

The Crest Girls' Academy

Crest Road, London, NW2 7SN

Inspection dates 5–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement is inadequate. This is because the sixth form is inadequate. Too many students make insufficient progress at AS level and not enough gain qualifications at the end of their programmes of study.
- Achievement across the rest of the academy requires improvement. This is because there are inconsistencies in how well different groups of students achieve in different subjects.
- Students of Black African heritage make slower progress than other students in some subjects.
- Teaching is improving, but is not yet consistently good enough across all key stages and subjects. Teachers' marking does not give enough detail about how to improve.
- Teachers' expectations of students are not high enough.
- Senior and subject leaders have not monitored the progress that all students are making closely enough until recently. A more rigorous approach to improving the performance of teachers has had impact in some subject areas but further improvements are needed.
- Leadership and management require improvement because progress has not been rapid or consistent enough, particularly in the sixth form.
- The restructuring of the governing body has been slow. Governors are now challenging the academy's leaders to bring more rapid improvement, but this is too recent to have had a significant impact.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 has improved over time.
- Students behave well and attend regularly.
- Students feel safe at the academy. They show consideration and tolerance towards each other and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Senior leaders have taken effective actions to develop teachers' skills and improve the quality of their teaching in some subjects.
- Leaders know what needs to be done and have shown that they can bring about improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, including seven jointly observed with senior leaders.
- They observed tutor time and break-times. They looked at a range of students' work.
- Inspectors met with groups of students of different ages and abilities. They discussed achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors met with the Executive Principal, head of school, academy leaders, two representatives from the academy's sponsor, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took into account the 15 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors checked the school's records of students' attainment and progress, attendance and exclusions, safeguarding procedures, and the Executive Principal's report to the governing body.

Inspection team

Russell Bennett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Duncan Kamyra

Additional Inspector

Helen Diles

Additional Inspector

Rachel Hobson

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The Crest Girls' Academy opened in September 2009. The academy is sponsored by Edutrust Academies Charitable Trust (E-ACT). It shares a site and a sixth form with the Crest Boys' Academy. The Executive Principal, appointed in April 2012, oversees both academies. The academy sponsor is working with the Department for Education on a proposal to join The Crest Girls' Academy with The Crest Boys' Academy in September 2013 to form a single academy.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is higher than the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- Just over half the students are eligible for support through the pupil premium, the additional funding from the government for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents in the armed forces and for those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average. The largest groups are of Black African, Somali, Pakistani and Afghan heritages. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also much higher than the national average.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision at the college of North West London and Right Track.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is good or better by:
 - checking that all teachers use what they know about students' knowledge and understanding to plan high-quality lessons which are challenging for all abilities
 - reducing the number of lessons taught by short-term teachers
 - building in activities which develop students' confidence and spoken fluency
 - marking students' work using a consistent approach which clearly identifies specific areas for improvement.
- Raise the achievement of all groups of students by:
 - improving the progress and attainment of students in the sixth form, especially at AS level
 - ensuring that all teachers have the highest expectations of what all students can achieve
 - eliminating inconsistencies in achievement between different groups and subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels, making sure that:
 - information about the progress of different groups is checked accurately across all subjects and used to assess the impact of teaching on improving students' progress, particularly in the sixth form
 - students are given clear and high-quality guidance about courses in the sixth form which suit

their particular needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students' attainment is below average when they join the academy. In 2012, the proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics increased by eight percentage points, but was still below the national average.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is inadequate. High numbers of students underachieve at AS level across a range of subjects. Too many students fail or do not achieve sufficiently high grades to progress to A level. The smaller numbers of students who complete A levels make better progress, although there are inconsistencies in achievement between subjects. Students on vocational courses make good progress because the teaching is good and because the courses are matched to their needs.
- Most students make at least expected progress from their starting points in English and mathematics. In 2012, the proportion of students making better than expected progress was above national averages in both subjects.
- Students' progress across all subjects is variable, however. Progress in humanities has been too slow over time. Recent interventions to improve the quality of teaching have improved the progress that students are making in lessons.
- The academy entered students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics in 2012. Low numbers achieved a grade C or above. Data provided by the academy indicate that recent interventions are on track to improve the attainment of students entered early in both subjects in 2013.
- While some groups of students are making good progress, including those who speak English as an additional language, gaps remain between some students of Black African heritage and others. Academy leaders are now using data more effectively to promote equality of opportunity for all students. A focus on the performance of these groups is closing the gap across year groups, but this is not rapid enough in all subjects, including science.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. While they benefit from support from additional adults, work in lessons is not always set at the right level to enable them to make good progress.
- In 2012, the gap in GCSE English and mathematics examinations between students supported by pupil-premium funding and other students was smaller than that found nationally. Targeted interventions for students are successfully closing the gap between students in other year groups, including those eligible for additional funding in Year 7.
- The very small numbers of students who attend off-site provision make good progress from their individual starting points.
- There are now more rigorous tracking systems in place to track the progress of all students, and teachers have a clearer understanding of the progress students are making from their starting points. However, these are not yet used consistently by all teachers and subject leaders across the academy.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Too much teaching is not good enough. Where teaching requires improvement, it is often because teachers do not plan lessons which are matched to students' individual starting points. In these lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what all students can achieve and this hinders more rapid progress.
- The impact of strategies to develop teachers' skills and make lessons more challenging can clearly be seen in the best lessons. Actions taken by leaders have improved the quality of teaching in targeted subject areas. In humanities, teachers are making more effective use of information about students' progress to plan lessons which are more closely suited to students' individual abilities and needs. As a result, students are making better progress.
- Over the last year, the academy has employed temporary teachers to cover staff absence in some subject areas. Too often, the work set in these lessons is of poor quality and students do not make enough progress. This has resulted in variability in the quality of teaching across subject areas, including in the sixth form.
- Relationships between students and teachers are positive. In the most effective lessons, teachers build on this by ensuring that tasks and questioning are challenging enough to engage students fully. They provide activities which enable students to work things out for themselves and develop spoken fluency.
- In an English lesson in Year 10, students showed high levels of engagement, because they were challenged to work independently on a newspaper writing task. The students were given different levels of challenge according to their abilities and the teacher used targeted questioning which encouraged them to think more deeply about the effect of the language they were using on the reader. As a result, students of all abilities made good progress.
- In less effective lessons, the pace is too slow and activities are not planned to ensure that all students are pushed to think deeply and make sufficient gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of how best to ensure that students make progress through different levels and grades. In the most effective lessons, students are confident about explaining their targets and the areas in which they need to improve. Where the teaching is less effective, students do not have clear understanding of how they can improve their work.
- Most teachers mark work regularly, but the quality of feedback is variable. Teachers do not always give precise enough advice to students on what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers have recently had training on developing students' literacy skills, though this is not used effectively by all teachers to improve progress. Students in Year 7 with weak literacy skills are benefiting from additional small-group teaching, which focuses on improving their reading, writing and communication. This has enabled them to make better progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say that they feel safe. They get on well together and show consideration for each other. They show courtesy and politeness towards visitors. The academy is a tolerant community and any form of discrimination is unacceptable.

- Bullying is rare. When it happens, students are confident that it will be resolved, with help which is readily available from staff. Students know how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Students are keen to do well. This is also the case in the sixth form despite the fact that their needs are not always well met. Students show pride in their work. When they are given opportunities to work together in lessons, they cooperate very well.
- Exclusion rates are low. The academy's actions to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions have proved very effective. In addition, the number of referrals to the school's seclusion room is reducing over time. When students are referred for behaviour which does not meet the academy's high expectations, they use the time productively to continue their learning.
- The academy has strengthened its behaviour policy. Students say that behaviour has improved over the last year. In a very small number of instances, teachers are inconsistent in applying the behaviour policy. As a result, students occasionally lose focus and achieve less well.
- Students attend regularly. The academy tracks the attendance of individual students rigorously. Effective actions are taken if attendance becomes a concern.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- There has been improvement in some areas of the academy's work since the previous inspection, but this has not happened across all aspects as some weaker leaders have lacked the necessary skills to bring about more rapid improvement.
- There are other inconsistencies that remain. For example, not all staff use assessment information well enough to plan lessons that are closely matched to the students' needs and abilities. This has not been decisively tackled by all leaders. In addition, there are weaknesses in the guidance that students receive about the suitability of the courses that they choose in the sixth form.
- The Executive Principal and senior leaders have a clear determination to bring about more rapid change, and are tackling key areas of performance with resolve. Senior leaders and governors are held to account by the academy trust through a process of review and challenge.
- Clear structures are now in place to support and challenge teachers. Responsibilities and targets are closely matched to raising students' achievement. The impact of these changes is evident in the improved results at GCSE in 2012. Pay progression, including that of senior leaders, is not automatic and is based on achieving challenging targets.
- Senior leaders have developed a more rigorous system for checking on the progress that students are making throughout the year. Leaders of subject areas and year groups use this to promote equality between groups, by checking that all students are making progress. However, they do not all follow through to check how well teachers use the information.
- Students study a broad range of subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4. This provides them with a programme of study which includes good opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. There is a wide range of courses at Key Stage 5.
- There are some examples of where subject leaders have monitored effectively the quality of teaching and learning in the subjects they lead. This has led to improvements in achievement. For instance, a focus on developing teachers' skills in history, business studies and English has

improved the quality of teaching. As a result, students are making better progress in these subjects.

- Recent changes to the leadership of the sixth form have resulted in more accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Leaders correctly identified that students have made inadequate progress at AS level and have started to tackle this. Students have been enrolled onto courses which do not match their needs or abilities. The quality of guidance to prepare them for their next stage of education, training or employment has been insufficient. The quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement had not been monitored closely enough.
- Extra government funding has been used to provide additional mentoring and 'catch-up support'. This has effectively supported improved progress for students in Years 7 to 10, but has had less impact in Year 11.
- Academy leaders ensure that the progress and attendance of students who attend off-site courses are carefully monitored.
- There are clear procedures in place to ensure that students are safe.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- A restructured governing body has been in place since December 2012. Current governors understand clearly that further and more rapid improvement is needed in all aspects of the academy's work. They know that improvement has been too slow in the past. They have a strong commitment to ensure that teaching improves, so that it is all good or outstanding. They accurately identify that, despite improvements in attainment at Key Stage 4, students' achievement is still too low across different subjects. They are clear that attainment is inadequate at AS level and are already providing effective challenge to the school's leaders to bring about the necessary improvements with urgency.
- There are now more robust procedures in place for monitoring the achievement of students and the impact of leadership. Governors are using this information to hold teachers and leaders to account, though this is relatively recent and the impact is, therefore, limited. They are aware of the expenditure of additional money to support students' learning, but do not yet evaluate the impact of strategies on improving achievement. Governors fulfil all statutory responsibilities for safeguarding students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135973
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	422542

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	927
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hall
Principal	Phil Hearne
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 September 2011
Telephone number	0208 4524842
Fax number	0208 4526024
Email address	admin@thecrestgirlsacademy.org.uk

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