

The Crest Academies

Crest Road, London, NW2 7SN

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. They do not plan lessons to meet students' precise needs. Teachers do not assess students' learning well enough within lessons, or provide them with clear areas for improvement.
- Teachers do not have the expertise to develop subject knowledge or language skills for students learning to speak English as an additional language. Consequently, these students' achievement at Key Stage 3 is inadequate.
- Achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 in mathematics is inadequate. Girls' achievement is better than that of boys.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Too many students failed their AS-level examinations in 2014. Too few Year 13 students follow three full A-level courses; this limits their future choices.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement. Boys' attitudes to learning are not as positive as those of girls. This is reflected in the poorer quality of work in books and their lack of focus in lessons.
- Leaders have not established a common and consistent approach to developing students' literacy and numeracy skills through teaching in all subjects.
- Boys and girls are separated for teaching, in the playgrounds, at lunchtime and around the academy. This limits opportunities for them to work together, socialise and learn to get on.
- Subject leaders are not skilled enough to check students' progress or the quality and consistency of teaching with sufficient rigour. They do not ensure that teaching is of equal quality for boys and girls.
- The previous local governing body did not hold the leaders of the two academies sufficiently to account. They failed to prevent the decline in students' achievement across the academies, including in the sixth form. A new local governing body is being formed.
- Until recently, the sponsor's actions to support the academy have not been effective in rapidly bringing about the required improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- The new Principal has quickly and accurately assessed what needs to be done to improve the academy. He has acted with speed to put in place some improvements. There are already some signs of improvement in the quality of teaching and in the progress of some students.
- Girls' progress in English is better than that found nationally.
- Students are well cared for and concerns are acted on appropriately. Students have secure understanding of potential risks to their safety and of how to stay safe, including when they use the internet.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 51 lessons, including 20 jointly with senior staff. The team also scrutinised students' books across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with the new academy Principal, senior leaders, a system leader, subject and pastoral leaders, other staff, a representative from the governing body and the academy's sponsors. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, and the academy's records of behaviour and attendance. They looked at the academy's self-evaluation, documents relating to performance management and records of students' achievements.
- Inspectors looked at students' examination results for the boys' predecessor academy, the girls' academy and the joint sixth form. They evaluated academy data on current students' attainment and progress, including in the sixth form. They also considered how the pupil premium is being used to support and improve the achievement of disadvantaged students.
- The inspection team evaluated a range of evidence and documentation provided by the academy. This included information about the curriculum, the academy's self-evaluation, minutes of raising achievement board meetings and records about the monitoring of teaching. Inspectors also reviewed records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Formal and informal discussions took place with students. Inspectors heard students from Year 7 read.
- Inspectors analysed questionnaire returns from 35 staff. There were too few responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, for inspectors to evaluate. Inspectors spoke with a few parents to ascertain their views about the academy.

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Campbell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mel Rose	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional inspector
Anne Turner	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The Crest Academies was formed in September 2014 when The Crest Boys' Academy was subsumed by The Crest Girls' Academy. Up until this time, the two separate academies were managed by the same leadership team and a single governing body. The Crest Academies retains the Unique Reference Number of the Crest Girls' Academy. It operates from new purpose-built premises. The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form, and is sponsored by Edutrust Academies Charitable Trust (E-ACT). A new Principal took up post in January 2015.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below the national average. Just over half the students are eligible for support through the pupil premium, the additional funding from the government for disadvantaged students. This is above average. A few students attend alternative provision at Plan B and Right Track.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average, with most groups represented. The largest group is of Black African heritage. Almost half of the students join the academy after the start of Year 7. Over 80% of students speak English as an additional language; this is significantly above the national average.
- The academy is receiving support and advice from Brunel University, The Queens' School Bushey, and Highgate School. A systems leader from the sponsor and the headteacher of Queens' are providing temporary part-time support.
- The government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress, was met by the former girls' academy but not by the boys'. When combined as the Crest Academies, the standard is not met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and so raise students' achievement, particularly in mathematics, across Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what both boys and girls can achieve
 - teachers bring more precision to their lesson planning to meet students' differing learning needs and abilities
 - teachers' skills in checking students' learning during lessons and adjusting their teaching accordingly are improved
 - teachers' and teaching assistants' knowledge and skills are developed to support subject and English language learning for the many students who are learning to speak English as an additional language
 - teachers consistently provide students with guidance about how to improve their work and that students are supported to respond to teachers' written feedback.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the knowledge and skills of all middle leaders to improve the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of monitoring students' achievement
 - developing and implementing a whole-academy approach to promoting literacy, reading and numeracy
 - evaluating the current arrangements for boys' and girls' teaching and use of academy facilities at Key Stages 3 and 4 to maximise curriculum breadth, and to ensure opportunities for social interaction and equality of opportunity are promoted fully
 - developing the roles of local governors to form an effective local governing body that is able to support and challenge academy leaders to secure the necessary improvements.

The planned external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate. In 2014, boys' and girls' attainment declined at both GCSE and AS level, and achievement is inadequate for too many students. Leaders have not secured sufficient improvements in the quality of teaching to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well across subjects and key stages.
- Leaders have yet to achieve a sufficiently stable core of high quality and experienced teachers. The new Principal has established an accurate view of teaching and has acted quickly to improve its quality. Many teachers are new to the profession. While they are given effective induction support, inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint further newly qualified teachers.
- Despite this, the team of senior leaders is now working well together. It has established new systems for behaviour data management. Leaders are using expertise from other schools to ensure the reliability of checks on the progress students in all year groups make. For example, the recent Year 11 mock examinations were externally marked.
- Subject leaders are taking greater responsibility for the quality of teaching and in checking students' progress. However, the poor quality of work and marking over time seen in many books demonstrates that they have yet to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to drive required improvements. This significantly reduces the capacity of the academy to secure the necessary improvements rapidly enough, particularly for the teaching of boys, to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Since September 2014, the academy has been designated as a mixed-gender academy under one name. In reality, however, the academy continues to operate as two single-gender establishments for the purposes of classroom teaching, extra-curricular opportunities and students' social activities. Parental preference rather than educational value is the reason given for this continued separation. This approach does not promote equal opportunities for all. This is not the case in the sixth form, where students share the social areas and are taught together.
- The separate teaching of personal, moral and cultural development limits opportunities for social interaction and debate between boys and girls in Key Stages 3 and 4 to prepare them fully for life in modern Britain. This is a view shared by the academy's senior leaders. Nonetheless, a wide range of important topics is covered and delivered age-appropriately. Students learn about different faiths, tolerance and respect. The new Principal has initiated shared assemblies, providing a first opportunity for boys and girls to learn together. Some spiritual development takes place in assemblies and some lessons. However, the new buildings are bland and few displays offer students opportunities to reflect or to extend their thinking.
- There is no consistent approach for developing students' literacy and mathematical skills. This contributes to the low achievement, particularly for boys in English all students in mathematics..
- The sixth form courses are not always best suited or planned to meet the academic needs of students, particularly given the low prior attainment from Year 11. The personal development programme is suitably adapted for their age group, helping to prepare them well for adult life in modern Britain.
- The new Principal has brought drive and vision, and accurately assessed the academy's strengths and areas of development. He is imparting his vision with single-minded determination to students, staff and parents, raising morale and aspirations. Evidence of change is already apparent in many areas of the academy's life, including the quality of teaching. However, it is still too early for this to have translated into measurable improvements in students' achievement.
- Students receive helpful information, advice and guidance to help them with their option choices in Years 9 and 11 and for sixth form students to select their pathway into education, training or work beyond the academy.
- Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are in place and followed. The impact of teaching on students' achievements is the basis for decisions about pay progression.
- Leaders are aware of the overall impact of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding for eligible students. Over time this has led to improvements in their achievement, with some disadvantaged boys outperforming others, for example. However, they have not evaluated the effectiveness of the different uses of the funding to inform future spending.
- The attendance, progress and well-being of the few students who learn in alternative provision are monitored well to ensure they achieve well.
- Leaders have reviewed and updated safeguarding policies and procedures to meet statutory requirements. Good links with outside agencies, including the police, ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively and additional support sought for students, as needed.

- Prior to September 2014, the support offered by the sponsors was not effective in driving through change rapidly enough. The consultant support provided for subject leaders, while helpful, has not secured rapid enough improvements to the quality of teaching. The placement of key staff at the academy has built expertise and capacity at senior level. This is starting to secure change, such as improvements to safeguarding and data management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is inadequate. The previous joint local governing body of the separate academies did not ensure that the quality of teaching and consequently students' achievement were adequate, including for those in the sixth form.
 - Since September 2014, the sponsor-initiated Raising Achievement Board (formed of local governors, academy leaders and senior staff from the sponsor) has brought considerably more rigour and challenge to monitoring the work of the merged academies. This has led to additional investment, and support for senior and middle leaders to secure improvement. Minutes of their meetings show this includes information about students' performance and the quality of teaching. Governors have monitored the overall impact of additional government funding on the achievement of disadvantaged students.
 - The new Chair of the local Governing Body is well advanced in his plans to return governance to local level. Governors are in place and their training is planned. A full review of governance is intended to ensure the new body is fit for purpose prior to taking back the role.
 - Governors have scrutinised information in relation to teachers' performance and pay progression to ensure appropriate rewards for teaching success and for tackling underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. In general, students want to do well, but girls have more positive attitudes to learning than boys. Girls are more attentive in lessons and able to pursue their own learning. In some instances boys lose focus and can disrupt their own and others' learning, although this is reducing. Students, boys in particular, require considerable supervision around the academy. Overall however, students are mostly orderly and polite to each other, staff and visitors.
- The new behaviour management systems and the much higher expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning set by the new Principal are making a difference. Staff and students are of the view that behaviour is improving; they like the clear steps of the new behaviour systems. Consequently, the previously high behaviour incident and exclusion rates are now falling.
- At Key Stages 3 and 4, boys' and girls' understanding of how to work and behave alongside each other is limited. This is because students are not taught together, almost all after-school clubs are run separately, and at break and lunchtimes boys and girls have their own playgrounds and social areas. This is not the case in the sixth form, where they share the social areas and are taught together.
- The new building has not inspired students; they say it is dull. Their general lack of enthusiasm and the small amount of litter seen during the inspection are testament to this. The new Principal is working hard to raise teachers' and students' expectations for learning and achievement. For example, Crest Academies' aims and aspirations are now on display; students and staff are beginning to aspire to these and some painting work is being undertaken to brighten the environment.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. A new ethos for learning is at the earliest stages of being developed to ensure boys and girls feel confident to learn in each other's company and for all to strive for academic excellence.
- Boys and girls say they feel safe and do not feel that bullying is a concern. Most feel confident that they have someone to turn to if they have a concern and are confident that staff would address their concerns.
- Lessons in personal and health education, special events and assemblies help students in all year groups to learn about a range of important issues. This includes different types of bullying, and understanding of potential risks associated with using the internet and social media. Consequently they develop a secure understanding, appropriate to their age, of how to stay safe.
- Attendance, although it remains below the national average, is improving in Key Stages 3 and 4. Like some other aspects of the academy's work, the more rigorous and better-managed processes for attendance are leading to improvements.
- The few students who learn in alternative provision attend and behave well because leaders ensure that it

carefully matches their needs and that it provides a safe place for them to learn.

- Parents spoken to said they felt confident their children were safe in school, although a few staff raised concerns in relation to safety in the staff questionnaire responses.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching for girls and boys is too variable for them to achieve well over time, particularly in mathematics and across Key Stage 3. In too many lessons, learning is hindered by teachers' low expectations of what students can achieve, particularly the boys, and a lack of precision in lesson planning.
- Girls are more enthusiastic learners and are more able to focus on their learning for longer periods of time than boys. Boys tend to wait to be told what to do next, considerably slowing the pace of their learning. Boys' books, in particular, reflect a lack of pride in their work. Teachers too readily accept poorly presented work, work that is incomplete or which reflects a lack of effort.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this well to teach concepts and understanding. However, they do not always have the expertise to adapt their teaching for the high proportion of students who are learning to speak English. As a result students, particularly those in the earliest stages of learning English, are not always able to participate fully in the learning and fall further behind.
- The good relationships between teachers and students are a positive feature of the academy. Students, including those in the sixth form, say that teachers are always willing to help them if they are unsure.
- In too many lessons, particularly boys' classes, teachers do not use questioning effectively to check students' learning or promote their thinking. Teachers accept responses that are too short for them to assess students' understanding. Neither do they adjust their teaching to revisit aspects not fully grasped or move swiftly to provide greater stretch and new learning for all, including the most able.
- Teachers generally deploy teaching assistants well to provide effective support for students with special educational needs or who are in the early stages of learning English. However, on occasions, teachers do not direct them well enough to support students' learning or ensure consistency of practice, such as in marking students' books within lessons.
- The quality of marking is very variable. It is generally better in girls' books. In too many books, though, marking has no impact on students' learning because comments are unhelpful or unreadable, and there is no follow up by the teachers. On occasions, work remains unmarked. Books from history, science and English provided examples of higher-quality marking. Here, students receive clear explanations of what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. In some instances teachers ensure that students have responded to their comments, although this is not routine practice.
- There is no common approach to developing the low levels of literacy, reading and numeracy of many students, boys in particular. This leads to inconsistent practice across subjects and slower progress. For example, not all teachers routinely correct poor grammatical speech, or spelling and punctuation errors in written work.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students make inadequate progress across Key Stage 3, particularly in humanities, and in mathematics at both Key Stages 3 and 4. The proportion of boys and girls gaining five or more A* to C, including English and mathematics, declined in 2014. It was below the national average for boys and girls, and significantly so for boys.
- When compared to other students nationally, the attainment of disadvantaged boys was one grade behind in English and a grade and one third behind in mathematics. For girls it was almost two grades below in mathematics and just over half a grade below in English. When compared to others in the academies, this group of boys was almost two thirds of a grade ahead in both English and mathematics. However, these girls were two thirds of a grade behind in English and almost a grade behind in mathematics.
- In 2014, the progress of boys and girls in mathematics was below national expectations. Boys made less progress than girls in English. Disabled students and those with special educational needs made at least adequate progress from their individual starting points because they received effective support. Their rates of progress were below those of others nationally. Black African boys and girls achieved well. The most able boys and girls underperformed; better progress was made by those who are less able. While girls of average ability performed well, the equivalent group of boys underperformed.
- Generally the quality and quantity of boys' work are in stark contrast to those of the girls across the academy. Evidence from lessons and books suggests better teaching for students in Year 11 is helping to

secure some better progress, particularly in mathematics. Current academy data for Year 11 students shows more even attainment between disadvantaged and others in English and mathematics.

- A very small number of the most able students take GCSE mathematics examinations early. This provides them with the opportunity to study for additional qualifications in mathematics, meeting their needs well without inhibiting their attainment.
- Effective use of alternative provision secures continuing education and progress for a small cohort of students.
- The lack of a whole-academy approach to literacy and numeracy development hampers students' progress, particularly for those who join with low prior attainment and/or who speak English as an additional language. Targeted support for those with identified needs identified is effective in developing reading, writing and communication skills.

The sixth form provision is inadequate

- Achievement in the sixth form is inadequate. Too many students failed to achieve at AS level in 2014. This has led to many students either studying or leaving with too few A-level courses in Year 13. This limits their future education and employment opportunities.
- Achievement across vocational, AS and A2 courses is varied. A common pattern is for some students within a course to make good or better progress while others significantly underachieve. Performance in vocational subjects is better than in academic ones. Teaching in the sixth form is inadequate and reflects the varied achievement. While there is some good teaching, teachers do not always effectively compensate for students' lower attainment from Key Stage 4 to secure adequate progress, particularly in Year 12.
- In vocational subjects both boys and girls met the current interim Key Stage 5 minimum standards. In academic subjects they were met by girls but not boys. Current academy data shows some improvement in students' progress, with more set to achieve passes at AS level in 2015.
- Leadership and management are improving. The new sixth form leader is aware that the guidance given to students in Year 11 to help them select the courses best suited to their needs, abilities and interests was not sufficient. Consequently, the proportion of students who proceed to higher education is below the national average, with higher-than-average numbers not proceeding into education or employment. A review of the courses offered, entry requirements and advice and guidance for students is beginning to address this.
- Many students join the sixth form without a grade C or above in English and/or mathematics. The academy is having some success in helping these students to secure the necessary grades.
- The programme for sixth form students' personal, health and social development is broad and promotes their understanding of key issues and safety well. It includes sensitive topics such as female genital mutilation. Students receive effective personal and academic support. They contribute to academy life, for example, acting as mentors to younger students and in charity fundraising. A tighter system for checking on the attendance of sixth form students has shown an increase in absence which the academy is rapidly and effectively tackling. Students are increasingly taking responsibility and responding to the higher expectations now set by the Principal and head of sixth form.

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	447704

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1301
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Turner
Principal	Mohsen Ojja
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 June 2013
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