

The Crest Girls' Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135973
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	381995
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Linda McGill HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	927
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hall
Headteacher	Bev Bell
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Crest Road London NW2 7SN
Telephone number	020 8452 4842
Fax number	020 8452 6024
Email address	staff@thecrestgirlsacademy.org.uk

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	21–22 September 2011
Inspection number	381995

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 35 parts of lessons taught by 35 different teachers, and two assemblies. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, other members of staff, groups of students, members of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and a representative of the academy's sponsor. The team observed the academy's work and looked at a wide range of documents, including information about students' attainment, progress and attendance, policies and procedures, minutes of meetings and the academy's plans for improvement. The questionnaires returned by 375 parents and carers were scrutinised, along with others completed by students and members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors investigated the reasons why students make slower progress in mathematics than they do in English.
- Inspectors evaluated whether all teachers use assessment information equally effectively to adjust tasks and activities so that all students, in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make the best possible progress.
- The inspection team evaluated the impact of steps taken to bring about greater consistency in the quality of teaching within and across different subjects.
- The inspection team considered the effectiveness of steps taken to reduce the number of students who are frequently absent.

Information about the school

The Crest Girls' Academy opened in September 2009 in the buildings of its predecessor school. It shares a site with The Crest Boys' Academy and sixth-form provision is made jointly. Both academies are sponsored by E-ACT, an educational charity. The academy is of average size. Its intake is exceptionally diverse; the students come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds with the largest groups being girls of Black African, Pakistani and Afghan heritage. Over 50 languages are spoken and four out of five girls speak English as an additional language. Over one third of the students have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is much higher than the national figure. Generally, their particular needs relate to learning, communication skills or behaviour. About half of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals, a proportion well-above average. Many more students than is usual leave or join the academy at different points throughout the year. A considerable number arrive without prior experience of education in England. The academy's specialisms are in modern foreign languages and technology. The academy was re-designated a training school in March 2011. In the past few months, 31 teachers and support staff have left the academy as a result of a restructuring exercise.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Crest Girls' Academy has achieved much in its first two years, as a result of strong, purposeful leadership and clear direction. It is satisfactory overall and there are important strengths in some aspects of its work. Foremost among them is the powerful sense of community within the academy. The students are clearly proud of their school and there is a high degree of mutual respect and affection among students and between students and staff.

Students' achievement is satisfactory. That judgement masks considerable variation between subjects, however. Over the past two years, students have made excellent progress in English and their attainment is in line with that of students nationally. In mathematics, however, progress was satisfactory in 2011 and students did not make up ground; their attainment at GCSE was low. That contributed to a small dip in the proportion of students who gained five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics and the rapid rate of improvement of the academy's first year was not sustained. Tackling the wide gap in attainment between English and mathematics is, rightly, one of the academy's key priorities. Students make good progress and attain well in modern foreign languages. Results in technology, the academy's other specialism, improved well in 2011, but did not match those in languages. The academy's current assessments show that attainment is rising and that students are making better progress in mathematics; more students are on track to attain five GCSEs at higher grades than at this time last year.

Teaching is satisfactory and is improving well, but some inconsistencies remain. For example, teaching in English is almost always good or outstanding, but teaching in mathematics is more often satisfactory and so the gap in attainment between the academy's students and the national average is not closing rapidly. In addition, planned opportunities for students to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects are neither regular nor systematic. The academy's strategies to increase the proportion of good and better teaching have made a substantial difference, but there is still a way to go before it is consistently good across all subjects. The academy collects and analyses a good deal of information about the attainment and progress of different groups of students and takes effective steps to ensure that no particular group falls behind. That ensures that students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are eligible for free school meals or who speak English as an additional language make progress at the same satisfactory rate as their classmates. Variations occur between subjects, not between different groups of students.

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

Students' behaviour is good. Students respond enthusiastically to good teaching and have positive attitudes to learning; when teaching engages them fully, their behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Well-targeted efforts have led to a reduction in the number of students who are persistently absent.

Decisive and supportive leadership from the Principal and other leaders has ensured that the academy emerged from a difficult period of staffing changes well placed to build on what has been achieved already. Morale is good. Areas of strength and relative weakness are well known and the academy's plans for improvement are well considered and appropriately focused. Systems for monitoring and evaluating performance are thorough and the governing body's arrangements for holding the academy's leaders to account are robust. The sponsor's regular evaluations of the academy's performance are forthright. All of those aspects, together with the track record of improvement since the academy opened two years ago, mean that the academy's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment and boost students' progress in all subjects, especially mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - identify clearly in their plans what students are to learn in lessons, as well as what they will do
 - provide tasks and activities that are tailored closely to students' learning needs and their prior attainment
 - ensure that the more-able students do not mark time, but are challenged from the outset in lessons
 - plan interesting and engaging tasks that encourage students' active participation
 - probe more deeply students' understanding of what they are learning during lessons
 - include frequent opportunities for students to discuss their ideas and explain their thinking.

- Improve students' basic skills in mathematics by providing more frequent opportunities for them to use and apply their numeracy skills in different subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment on entry to the academy is well-below average overall,

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

although there is a wide range of attainment within each year group. Where the teaching inspires them, the students are keen learners. For example, in a drama lesson, students cooperated well as they tried to form letters with their bodies. One said ‘I really enjoyed this lesson. We can work together on our ideas.’ In a science lesson, students discussed their thinking and worked together well to devise an investigation to explore how heat is conducted. When teaching is satisfactory, students have fewer opportunities to explain their reasoning or to work collaboratively. They work steadily and complete their tasks, but without that spark of enthusiasm that shows clearly in better lessons. Students who speak English as an additional language and those who are recent arrivals in the academy and the country receive good support from staff and from their fellow students, which helps them make good progress in learning English and promotes their learning in other subjects. Appropriately targeted help and guidance for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that they make similar progress to their classmates.

Students make a good contribution to school life and the ‘junior leadership team’ is a good vehicle for students’ views. Students are confident that their ideas will be listened to. They report that they feel very safe in the academy. Year 7 students confirmed that their anxieties about starting secondary school were ill-founded; they valued the support of older students and, in particular, the mixed-age tutor groups and had settled in quickly. All groups of students reported that bullying is very rare and that, if any were to occur, it would be dealt with swiftly. Students take part enthusiastically in sport and physical activities, both in lessons and in extra-curricular clubs and activities, and they have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. All groups of students get on together very well and respect one another’s cultures and traditions. One student said ‘The beauty of this school is in the mix.’ Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance levels are broadly average. There are strengths in the students’ understanding of teamwork, the world of work and their skills in English, but their preparedness for the next stage of their education or working life is hampered by their weaker basic skills in mathematics.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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 extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers pay close attention to students' prior attainment when planning lessons and consistently identify specific outcomes for different groups. Detailed plans show clearly how the lesson will progress and how particular groups or individuals will be supported. A weakness in some plans, however, is that all students begin from a similar starting point. That means that more-able students mark time while they complete tasks that are insufficiently challenging. Some plans focus more on what students will do, rather than what they will learn. As lessons progress, there is sometimes more emphasis on completing tasks, rather than checking that students understand fully what they are doing and why and probing their underpinning knowledge. For example, in a geography lesson, students talked about the conditions in Antarctica, but some did not know where Antarctica is located. In a mathematics lesson, students converted improper fractions to mixed numbers successfully using a practical method to help them, but some did not understand fully the mathematical reasoning behind the tasks. Occasionally, tasks and activities do not enthuse or engage the students fully, who become passive and compliant, rather than active learners. Relationships between teachers and students are good and there is a positive working atmosphere in lessons. A brisk pace, attention to what students are learning as well as what they are doing, strong subject knowledge and a sense of fun and enjoyment on both sides are characteristics of the more-effective teaching.

The curriculum meets students' needs and contributes well to improvements in learning and progress, although the full impact has yet to show in the academy's examination results. There is a good range of academic and vocational 'pathways', and working in partnership with external providers to extend students' opportunities is a particular strength. Students can study a wide range of modern foreign languages, which has a positive impact on their achievement. The impact of the specialism in technology is growing, but is not as strong. There is a very wide range of sporting, recreational and academic activities after school. Take-up is good and contributes well to students' personal development.

Individual students are well known and the academy goes to great lengths to support those who are potentially vulnerable. Considerable successes have been achieved with individual students who have been helped through difficult times, minimising the impact on their learning and achievement. The needs of students who arrive at different times throughout the year are assessed quickly and appropriate provision made if needed. The academy's inclusive approach and clear procedures

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

for managing behaviour have led to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions, which are now infrequent occurrences. Good links with many primary schools help smooth transition into Year 7 and transition to sixth form and beyond is managed well. Very few students do not go on into education, employment or training. The academy tracks the attendance of every student and takes swift action if there are any unexplained absences. Attendance levels are rising, albeit slowly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff at all levels share in the drive for improvement that stems from the common vision of senior leaders, the governing body and the sponsor. The Principal embodies this drive; she is a constant presence around the academy and her high expectations are infectious. She is approachable; students said that they would have no hesitation in coming to her with a suggestion or idea. The recent restructuring process and consequent reduction in staffing levels were managed well and have brought greater certainty and financial stability.

The academy's rigorous cycle of monitoring and review gives leaders a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Well-targeted efforts to increase the proportion of good and better teaching have had a good impact; teaching is improving securely and the academy is well placed to spread good practice from within. The academy works well with its partners to broaden the skills and expertise of teachers alongside those of students. The academy's leaders are held to account by both the governing body and the sponsor, which means that areas of strength and relative weakness are spotted quickly. Members of the governing body take a close interest in the academy's work and make a good contribution to its strategic direction. The governing body is meticulous in ensuring that statutory responsibilities for keeping students safe are met. Procedures for protecting students are thorough, well known and effective. Students' performance is tracked and analysed scrupulously and the academy's efforts ensure that there are no gaps between the outcomes for different groups. All groups achieve equally in their learning and their personal development is particularly strong. Discrimination is not tolerated.

The academy is a cohesive community where students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences get on together very well. Steps to ensure consistently good behaviour on buses when students from both academies leave at the end of the day have met with some success and have improved the public perception of the

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

academies’ students. Links with a school in Sierra Leone and with a contrasting partner school in London enhance students’ understanding of life in different communities. The academy takes steps to engage with different groups of parents and carers and to seek their views; relationships are positive.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The sixth form offers a broad range of academic and vocational courses that are well matched to students’ needs and abilities. As a result, around three quarters of the students transfer to the sixth form after Year 11. Retention rates from AS-level to A-level are good with very few students choosing to leave the courses they have started. The attainment of students at A-level is rising steadily, but remains below the national average. Taken overall, students make satisfactory progress from their varying starting points. However, there is a substantial variation in achievement between subjects. For example, progress is generally good in some subjects, such as applied business studies, English and psychology, but is weaker in others, such as chemistry, biology and mathematics. That, as in the main school, is attributable mainly to the variations in the quality of teaching. In the last academic year, students’ attendance was below expected levels. Sensible steps have been taken to improve attendance this year and the positive impact of this action is just beginning to be seen. Students take an interest in world events and are involved in a number of charitable and fund-raising activities, including Islamic Relief and Comic Relief.

The recently appointed assistant principal is driving improvements with enthusiasm and energy. Greater rigour has been brought to systems for monitoring students’ progress and the quality of provision. The systems are beginning to have an impact on outcomes for students, but the full effect is yet to be realised.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A substantial proportion of parents and carers returned a questionnaire. The very large majority indicated that they are happy with their children’s experiences at the academy and that their children enjoy school. The few written comments from parents and carers were almost all concerned with instances of unacceptable behaviour outside the academy’s gates. That concern appears to be reflected also in the response to the question about behaviour, where just under one third of parents and carers do not agree that the academy deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that students’ behaviour in lessons and around the buildings is almost always good. Procedures to deal with unacceptable behaviour are well known and effective. The academy’s leaders are acutely aware of tensions that have arisen between different groups outside the gates and have taken effective steps to deal with the situation. Students reported that the end of the day is calm and orderly now. A small minority of respondents does not believe that the academy takes sufficient account of their views and concerns. They feel also that their children are not encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle and that they are not helped to support their children’s learning. The inspection team found that surveys of parents and carers’ views are conducted regularly and the results analysed carefully. The inspection team found also that students have ample opportunities for physical activity and that school lunches are nutritionally balanced. The academy involves parents and carers in their children’s learning in a number of productive ways, but staff acknowledge that more could be done to ensure they engage fully with all groups of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Crest Girls 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 375 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 927 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	27	232	62	32	9	7	2
The school keeps my child safe	90	24	240	64	33	9	7	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	104	28	202	54	47	13	9	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	76	20	218	58	52	14	6	2
The teaching is good at this school	76	20	220	59	56	15	6	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	77	21	201	54	64	17	11	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	16	209	56	72	19	16	4
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)	86	23	221	59	41	11	7	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	61	16	212	57	69	18	9	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	84	22	167	45	69	18	33	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	13	199	53	71	19	20	5
The school is led and managed effectively	77	21	199	53	61	16	12	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	109	29	193	51	49	13	14	4

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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



23 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Crest Girls' Academy, London, NW2 7SN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited recently. We enjoyed talking to you particularly and were impressed by your confidence, thoughtfulness and how well you express yourselves. Your views were very helpful to us and contributed to the evidence that we collected during the inspection. During the two days, several of you asked me what I thought of the academy. The headlines are in this letter but I hope that you will look at the whole report, which is available on the internet at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The academy provides you with a satisfactory education, including in the sixth form, but it does some things better than others. For example, you make swift progress and reach the same standards as other students across England in English, but you make slower progress and do not do as well in mathematics. We have set out in the main report a list of things that teachers need to do in order for you to make the best possible progress in all subjects. It includes making sure that everybody is challenged in lessons from the very start and that teachers check that you fully understand before moving on. We have also asked that you be given more opportunities to use and apply your mathematical skills in other subjects.

Other very positive things include your good behaviour, the way students from all backgrounds get on so well together and how you respect one another and your teachers. The academy supports individual students very well, especially during difficult times. You can help the academy to make further improvements by continuing to work hard in lessons and by making sure that your attendance is as good as it can be.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**