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Richard Bannister
Principal
City of London Academy (Southwark)
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Dear Mr Bannister

Short inspection of City of London Academy (Southwark)

Following my visit to the school on 8 June 2016 with David Boyle, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection you and your leadership team have worked effectively to drive improvements in the standard of education provided in the school. The inclusion of all pupils is at the core of your plans. You have been strident in your actions to increase the accountability of all staff for pupils' all-round development, including their academic outcomes, which have shown marked improvement. Your evaluation of the school's current performance is accurate in identifying strengths and areas that require further work in order to match the very high standards for which you aim.

With the support of governors and the trust, you have improved the pupils' achievement at GCSE and on 16 to 19 study programmes. High expectations drive the school's development planning, starting with improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Systems in place to support the most able pupils in attaining the best grades are leading to strong outcomes overall and in many subjects at GCSE. In English, for example, the proportion of most able pupils projected to exceed expected progress shows a large increase on last year.

Leaders' actions have markedly improved the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes. This was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. However, leaders recognise where further work is needed to secure the best possible outcomes for students. The most able students on 16 to 19 study

programmes are a focus for leaders' plans, recognising that this group could attain more highly and continue making the gains seen at GCSE.

You and your leadership team work with, and draw upon support from, the trust. This work is particularly effective in enhancing the transition of pupils from primary to secondary school and when supporting older pupils to make decisions about their subsequent education, training and employment. The multi-academy trust that you have formed with Redriff Primary School is being used as a model for further developments within the trust, building on the strengths in transition arrangements for pupils and benefiting from colleagues' expertise.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct are a strength of the school. Rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly and in line with the school's policy. The culture and ethos of the school encourages a sense of community with appropriate systems that pupils value. This encourages positive attitudes to learning and is reflected in the well-maintained and respected school environment.

The curriculum is broad with a range of academic subjects on offer at GCSE and A level. Work-related courses are available to those for whom these are better suited. The school's enrichment offer is very strong with a variety of clubs available for pupils, trips abroad that broaden understanding and sports programmes such as the Basketball Academy. This is very popular and encourages greater academic engagement by virtue of the link made between working hard in lessons and permission to play. The relationship between positive behaviour, including attendance, and academic performance is a key strand of leaders' strategy for sustaining improved outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors hold the safety and well-being of pupils as paramount, placing pupils' personal development at the centre of plans for the school's continued improvement. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure. Systems and processes for supporting pupils' welfare are robust and rigorously applied, including checks made on staff.

Staff and governors are knowledgeable about their roles and work closely with appropriate external agencies when necessary. They receive training on issues such as female genital mutilation and the 'Prevent' duty. Information about these issues is also covered in assemblies in order to heighten pupils' awareness, so that they can keep themselves safe. Consequently, pupils feel well informed and know who to go to if they have concerns. Pupils actively take part in enhancing the welfare of others in the school, for example by becoming cyber-mentors as part of the school's strong e-safety programme.

Inspection findings

- The school's programme of professional development supports improved teaching, learning and assessment, which in turn leads to more confident pupils who are achieving better grades. Teachers are encouraged to pursue

their own professional development opportunities which are matched to their career aspirations. Middle leaders who are new to their role this year have benefited from specific training and are articulate in their evaluation of their departments.

- The inclusion unit, alongside the school's resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, supports pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities to make strong progress. Their attendance is closely monitored by a dedicated team in order to secure pupils' continued development. Other vulnerable groups identified by the school, such as White British pupils, are the focus of programmes that tie into broader intervention strategies. Interventions are used extensively to support pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Pupils identified as coming from a disadvantaged background make progress in line with their peers. In 2015 a larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils than their peers attained at least five GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics. Current assessment information indicates that this trend will continue and reflects the effective impact of leaders' use of the pupil premium (additional government funding to support disadvantaged children and children looked after).
- Teachers' consideration of pupils' needs in their planning of lessons is evident in the way most pupils engage with their learning. Most pupils feel suitably challenged and their books reflect good rates of progress which are supported by teachers' use of the school's system of assessment.
- Leaders recognised that humanities and modern foreign languages required focused attention in order to bring about rapid improvements. Actions including new leadership are already having a positive impact, with outcomes projected to improve this year. There is more to do in order to sustain improvements through consistently high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school's assessment system closely tracks pupils' performance against aspirational targets. This leads to quick responses to underperformance which form the focus of raising achievement plan (RAP) meetings within faculty and year group teams. Where leaders' expectations of teachers' use of feedback are met, pupils' progress is particularly swift.
- Outcomes in the sixth form continue to improve. As a result, the sixth form is becoming more popular, with the majority of Year 11 students applying to stay on this year and the sixth form being oversubscribed for September 2016. The curriculum and personal development programmes are closely aligned to the school's focus on raising students' aspirations. This includes the organisation of work experience placements, opportunities to hear from outside speakers and the close support given when students make decisions about their subsequent education, training and employment. Much of this is organised through the City of London Corporation's links with the school.
- Leaders of 16 to 19 study programmes have identified further work to be done to secure the consistent use of assessment and tracking information across subjects in order to support students' rapid progression, particularly the most able.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including engagement in activities and events that promote fundamental British

values, is a strength of the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils in all year groups experience opportunities such as debates, competitions, assemblies and whole-school events that capture pupils' imagination, for example a European Union referendum event.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in humanities and modern foreign languages are fully embedded in order to sustain stronger outcomes across all year groups
- 16 to 19 study programmes continue to improve, supporting the most able towards the best possible outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. They also met governors, including the chair, and held telephone conversations with the City of London Academies Trust chief executive officer and your school improvement partner. Inspectors held formal and informal conversations with pupils.

Inspectors visited 10 lessons jointly with members of your senior leadership team, including three Year 11 revision sessions. No observations of learning were made for 16 to 19 study programmes as students were on study leave. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, minutes of governing body meetings, and school policies and procedures. They scrutinised the school's evaluation of its own performance and the development plan. They also evaluated records about keeping pupils safe, and reviewed the register of checks made on staff.