

# City of London Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134222
<b>Local Authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	331637
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Lynes HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1013
Sixth form	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr William Fraser
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martyn Coles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Lynton Road London SE1 5LA
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7394 5100
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7394 5101

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Academy is sponsored by the City of London and has specialisms in business and enterprise, and in sports. It moved into its new buildings in September 2005, following two years in temporary accommodation on two different sites. It is in its sixth year of phased growth and 2008 saw the first cohort of students take GCSE examinations. The academy is careful to recruit students from its immediate locality. Admissions are coordinated by the local authority and students are admitted equally across five ability bands, in order to ensure a broadly comprehensive intake. The student population reflects the academy's immediate inner city catchment; just over half the students are of White British heritage, with a wide variety of other ethnic groups represented, including significant proportions of African and Caribbean heritage. Very few are at the early stages of learning English. A third of students are entitled to free school meals, one quarter have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and about 5% have a statement of additional need. All these proportions are above or well above national averages.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The City of London Academy is a satisfactory school that ensures the good personal development of students. It has sustained this aspect of its work since the last inspection. Students continue to feel very safe inside the academy and behaviour is good. This is particularly important as some students report feeling safer in the academy than they do in the local community. Relationships between teachers and students are mainly good and students feel that staff are caring and very supportive. They enjoy many elements of the academy's provision, particularly the clubs and activities that go on before and after the taught day. Students have consistently attained results in Key Stage 3 tests that are at or above the national average. Considering their starting points, this is good achievement. The academy did not enable students to sustain that good academic progress into the first year of GCSE examinations in 2008. In particular, girls achieved less than they might have. Achievement overall was satisfactory as the number of students attaining five GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics was just below the national average.

A combination of fluctuations in staffing, difficulties with the delivery of the Key Stage 4 curriculum and ensuring that students were entered for the correct examinations meant that there was underperformance in some subjects last year, particularly in business, information and communication technology (ICT), and sports. The principal has evaluated the reasons for this in an honest and rigorous manner. He has taken robust action to hold some middle leaders more accountable for the performance of students and has made significant changes to the examination entry policy, particularly in ICT. The quality of teaching is now being evaluated more effectively by the new vice-principal, and she has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Recently introduced procedures have improved attendance and reduced persistent absence. As a result of these actions the academy was able to provide evidence that progress at Key Stage 4 is improving this year. However, systems to track students' academic performance are underdeveloped in some subjects and senior leaders do not consistently monitor the impact of middle leaders' work during the academic year. This also limits the ability of the governing body to hold senior leaders to account for the academic performance of students.

There are some clearly emerging strengths at subject leadership level. One particularly noteworthy example is the way that the new director of sport has made significant improvement in a relatively short period of time. He has adjusted the curriculum to focus on students' interests and capabilities and put in place effective systems to track progress. This is important as sports is one of the academy's specialist subjects and it did not meet its specialist schools targets last year. The academy was able to provide convincing data that these targets will be met in sports this year. The senior leadership team acknowledge that their development planning for the academy needs to have a more rigorous focus on the main issues that will support greater progress at Key Stage 4. In particular, there is scope to focus more on the achievement of girls and the development of the curriculum so that it meets the needs and interests of more students. Effective action has been taken as a result of last year's examination results that demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form provision is good in promoting the personal development and well-being of students and satisfactory in all other aspects. Examination results indicate that students make satisfactory progress. Nearly all students complete their courses and the current Year 13 have all been offered places at university. The quality of teaching is satisfactory although there are some inconsistencies across courses and some students in Year 13 report concerns about gaining the grades they need to take up university courses. The care of students is good and there are good systems to support their well-being. However, the monitoring of their progress is not sufficiently rigorous in all subjects to ensure progress and prompt improvements in their work. Leadership and management of the new sixth form are satisfactory as is the curriculum. However, the strategic vision and planning for further growth is less secure. There are emerging links with other providers but these are at an early stage of negotiation.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at Key Stage 4, particularly of girls, by:
  - improving systems for tracking the academic progress of students, and using this information to intervene early enough to make a difference to their achievement
  - using academic progress information to set performance targets to monitor the quality of the work of subject leaders during the academic year
  - ensuring that a curriculum is planned and delivered that meets the needs of a greater number of students at Key Stage 4.
- Develop governors' ability to hold senior leaders to account for the academic performance of students.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Students enter Year 7 with skills, knowledge and understanding slightly below that typically found nationally. By the end of Year 9 results in tests in English, mathematics and science are broadly similar to national outcomes. This represents good achievement. In 2008 the students in Year 11 achieved results in GCSE examinations that were below national averages. This means that these students did not sustain the good progress they made during Key Stage 3. Girls in particular did not achieve as much as their Key Stage 3 results indicated they should have. Nevertheless, the number of students attaining five higher GCSE grades that included English and mathematics was near to the national average, which represents satisfactory progress from their starting points. The academy's own monitoring and lesson observations during this inspection suggest that progress continues to be good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. This, when considered alongside changes made to examination entries and improving attendance, indicates that GCSE examination results in 2009 are likely to represent at least similar achievement to last year. Progress, including that of those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, continues to be satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students have good attitudes and are able to confidently express mature views on social and moral issues. This is reflected in the good relationships that are seen around the academy and results in a harmonious, orderly environment. Students confirm the view of inspectors that behaviour is generally good both in and out of lessons. Students have a good understanding of cultural difference and the implications of a diverse society since they experience this within the academy community. They recognise what is required to ensure that all members of the school community feel included. For example, Year 7 students are aware that one or two of their peers who joined the academy last September still feel unhappy. They are able to report on several strategies that are being used to make these two more vulnerable students feel more settled. The majority of students make good choices about what they eat in the canteen and an unusually high proportion regularly participate in extra activities that promote their health and well-being. A small, but significant, number of younger students report feeling excessively tired because of the length of the academy day. All students report feeling safe and secure which is a testimony to the good relationships and the sympathetic understanding they show one another. Many enthusiastically described why they enjoy school and when asked, 'What would you change?' they hesitated and felt obliged to search for a response. Attendance has improved this year and is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features; it is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Initiatives to raise the quality of teaching are too recent to have had a significant impact on raising academic standards.

In the best lessons, the brisk pace and use of 'bite-size' activities engages students' interest and enables all to participate fully and make good progress. Planning is good and a variety of learning resources, including the interactive whiteboard and digital projector, are used well. Teachers have high expectations and their good understanding of their subject lends confidence to lessons. These lessons are lively and enjoyable and there are very good relationships between the students themselves and with the teacher. In some satisfactory lessons teacher expectations are not always high enough, planned activities are sometimes not intellectually challenging nor well matched to students' abilities, particularly girls, and teachers' talk tends to predominate. Students' enthusiasm in responding to questions is not managed well and undermines the pace of learning. Moreover the use of questions to challenge students' understanding is inconsistent and limits the ongoing assessment of learning in lessons.

The marking of students work is up to date and most teachers give helpful advice on what students need to do to improve, though the reinforcement of literacy skills is not strongly evident. Assessment data is beginning to be used proactively as a tool, for example in mathematics and sport, to track student performance and inform lesson planning. However, the use of homework to support the learning in lessons is inconsistent across subject areas.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The range of subjects offered reflects the academy's specialisms well. Business and enterprise studies is a core subject throughout Years 7 to 11 and sport is delivered both as a separate entity and dynamically across several subject areas. A whole-academy literacy programme is driven through English, the Library Service and special needs department, but is not supported across all subject areas. Appropriate pathways to suit the needs of Year 10 students of all abilities are underdeveloped. For example, work-related courses, ICT and business studies as optional subjects and the progression needs of the most able students are only being improved this year. Moreover, aspects of the timetable are impacting negatively on the delivery of the curriculum. The academy has confirmed plans to extend the range of vocational courses offered to students for the next academic year.

A strength of the curriculum is the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The academy's sports specialism delivers an extensive number of after hours clubs and classes, with significant numbers of students and many community groups accessing the sports facilities. Many students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, working towards the three awards. Learning is enhanced with a range of visits, links with external agencies, residential opportunities and special events. The students also profit from drama and musical productions, enterprise activities and charity fundraising events, all of which widen their perspectives and prepare them well for life beyond the academy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The support provided to promote personal development is stronger than that to ensure academic progress where systems are inconsistent, but satisfactory overall. The academy is a caring community that has the welfare, health and safety of its students at its heart. Teachers are highly committed to the well-being of all students and students justifiably say they feel very well looked after and safe. Staff vetting is thorough and meets current government requirements. Staff know the child protection and health and safety procedures well. The academy works very well with an extensive range of outside agencies which provide support for the most vulnerable students. While the academy has developed good strategies to monitor and improve attendance recently, the number of students who are persistently absent from school is still high and inhibits improvement in standards for these students. Transition arrangements from primary schools are well established and students are well supported through the options process. Systems to monitor and support learners' academic progress have not been sufficiently developed to ensure that all students are challenged effectively. Some departments, for example mathematics and sports, use data well to track students' progress. However, some departments and a number of individual staff do not make effective use of the data and some have incomplete student tracking information available.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leaders and managers at all levels are committed to the inclusion of all students and exclusion figures are low. The academy is a safe, calm and orderly community. The management of student behaviour is effective and relationships between staff and students are good. Senior managers

were involved in joint observations of lessons with inspectors. A formal evaluation of this exercise revealed that all participants accurately identified the major strengths and areas for development in each lesson observed. However, some of the major development priorities for the improvement of standards in the academy have not been explicitly shared with staff or clearly identified in the development plan. This has hindered progress in some areas. The use of data both across the academy and within departments requires strengthening to enable effective tracking and evaluation of student progress at all levels. This will enable leaders to respond more promptly to issues of underachievement. Self-evaluation is accurate and improving. Senior leaders have a secure understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development but, beyond them, practice in self-evaluation is not always sufficiently analytical or consistent. The governing body knows the academy well. Governors are highly supportive but share inspectors' concern that staff turnover is high and is impacting on the work of the academy. Governors are still developing the ability to hold senior leaders to account for the academic performance of students.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of City of London Academy, London, SE1 5LA

Thank you very much for talking to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to let you know briefly what we found, but you can download the full report at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Inspectors were impressed by your honesty and the way you were able to identify both the strengths of the academy and the areas that it needs to improve. Many of you told us how safe you felt in the academy and how important this was to you. You told us how much you enjoyed what the academy provides beyond the classroom, but some of you said how tired you felt because of the length of the day. We agree with you that behaviour is generally good.

We have judged the academy to be satisfactory with some real strengths in ensuring your personal development. Your results in the Key Stage 3 tests show that you make good progress up to Year 9. The first year of GCSE results last year were more mixed and in some subjects you did not make as much progress as you should have done. So we have asked the academy to improve in the following areas.

- Improve GCSE examination results, particularly for girls, by:
  - tracking your academic progress more regularly and using the information to help you make faster progress
  - using the improved information on your progress to work with subject leaders to ensure that they help you to get better GCSE results
  - adjusting the curriculum to suit the needs and interests of more of you.
- Governors need to develop their understanding of your academic progress so that they can discuss this knowledgeably with the principal and vice-principals.

Inspectors were impressed by how committed many of you were to ensuring the success of the academy, so I am sure that you will want to play your part in helping to make these things happen. You can ask your teachers for clarification when you are not sure about your progress in a particular subject, and you can continue to be open and honest with teachers. Some of you also need to attend more regularly.

I wish you all the very best with helping the academy to make further progress.

Yours faithfully

Michael Lynes

Her Majesty's Inspector