

University Academy of Engineering South Bank

Trafalgar Street, London SE17 2TP

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Despite difficulties following the opening of the school, and the changes to the leadership team, leaders have a successfully sharp focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils receive a good-quality education and they achieve well.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have high expectations and ambitions for pupils. The trust and governors have made sure that the school did not swerve from their original vision for the school.
- Leaders have created a school where safeguarding is effective and given the highest priority. Pupils are safe, secure and happy. They know that they can rely on the staff for help at any time of the day.
- Pupils' personal development and their behaviour are good. Pupils are confident and ambitious. They enjoy their time at school and concentrate well in lessons.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support. As a result, their progress is good and matches that of other pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils meet the targets set across the curriculum, and their progress is good overall.
- The most able pupils make good progress. They have not always done so because there was insufficient challenge in too many subjects. This has now changed and their progress is better than before.
- Pupils have good mathematical skills and achieve well in the subject. Changes in teaching staff in the English department have affected pupils' progress. However, the school has started to develop pupils' literacy skills across all subjects. There is now greater attention to grammatical and other technical features.
- The new sixth form provides a good quality of education. Students make good progress in the courses offered. The provision is expanding, and students are positive about their experiences.
- The curriculum provides pupils with varied opportunities to increase their interests in the sciences and the arts. Pupils are keen ambassadors for the school's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) specialisms. They are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Careers advice is not offered at key stage 3. Pupils' social and cultural experiences are not well developed in preparation for future academic studies.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching and learning to enable the school to achieve its ambitious targets by making sure that:
 - all groups of pupils, including the most able, are fully challenged to make even better progress in subjects
 - changes made to improve the teaching of literacy skills are fully developed.
- Ensure that as the school expands, pupils in all key stages access clear and impartial careers advice and guidance that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- Ensure that pupils have appropriate access to a range of social experiences that increase their cultural awareness in preparation for the next stage of their academic lives.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The interim principal's very good leadership and high expectations of pupils have enabled the school to move forward very quickly. His work has seen an improvement in the school's effectiveness. This has been achieved by re-focusing attention on the rationale for setting up the school as a place where there is 'creativity, connections and challenge'. This ambitious aim is evident in the high expectations leaders have for pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 4.
- Leaders and governors have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has led them to identify priorities for improvement quickly and put well-planned systems in place to sustain changes.
- Leaders have focused successfully on developing teaching, learning and assessment. The quality of the leadership of teaching is good. This has resulted in teachers improving their skills and in pupils making good progress.
- Systems for checking teachers' work are rigorous. Leaders, including middle leaders, identify how teachers can improve. Leaders provide helpful guidance and support that lead to better teaching and learning. Pupils' confidence in their teachers is captured in the following pupil's comment: 'Teachers challenge us to do hard things, and each one has a unique way of explaining things that helps us to understand the work.'
- Senior leaders have increased accountability and encouraged teachers to take full responsibility for their work. Leaders have a clear understanding of good-quality teaching and learning. They use the main school and departmental improvement plans productively to check and measure the effectiveness of the school's work. Regular progress meetings and careful analysis of assessment information ensure that teachers quickly identify and support any pupils at risk of falling behind.
- The school's rigorous cycle of accountability serves three main purposes very well. First, it ensures that leaders challenge teachers about the effectiveness of their work. Second, it enables leaders to check that all pupils, regardless of their starting points, have an equal opportunity to make good progress. Third, it helps leaders to measure how well rigorous targets for staff performance are met. These are linked to the school's priorities that teachers are expected to achieve.
- Leaders have worked very well with the staff to confine to the past the previous high staff turnover and decline in the school's work. As a result, the school is well placed to develop further.
- Good-quality staff development, including the support for new teachers, has increased staff confidence in the leadership team. Leaders provide staff with opportunities to extend and use their expertise in the school. For example, leaders sponsor staff to engage in higher education studies and encourage staff to use research to inform school development. They also train additional staff to become teachers. Succession planning is well considered. Governors have appointed an experienced principal to take over the substantive post.

- Assessment systems are thorough. Leaders ensure that pupils can track their progress and understand their targets for improvement. Parents and carers report that the information that leaders provide is very helpful. Equally, senior leaders regularly gather and use a wide range of assessment information to check pupils' progress and the school's effectiveness. They use the analyses to make changes, thereby ensuring that all pupils can succeed well. However, previous changes in staff prevented the school from working closely with other partners to validate its work. Leaders have taken swift action to address this.
- A number of improvements have defined the school's effectiveness. The teaching of English is under new management, there is a sharper focus on the development of literacy skills and schemes of work are now in place. The department is well organised and is implementing a purposeful development plan to improve pupils' reading, writing and oral skills.
- Under new leadership, the special educational needs and inclusion department has rightly focused its attention on reviewing the register of pupils' special needs. The register is now accurate and the additional special educational needs funding is used effectively. Leaders ensure that staff use the new teaching facilities and resources effectively to move pupils' learning forward swiftly. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities now make good progress in all year groups. However, the reorganisation of the department has meant that less time has been spent checking on pupils' specific academic progress.
- Provision for the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils is good. The investment and targeted use of pupil premium funding, particularly in staffing, have resulted in pupils receiving high-quality care and support that enable them to make good progress that is similar to that of others nationally. Leaders also ensure that the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has a substantial effect on pupils' learning, evident in the better progress that this group of pupils make.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Careful planning ensures that there is a sharp focus on linking the school's specialist subjects (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, or STEAM) to other areas of learning. The curriculum provides pupils with memorable experiences that encourage them to create and develop new ideas. For example, pupils have developed a 'Formula 1' racing circuit in the school. The science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) ambassadors ensure that pupils engage in a variety of enterprises and connect their learning across subjects. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. They take part in competitive sports and develop good attitudes to learning. Careers education is undeveloped at key stage 3.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is their understanding of fundamental British values. The curriculum provides them with insight into living in diverse Britain, and exercising tolerance and showing understanding of other faiths and cultures. Pupils are very well prepared for living in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is experienced and a driving force behind the school's quick recovery when it began to decline in the second year of operation. Governors have an in-depth understanding of the key priorities of the school's work; they know the area that the school serves. They visit the school regularly and receive a stream of information from different sources, including school leaders, and from partners within the local community.
- Governors have a good grasp of the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Consequently, they did not hesitate to seek help and support when the school was not living up to the school's aims outlined in the school's prospectus. Governors did not allow the obstacles that the school has faced to hold back the school's progress. Governors' swift actions ensured that the school recovered very quickly.
- The governors act as critical friends, challenging and raising questions about the school's effectiveness in relation to pupils' achievement. They are aware of the performance of different groups of pupils, in particular the most able, disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors' knowledge of pupils' circumstances ensure that they maintain a clear and strategic focus on pupils' achievements.
- Governors regularly raise safeguarding concerns about pupils. Their involvement in the community, regular updates from leaders, and training and development all contribute to them fulfilling their statutory duties well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that they duly carry out all pre-employment checks.
- Safeguarding arrangements are a particular strength of the school's work. Leaders and staff are highly effective in ensuring that local safeguarding concerns do not affect pupils' education. They are sensitive to the needs of pupils. Pupils were unequivocal in their comments about teachers quickly identifying their need for support and help. Pupils therefore have trusting relationships with staff and know that they can rely on them.
- Leaders ensure that they address local concerns in their training and development. For example, they work with community groups to explore risks of female genital mutilation. Leaders have been direct in providing training on risks to pupils' safety, including in relation to domestic violence, e-safety, gangs, drugs, child sexual exploitation and extremism. Coverage of safeguarding topics in the curriculum means that leaders and other staff keep pupils well informed about keeping safe.

- The school works very well with external partners and uses a set of assessment information effectively to ensure that they can quickly classify pupils' needs. This ensures that support is timely and matched to needs. Services such as early help are used extensively. Records of referrals are well maintained and actions show that the school's work with external partners and parents is highly effective. Pupils and parents said that they agree that safeguarding procedures are strong.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They have good working relationships with pupils, which support teaching and learning very well. Both staff and pupils recognise that the school is now consistently living up to leaders' ethos and vision, after a slow start.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to encourage pupils to learn, use and understand subject-specific vocabulary. This helps pupils to understand the key concepts behind the theory they learn.
- Assessment information is used accurately to match work to pupils' needs. Teachers use a bank of assessment data that charts pupils' progress over time. They make very good use of information on pupils' personal development and achievements to provide effective pastoral and academic support. High-level support and care lead to pupils learning well. Staff have created a positive climate for learning which allows pupils to thrive. For example, pupils identified the shorter lessons as being a main reason for remaining on task and absorbing their learning.
- Teachers plan their lessons well and use a very good range of resources to engage pupils. Effective organisation of activities helps pupils to build up their skills quickly. Lessons are exciting and require pupils to think at a deep level.
- The current very good quality teaching in English ensures that pupils use talk very well to articulate their learning before they begin to record their ideas. Most pupils are confident at debating. Pupils' writing skills show improvement in the organisation and structure of their work over time. Pupils' spelling and use of technical features are weaker. Leaders have correctly identified the development of reading as a key priority, primarily as baseline information shows that a large minority of pupils lag behind in their reading age. Good investment in the library resources has started and more work is planned.
- The teaching of mathematics is a particular strength of the school's work. Pupils identify mathematics as a favourite subject. This is because teachers make sure that pupils of different abilities are stretched and complex work is reviewed. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support and ensure that pupils keep up with the pace of work. This is because they explain, give illustrations to exemplify the work needed and ensure that pupils complete the tasks that teachers set.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are very much at ease in their school with each other and with their teachers. Pupils work hard, and demonstrate maturity and self-discipline when learning. As a result, they achieve well and understand what they need to do to reach their personal goals.
- Pupils see the school as a safe place where they are happy. It is typical to see pupils playing a range of games in a friendly manner. Pupils know that every day, the staff place a high priority on their personal development. Staff are highly visible in the playground and around the school and their presence assures pupils that they are safe.
- Pupils understand the importance of protecting themselves when online. Teachers cover a wide range of appropriate and relevant topics on e-safety in assemblies, during tutorial time and in subject teaching. Pupils are very much aware of the potential consequences of inappropriate use of social media.
- Across the key stages, pupils are keen to succeed and talk knowledgeably about their 'baseline assessment' starting points and the targets they need to meet in order to be successful. They are aware of what they need to do to become even better learners.
- Pupils are proud of the choice of school they have selected to attend. Pupils who have been selected to be STEM or STEAM ambassadors enthusiastically seek to reflect and promote the school's aims. Pupils say that their decision to attend the school was influenced by their desire to go on to study at university.
- Pupils respect and support each other within this diverse school. They give back to the school community as library monitors, ambassadors and school councillors, supporting and representing the views of others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour is good in classes and during social times, and pupils' views and observation of pupils' movements around the school confirm this. Pupils do not feel the same about the behaviours of others that they see in the local area. They praise the school for reflecting their concerns about safety and behaviour in the curriculum and providing support that is timely and helpful.
- Pupils exercise self-discipline and quickly regulate their behaviour. Pupils like the new behaviour policy, which they say is handled well. They also respect and listen to their teachers when they correct their behaviour.
- Pupils are emphatic that there is little or no bullying in their school. They told inspectors that, 'even if there is a glimpse of it, it will not be repeated and it is dealt with quickly'. Incidents of bullying are not prevalent and pupils are assured that unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated. They have a good understanding of the different types of discriminatory practices that people are likely to face if they are seen as different. This is primarily because the curriculum gives them a good understanding of prejudice-based behaviours.

- Pupils requiring support to improve their behaviour are responsive to the mentors who work with and guide them. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour is low. The school has not had any exclusions since opening.
- Attendance is well above average, and testifies to pupils feeling safe and secure in their school. Targeted actions have led to improvement in the attendance of the few pupils who do not attend regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress across the curriculum is good in almost all subject areas. They make strong progress to develop skills in line those others nationally.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong and consistent, as it is in science. It is rapid in the creative arts, including music, art and drama. Pupils make good progress in the humanities and in Spanish, the main modern foreign language taught. The few pupils learning Mandarin make typically good progress.
- Pupils in general make good progress in computer science, engineering and product design. Leaders have taken robust action to address a recent glitch in pupils' performance.
- The school's high expectations of what pupils could achieve based on their current rates of progress indicate that most of the first cohort will be entered for at least 10 GCSE subjects. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' progress to be in the top 25% of schools nationally. Under the new leadership team, leaders and governors have high expectations that pupils will sustain the strongly improving rates of progress.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Progress is strongest in Year 7 in almost all subjects, particularly in mathematics and science. When the school opened, pupils made slower progress in English from their starting points. Weaknesses in basic reading skills, high staff turnover and lack of planning affected pupils' progress. Leaders have now started to tackle these shortcomings in English very well. As a result, pupils are making better progress in the subject.
- The school's assessment information shows that the large majority of the most able pupils make above-average progress. Nevertheless, scrutiny of work across all subjects taught in key stage 3 indicates that pupils require further work to strengthen their understanding of the skills they are learning. Pupils explained to inspectors that generally they are given demanding work in mathematics. Pupils' work across the curriculum shows that they are suitably challenged. This is because there is more focus on teachers having high expectations of teaching and learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, achieve similar outcomes to their peers in the school. The school's records show that in Year 7, disadvantaged pupils make slightly faster progress than other pupils.
- Targeted use of additional funding supports disadvantaged pupils' learning effectively, particularly in ensuring that they develop good basic core skills in numeracy and literacy that they use in other curriculum subjects.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers in Year 7 but achieve slightly below others in Years 8 and 9. Changes to the way in which pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified and supported are helping them to make better progress than in the past.
- In the past, girls outperformed boys in all subjects, particularly in Years 7 and 9. However, the differences in their performance in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, are now closing quickly.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including pupils who speak English as an additional language, achieve well across the curriculum.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students benefit from high-quality teaching which supports and challenges them to make good progress from their starting points. Evidence from students' work and visits to classes indicate that the school's self-evaluation of the sixth form is accurate.
- Assessment information measuring students' learning, discussions with a group of students and scrutiny of their work show that most are on target to achieve their predicted grades. Careful selection of courses confirms that the different pathways offered are suitably matched to the needs of students.
- Students in the new sixth form selected the school because of the specialist provision and link to South Bank University. The curriculum meets the needs of the students who need to improve their GCSE grades in mathematics and English. The curriculum is set to extend beyond the subjects currently offered with courses such as philosophy and ethics, economics and other level 3 vocational subjects.
- Students make good use of catch-up sessions for students who fall behind. Subject leaders and other staff use interventions such as one-to-one support and extended subject-specific work sessions during their 'free lessons' to give tutorials which students appreciate.
- Students are self-assured and recognise their position as role models for younger pupils who aspire to enter the sixth form. Through students' exemplary attitudes and behaviour, and their multiple roles as supervisors, community leaders and mentors in lessons, they have set high standards of conduct for younger pupils to follow.
- Students access a good range of work experience that gives them insight into the workplace. Initial preparation for university is thorough and includes guidance on the application process, as well as careers advice and guidance from visiting speakers.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good and the members of the new team work well together. Leaders are committed to reviewing and monitoring students' achievement regularly to identify and make improvements to the provision.

School details

Unique reference number	140221
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10031659

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	389
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	27
Appropriate authority	South Bank Academies Multi Academies Trust
Chair	Rao Bhamidimarri
Principal	Gary Nelson
Telephone number	020 7277 3000
Website	www.uaesouthbank.org.uk
Email address	office@uaesouthbank.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2010

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This relatively new school opened in September 2014, with the first cohort of 93 pupils in Year 7. Currently, there are four year groups in the school, Years 7, 8 and 9 in key stage 3, and 29 students in Year 12. A new cohort will continue to join the school each academic year. The school's capacity is 900 pupils, including 300 in the sixth form.

- The school currently has a higher proportion of boys than girls in all year groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not work with an alternative provider.
- More pupils than usual join the school at different times throughout the academic year.
- As a new school, the first GCSE examinations will be taken in 2019. The current Year 12 cohort will take AS-level examinations in June 2017.
- The first principal left the school in September 2016. At that time, the trust's chief education officer took over the vacant position until the trust and governors appointed an interim principal in October 2016 for one academic year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 part-lessons, some with senior leaders, across the three key stages.
- Meetings were held with the principal, other senior and middle leaders, the chief education officer from the trust and one other governor, and a senior adviser from the Department for Education. The inspectors held discussions with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took into account the views of the 10 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and to the eight free-text responses that parents submitted online. The school's own survey of parents' views was also taken into consideration.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, records and assessment information showing pupils' progress, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, the curriculum and reports sent to parents.

Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vikram Gukhool	Ofsted Inspector
Pat Slonecki	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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