
CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	UCL ACADEMY
School Address:	Adelaide Road, Camden, London, NW3 3AD
Hub School:	London West Hub (Lampton School)

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Unique Reference Number:	137181
Local Authority:	Camden
Type of School:	Secondary
School Category:	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Number on roll:	697 including 160 in the Sixth Form
Head teacher/Principal:	Geraldine Davies

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	15-16 May 2014
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Requires Improvement

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	13-15 May 2015
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES

School Improvement Strategies: GOOD

Achievement is: GOOD

Quality of Teaching: GOOD

Area of Excellent Practice:

ENGLISH CONFIRMED

CONNECTED CURRICULUM CONFIRMED

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that UCL Academy appears to have moved beyond the Requires Improvement grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report 15-16 May 2014 and is working at the top of the Good grade.

Information about the school

The UCL Academy opened in September 2012. It is sponsored by University College London. The academy currently has students in Years 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13. Students in years 7,8 and 9 follow the International Middle Years Curriculum. Students in the sixth form follow academic pathways with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school because it currently does not have students in all year groups. The proportion of students supported at school action is much smaller than the national average, while those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with national averages. The academy admits students from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds; nearly three-quarters of the students in the Foundation group speak English as an additional language. Just over half of the students are eligible for pupil premium funding. The school is heavily over-subscribed with over one thousand applications for the one hundred and eighty places available annually.

The Review Team acknowledges the phenomenal effort and attention given by the academy to the areas for improvement from the last Ofsted inspection and praises the dynamic leadership team, led by the visionary Principal, for the undoubted progress that has been made.

School Improvement Strategies

What Went Well;-

- School performance data shows that students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are making strong progress and that significant work has been achieved in closing gaps for students with special needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding. There has also been good progress made by gifted and talented students.
- The first cohort of A2 students achieved impressive results and showed a marked improvement on the AS results achieved by the same cohort the year before. Sixth form students receive differentiated support triggered by their progress in relation to the targets set for them.
- Marking is regular and shows strong evidence of assessment for learning. Some marking is exemplary showing student teacher dialogue and students then improving their work as a result of the feedback they received.

- Teachers' planning is detailed and shows evidence of understanding the needs of individual students.
- Intervention to raise the standard of teaching is strongly evident with a range of programmes and interventions to support the development of teachers; improvements are closely monitored.
- Leadership and development programmes are being operated for senior leadership, middle leadership, NQT+1 and NQT staff in order to develop their effectiveness.
- Pupil premium funding and its impact is closely tracked and monitored and is adapted if needed. A personalised approach to supporting student needs has been adopted as part of a '3 wave' intervention approach.
- Student tracking and monitoring is regular and rigorous and accountability for student achievement lies with the class teacher and is, in turn, monitored closely by the ALT, the academic and intervention boards and the SLT.
- Rewards are allocated to students for having met one or more of the ten learner attributes that the academy has identified. These are monitored to gauge how effectively these qualities are being taught and promoted.
- Extensive use is made of external verification of standards.

Even Better If:-

- ...there was greater consistency and embedding of best practice.

Pupil Achievement

The academy's new and innovative Key Stage 3 Assessment model underpins the tracking of progress across the Key Stage. Whilst the absence of Key Stage 4 results means the ultimate external judgement on outcomes is not yet available, the school is aware of the need to justify their Key Stage 3 progress figures and a wide programme of standardisation and moderation is in place.

The threshold-based model of assessment has meant that the tracking system is clearly linked to planning and teaching in the classroom. Senior leaders and middle leaders have absolute clarity on the strengths and areas for development in student progress. Systems for classroom teachers and then Curriculum Leaders to monitor student progress are in place on a half termly basis and the nature of the assessment model means any intervention is directly related to gaps in learning and

the “I can...” statements. One middle leader described assessment at the school as “authentic.”

Previously identified underachieving groups are now making good progress. The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is closing and disappearing in some areas, such as at Foundation and L1+ level (equivalent to Key Stage 3.)

A small number of students with statements are being tracked closely in Level 1+ and this is an area of focus for the school.

The challenge for the most able students has been augmented by the introduction of an extended-plus trajectory in Science and English, and students in this group are also making better progress than their peers. The school is aware of a trend of boys performing less well than girls in L1 and intervention is in place and closely tracked.

Assessments reference National benchmarks and early predictors for GCSE suggest a 5A*-CEM pass rate of 94% for English and for mathematics for current L1+ students. This would represent quite outstanding results, even for a Sig+ intake, and all indicators show progress is strong. The challenge for the school is to continue to standardise these progress measures as students move through Key Stage 4.

The school is well prepared for Progress 8, as all students will start on a programme of 9 GCSE’s, which fill the ‘P8 buckets’.

Sixth Form

ALPS data for last year’s A2 cohort was rated a 3 and the top 25% value added, which is a dramatic recovery from the disappointing AS results the year before. These results are driven by strong performance, and larger entries, in the STEM subjects at both AS and A2. In-school variance is still an issue across subjects and the school has put in support to address this. An awareness of the lower attainment at AS level has resulted in plans for an improved induction process and entry requirements have been raised.

Quality of Teaching

Taking account of the full range of evidence, the overall quality of teaching was judged to be Good. 14 lessons were observed; 6 in Foundation, 2 in Level 1, 5 in Level 1+ and 1 in Level 3, together with a detailed work scrutiny and an enjoyable student voice meeting. The Leadership Team are experienced observers, leading a culture of learning that develops reflective practitioners who are committed to their own professional learning; the links with UCL are delivering a unique opportunity for teachers as learners themselves.

Development of the new Teacher Professional Improvement Programme, tied into Appraisal and integrated with intensive weekly Continuing Professional Learning, which is responsive to observation and learning walk feedback, is impacting very positively on teaching practice. 50% of teachers are now enrolled in the coaching programme and all are in triad research groups. This tangible drive to improve teaching is having a powerful influence on classroom practice.

The judgements of senior leader observers in the review consistently agreed with those of the review team.

What Went Well;-

- Students are confident, polite and collaborate highly effectively with each other in their learning - this can deepen learning and reflects excellent habit-forming routines. Students are a credit to the school and its ethos.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and inspires students. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive - this creates a great classroom climate for learning. Student feedback confirms this is typical.
- Student engagement is strong, supporting the impact of whole school development work on the 'wheel of fabulous learning'. Differentiation, at its best, has a marked impact on student progress.
- Feedback in students' books is, in the best cases, exemplary, having a marked impact on student progress. There is evidence of developing whole school feedback strategies.
- Questioning is frequently skilful and challenging, and in some outstanding examples, prompts whole class thinking.
- Learning intentions are usually well pitched and shared with students. The use of "I can' statements" is starting to deepen students' learning.

Even Better If;-

- ...while there is evidence of whole school feedback policy developing in most student work, feedback loops between teacher comments and student self assessment, and the use of follow up time strategies, were embedded consistently across all subject areas.
- ...students were more familiar with what they are currently doing well and what they had to do to improve further - the embedding of 'I can' statements into planning and AFL would deepen learning further.
- ...best practice in differentiation for less able and more able students was shared to embed personalisation for these sub-groups consistently and effectively in all lessons.

With further embedded AFL, the highly established routines, behaviours and expectations create an exciting platform for the deepest learning to take place. Sharing best practice in differentiated, challenging and base-lined learning intentions, and within lesson concept checking, would embed this.

Quality of Area of Excellent Practice

ENGLISH

The English Faculty is well led and driven by creativity and the desire to develop the most successful learning experiences for the students in the academy. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is assessed through 'I can statements' which have been successfully embedded into the work of staff and students. Student feedback on this approach is extremely positive and shows a comprehensive and innovative response to the challenge that assessment without levels poses. This approach to assessment has been moderated and validated by a number of external organisations in addition to the academy's internal processes. The faculty has also been instrumental in leading the academy's focus on improving the teaching of writing and this has involved close examination and analysis of the writing of students across the subjects that they study. Recommendations for improving writing have then been created for each faculty and, for some, on a student-by-student basis. Combined with close monitoring this approach is securing rapid improvement of the teaching of writing across the academy and of teacher and student expectations of the standard of student writing. In addition, the faculty have also initiated 'entry point' teaching in order to spark student interest in complex and challenging material at the start of a new unit of study. This has taken

the form, for example, of creating an immersive Victorian schoolhouse experience for 90 students, utilising teachers in role. This is clearly a forward-thinking, creative and innovative faculty, which is driving standards across the academy and this definitely confirms English as an area of excellent practice.

CONNECTED CURRICULUM

UCL Academy's embedded Connected Curriculum is an inspirational and innovative fusion of curriculum and vision that other schools have much to learn from – it is a clear Area of Excellence.

The Academy is determined that their Connected Curriculum should embody the learning vision of the school, supporting all students in making links and encouraging deeper learning. Developed in conjunction with UCL and the International Middle Years Curriculum, this curriculum has now been further personalised at Foundation through to Level 1+ around 6 broadly thematic 'big ideas' integrated into "I can" statements. At Level 2 the Connected Curriculum continues around 6 connected 'grand challenges' in collaboration with UCL, along with termly study skills and PHSCE foci, and this is further developed at Level 3 with academic lectures and University mentors.

The Connected Curriculum is highly successful in developing learners with the widest skills sets; this is consolidated in timetabled reflective journaling lessons and will be further developed to incorporate assessment of the learner attributes it embeds. It is supported by explicit entry and exit points for each connected 'idea' and significant time is allocated for teacher collaboration and curriculum planning. Impact is measured in curriculum area outcomes and the developing learner profile of Academy students.

Partnerships

Understandably, the academy enjoys a terrifically supportive partnership with their sponsor, University College, London, although the relationship is reciprocal, and the university has gained enormously from their links with the academy. Staff from both institutions work collaboratively, with those from the university being used aspirationally with the academy's students. Staff at the academy have unlimited access to opportunities for self-development, and are also able to utilize the unrivalled facilities and libraries at the university, which truly enriches the curriculum. An example of this is in establishing Astronomy on the forthcoming

Level 2 and 3 curricula. All students at the academy spend their first two days based at the university, and have subsequent visits throughout their time at the academy, inspiring them to strive for higher education places. A Level students at the academy benefit from lectures from the university's tutors, boosting their chances on their chosen courses. There is a valuable mentoring scheme where undergraduates are trained to work alongside main school and Sixth Form students to support their learning. Additionally, there are Learning Companions from the university assigned to work with Level 3 gifted and talented students, providing them with the stretch and challenge they require. On a lighter note, the university has also developed cheerleading in the academy as well as giving support to the staging of musicals. To ensure everyone connected with the academy has access to the university, they have arranged a "Take Your Parents to UCL Day", which was well attended.

UCL Academy has a valuable relationship with The Winch; a local group that was originally conceived as a youth centre but is very community-focused. Not only do they offer end-of-day activities for the students, they have provided safeguarding advice to the academy and have supported students who may be deemed at risk or who are from challenging home backgrounds. The academy plays an increasingly important role within Challenge Partners, only this week hosting the prestigious meeting for Senior Leaders and Hub Managers. They have worked effectively in the West London Alliance, having received valuable leadership support but also contributing their unique ideas and philosophies, from which they have gained very positive feedback.

The academy has close links with Tottenham Hotspur Football Club as part of their development programme. The club has worked with able boy footballers and also targeted pupil premium students to motivate them. Future plans will see them coming in to the academy to work with girl footballers and sixth form students. This partnership forms part of the academy's "Encounters with Excellence" programme, as does the use of dance professionals, lectures and external speakers providing workshops. The academy meticulously tracks these initiatives so that they can fill any gaps in the students' experiences. They have a novel "17 By 17" scheme, offering seventeen valuable activities and experiences they hope all students will enjoy before they reach seventeen years of age.

Links with the NSPCC have proved valuable, assisting with safeguarding, child protection and pastoral care policy-making. The academy has been highly praised by the Society for their work on the prevention of radicalization and their promotion of British values. Lastly, the academy is quick to acknowledge their close association with the Borough of Camden. UCL Academy sees itself as a major part of the "family

of schools” within the borough, where they enjoy the positive relationships locally and the mutually supportive network of schools.

This is just a brief version of all of the academy’s partnerships and associations but goes some way to giving a flavour of the unique opportunities and activities on offer to all students and contributes to their enviable success.

This review will support the school’s continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school’s hub in order that it can inform future activities.

What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Structures for supporting students with additional learning needs.

Alternative curriculum provision.