

South Bank University Sixth Form

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 150380

Name of lead inspector: Claudia Harrison, His Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 February 2025

Type of provider: 16-19 academy sponsor led

Address: 56 Brixton Hill
London
SW2 1QS

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Ofsted undertakes to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of education programmes for young people within the further education and skills sector. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

South Bank University Sixth Form opened as a 16-19 academy in September 2023. It is part of the London South Bank Academies multi-academy trust. The academy teaches education programmes for young people to around 300 students. Approximately 210 students study level 3 programmes, selecting one of three pathways – engineering, health or business and finance. Of these, around 160 study applied general courses, 30 study a T-level course and 20 students study mathematics and/or science A levels. Around 90 students study a level 2 foundation programme consisting of a level 2 vocational subject (engineering, health or business) alongside mathematics and/or English GCSE resit courses.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant education programmes that have a clearly defined purpose? Reasonable progress

Governors and leaders work very well with their partner organisations and employers to develop and teach an innovative technical, skills-based curriculum. For example, leaders work closely with NHS trusts to inform the design of their Health T-level curriculum and resources. Leaders have designed study programmes that provide clear pathways for students to progress within the sixth form and its partners or to move on to university or higher apprenticeships. The curriculum meets the demands of students and regional employers for high quality technical education in engineering, health and business.

Following a period in their first year of high leadership and teaching staff turnover, a new leadership team has rightly had a strong focus on recruiting suitable teachers. They have also introduced an excellent professional development programme to assess and support new and existing teachers to develop their practice quickly. Students benefit because they learn new skills and knowledge from teachers who are subject experts with an enthusiastic interest in teaching.

In the first academic year, leaders were too slow to establish sustainable systems to monitor how well students were making progress. Since September 2024, leaders

and managers have developed effective methods for identifying and supporting learners at risk of falling behind. Leaders have robust plans in place to continue to improve the quality of their monitoring systems.

Leaders and managers have implemented effective systems and practices to support students with barriers to learning, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teaching and learning support staff understand well which students need specialist support and how best to help them in the classroom. As a result, students with SEND make as much progress as their peers.

Leaders and managers include high quality, impartial, careers advice and guidance in the curriculum. Careers and vocational staff have established useful relationships with external stakeholders who provide high quality work placements and other careers activities that enhance the student experience. Students have the guidance they need to make informed decisions about their futures.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that students benefit from high-quality education programmes for young people that prepare them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress

Managers and teachers plan their curriculums well. In level 3 engineering, for example, they teach students key mathematical principles such as the product rule and quotient rule before setting practical assignments where students use this knowledge to calculate the maximum volume of a 3D box. Students learn considerable new skills and knowledge that they apply well to future learning.

In most subjects, leaders and managers establish the starting points of students accurately and use this information well to plan their teaching. For example, in English GCSE, teachers set carefully considered examinations to identify in which topics students need the most help. They adapt the curriculum where needed to emphasise and recap areas that students find difficult.

Teachers make effective use of a range of methods to teach students new knowledge and check that they understand it. For example, engineering teachers use targeted questions well to prompt students to explain the characteristics of several types of plastics using technical vocabulary. Teachers have an accurate understanding of which students understand and remember key terms and who needs further support.

In most subjects, teachers provide useful guidance to help students to improve their work and aim for higher grades. Students use this feedback to make corrections to their work, which improves rapidly in quality over time. Level 3 vocational and T-level students achieve high grades in their examinations. They are qualified to choose

from a range of positive destinations such as degree apprenticeships. However, too few level 2 students who need to take English and/or mathematics GCSE as part of their study programme improve their grades. These students have had fewer choices about their future education. Leaders and managers have taken positive steps to improve the number of students who achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics.

Staff prepare students well for their next steps. They encourage students to participate in activities such as volunteering in the community, taking part in skills awards, and setting up their own business. Students develop important employability and life skills linked to their curriculum pathway quickly.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers foster a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are suitably trained and know their students well. They identify concerns and report them quickly. Expert safeguarding staff provide students with effective support and make effective use of external agencies when necessary.

Staff teach students well about local risks such as knife crime. Students remember the precautions they should take to stay safe. Staff have not taught students well enough about the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Students' knowledge is less secure in this area. Leaders recognise this and plan to make greater use of local expertise to reinforce students' knowledge and understanding.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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