effectively.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139509
Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	422511

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Dix
Headteacher	Seamus Oates
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 7610 8340
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