

City of London Academy (Southwark)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134222
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	381636
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1095
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Fraser
Headteacher	Richard Bannister (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2009
School address	240 Lynton Road London SE1 5LA
Telephone number	020 7394 5100
Fax number	020 7394 5101
Email address	info@cityacademy.co.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed a variety of learning activities including 37 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. Meetings were held with the governing body, members of staff and various groups of students. In addition, inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at various policy documents including evidence of its self-evaluation. They considered the responses from student and staff questionnaires and 56 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

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

- How successful has the academy been in improving attainment for all students and are such improvements sustainable?
- How well has the curriculum been developed to meet the needs of different groups of students and have such changes led to a rise in attainment?
- How adequately does the small but quickly growing sixth form meet the needs of the students?

Information about the school

The academy is an average-sized secondary school sponsored by the City of London and has specialisms in business and enterprise, and sport. In 2008 the first cohort of students took GCSE examinations. The academy mainly recruits students from its immediate locality. The student population reflects the academy's immediate inner city catchment: just under half the students are of White British heritage, with many other ethnic groups represented, including significant proportions of African and Caribbean heritage. A well-above-average proportion of students have a first language other than English, though few are at the early stages of learning English. Many other indicators are also well above national average figures: 33% of students are entitled to free school meals, 37% have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and approximately 4% have a statement of additional need. The academy provides for a range of special educational needs and disabilities, including specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and hearing impairment. The academy has a specialist hearing impairment unit, though at the time of the inspection the number in attendance was very low. The academy has gained Healthy School status. Its work in sport, careers and developing international educational partnerships has also been recognised through external validations.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The academy provides a good education. Aspects of its provision, particularly leadership, the care, guidance and support for students, partnership work and the work undertaken with parents and carers, are outstanding. The academy's results show sustained improvement. The inspirational leadership of the principal, supported by an excellent management team, contributes to high student and staff morale. This is a happy school with a strong desire to improve further.

Teaching and learning are good. Attainment is average, but there has been a rising trend of improvement over the last three years. All groups of students are making good progress. Analysis of the performance of groups of students shows that those entitled to free school meals make outstanding progress. Hearing impaired students, along with all other students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Most students enter the academy with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy. Considerable emphasis is placed on improving literacy, but in the minority of lessons where learning is satisfactory rather than good, a common feature is that literacy is not being given sufficient priority. Another characteristic of these lessons is that teachers tend to spend too much time imparting information rather than encouraging the students to seek answers for themselves. Attainment in the sixth form is rising but is currently below average. Weaker aspects of sixth form teaching include inconsistencies in the marking and assessment of work. Some students fail to complete courses or struggle to gain a minimum pass grade, but the majority who successfully complete their courses make at least satisfactory progress.

The use of data and other information about students' performance and potential is good and as a consequence students are set appropriately ambitious targets. The way each student's academic performance is analysed is detailed and impressive. Staff know how all students are progressing, as well as the performance of identified groups of students. This good practice is helping to accelerate progress. The students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is outstanding and is reflected in the academy having National Healthy School status. In addition, most students participate in sport, either for fun or competitively. The provision made for students' personal, social and emotional development is outstanding and contributes well to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The academy's success as a specialist business and enterprise college is reflected in the good work to promote future economic well-being and in the partnerships that have been forged with the City of London. The contribution students make to the academy and the wider community is outstanding. Students take considerable responsibility. They have their own St John's

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Ambulance cadet force and this year will be taking part in the inauguration ceremony for the new Lord Mayor of London. Students told inspectors that they feel extremely safe and are cared for well. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Attendance has improved considerably and is now high. Behaviour has significantly improved. This is partly because of the consistent implementation of an improved behaviour policy, but also because of improvements in teaching and learning and the way lessons are managed. A far better and more varied curriculum is available and this has also contributed to significant improvements in attainment. Students are proud to be associated with an academy that they recognise is improving; they feel valued and respected. The principal and his staff team, who provide outstanding leadership and are supported by an outstanding governing body, have a strong and clear vision about how the academy will develop and improve further. This demonstrates the academy's good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more lessons feature good and outstanding learning by:
 - providing students with even more opportunities to work independently
 - ensuring greater consistency in developing students' literacy skills.
- Raise levels of achievement in the sixth form by:
 - further refining the advisory and tracking procedures to ensure that all students recruited onto A and AS Level courses have the levels of prior attainment and motivation necessary to secure success
 - ensuring consistency in the marking and assessment of students' work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In a large majority of lessons, learning is at least good. Learning is most effective when students are required to work independently or in small groups and where the pace is appropriate to their needs. Reflecting the quality of teaching, learning was good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, as well as in a range of other subjects including textiles, French, physical education and drama. Learning was outstanding in the latter because of the level of challenge and the enthusiasm and interest shown by the students. In the most successful lessons students make good progress because literacy skills are developed well and all students, including some who find writing difficult, are presented with realistic but challenging tasks. In a minority of lessons, although students' progress was satisfactory, literacy development was given insufficient emphasis, teacher exposition tended to dominate at the expense of independent learning and there were inconsistencies in questioning and the use of assessment.

The academy sets students challenging targets and monitors the progress of different groups extremely well. These robust procedures have contributed significantly to improved outcomes. All groups of students, including those with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those entitled to receive free school meals, make comparable rates of progress. An impressive feature of the academy’s outcomes is shown by the analysis of performance of different groups of students, all of which gain better GCSE results than expected based on prior attainment. Most students benefit from the extra support that is offered, including popular classes on Saturday mornings.

A safe and secure environment is provided and students are confident that staff will respond effectively to any concerns. Students’ behaviour in lessons was consistently good. Around the campus it was equally good, with most students displaying common sense and maturity. Students are encouraged to follow healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in high participation rates in sport, for example. Much emphasis is placed on developing their understanding of potential risks to their health and well-being. Most students are very proud of the academy and this is reflected in the contribution they make both to the academy and the local community. Students demonstrate a good understanding of the diversity of the United Kingdom and how other communities compare and contrast with their own. Their understanding of multiculturalism and moral and social issues, in particular, is developing very well; their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Students learn well because a majority of lessons are purposeful, challenging and enjoyable. Where learning is most effective, students are involved in a range of activities that are well matched to their interests and ability and they have scope to

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

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work independently. These lessons are characterised by a brisk pace with staff using questioning well to ensure that students can explain concepts or demonstrate their understanding. In such cases, students benefit from the good subject knowledge of the staff. Teachers’ expectations are usually high with students responding well. The assessment of students’ work is also good. In lessons judged satisfactory overall there were some of these strengths but also inconsistencies in developing literacy, a less exacting pace and a tendency on the part of the teacher to talk too much and provide answers too readily.

The curriculum is being continually evaluated and revised to meet the students’ needs. The current curriculum is good and has contributed towards a significant rise in the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at Grade C or above. In 2008 this figure was below the national average at 53%. In 2011, it was well above average at 98%. The changes have introduced wider choice including vocational educational while ensuring the continuation of a strong academic pathway. Enrichment provision is particularly strong. Sport is a key strength of the academy, but students are also offered plentiful opportunities to develop interests in the arts, or to participate in clubs and societies such as the St. John’s cadet force.

The academy’s systems to care for and support students are outstanding. The work of academy staff with families, students and a range of agencies to sustain the learning, personal development and well-being of individual students whose circumstances make them vulnerable is very strong. All students are valued. Improvements in attainment can also be attributed to the sterling work that has been undertaken to boost attendance. Attendance, including in the sixth form, is high and well in excess of the national average attendance figures. This remarkable outcome reflects very well on the commitment of staff to help and nurture all students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal provides a vision which is communicated clearly and effectively to staff, students, parents and carers. He and his strong senior leadership team show considerable commitment to obtaining the best outcomes for all groups of students. Morale is very high and all staff are committed to success for the academy. Detailed and accurate monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge have enabled the academy to devise precisely focused action plans. Attainment is improving well, with all students making good, and some making outstanding progress in their work. The

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strong and relentless focus on improving outcomes is resulting in gaps in performance between different groups closing. The promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is good, with careful tracking of students' progress and clarity about how the academy will provide for the specific needs of its students. Self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and there is a keen awareness that, even though the academy enjoys many successes, there is still room for improvement. This is reflected in successful curriculum innovation and the good and thorough work undertaken to improve teaching and learning. Attainment is being boosted further by the excellent work the academy undertakes in association with an array of partners, including parents and carers. For example, partnership work with the City of London, the academy's sponsor, has resulted in many enterprising enhancements to the curriculum.

The governing body is outstanding. Governors successfully ensure student safety and that all safeguarding requirements are met well and thoroughly checked. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Governors are very knowledgeable about the academy and how it is performing. They challenge staff about performance and outcomes, and they also evaluate their own contribution. Specialist status has led to the academy being at the centre of its local community as well as making valid contributions at a regional and national level. This, together with the academy's international work, for which it has received awards, has helped to ensure that the academy's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of this relatively new and improving sixth form is satisfactory. Students entering the sixth form have levels of attainment that are below average. Though results are improving, attainment by the end of Year 13 is

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below average. This represents satisfactory progress. Leadership and management are good and improving. There is a clear rationale for how the sixth form should develop and a good understanding of what needs to be improved and why. The curriculum has been improved to meet the students’ needs more effectively and the arrangements for monitoring and tracking students’ performance are challenging and gaining in effectiveness. However, a small minority of students, especially in Year 12 studying AS-level courses, make only limited progress. Students’ personal development is good. They feel safe and show loyalty to the academy. Students are keen to take on responsibility; they enjoy the opportunities to be student leaders and to contribute to various charitable efforts both at home and abroad. Although examples of good teaching were seen, the quality of teaching was more variable than in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students consulted during the inspection reported that most staff are knowledgeable and teach interesting and challenging lessons, but they also cited instances where lessons are insufficiently engaging and significant variations in marking and assessment. Care and guidance are improving well. Students feel supported and well advised about careers and university application. However, some students do not complete their courses, or struggle to gain a minimum pass grade. Staff recognise this and are seeking to further refine the existing advisory and tracking procedures. Attendance is high and monitored well. The sixth form is expanding and the students attribute this to the improving standards and the opportunities offered.

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	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

About 5% of parents and carers replied to the inspection questionnaire, with few adding any comments. This is a below average response. Most responses were highly favourably and supportive of the academy, with a minority expressing concerns that the academy does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team has concluded that individual needs are met well. The academy is inclusive and staff strive continuously to meet the needs of all students. Behaviour is good. Students behaved sensibly and were polite. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers believe that the academy keeps their child safe and that the progress being made is at least good. As one respondent stated: ‘My child had an excellent year last year because the teaching is good quality.’ Most parents and carers reported that the academy is doing well; a view fully endorsed by the findings of the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at City of London Academy (Southwark) 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1095 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	45	29	52	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	36	35	63	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	24	41	28	48	2	3	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	32	34	61	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	21	37	65	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	11	20	35	63	4	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	25	32	57	6	11	0	0
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)	18	32	28	49	4	7	1	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	14	25	33	59	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	29	32	58	4	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	15	34	58	4	7	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	10	18	39	68	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	20	37	29	52	2	4	0	0

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 academy, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their academy.



10 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of City of London Academy (Southwark), London, SE1 5LA

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit. I wish to thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you and learning about your views. You told us that the academy is a special place and that you are happy with the education you receive. We agree with you; you are receiving a good education.

Many things impressed us. Many of the lessons we observed were good, interesting and challenging and these factors lead to you making good progress in your work, with improving levels of attainment. You make a valid contribution to these positive outcomes. Your attendance is outstanding and your behaviour is good and we were impressed with your attitudes in lessons. We were pleased to learn about your involvement in various sporting, music and drama activities. We were impressed to hear about the prominent guests who visit the academy to talk with you and we think it is excellent that some of you will have the opportunity to take part in the Lord Mayor's Show. Though we are pleased by your achievements, we have asked the academy to make some further improvements to help you in your work. These are to:

- ensure that more lessons involve you in working individually and in groups to find things out for yourselves
- ensure staff apply greater consistency in their approaches to developing your literacy skills
- make better use of assessment to raise levels of achievement in the sixth form.

We enjoyed meeting you and would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham
Lead inspector

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