

The City Academy, Hackney

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135835
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381931
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Robert Lovett HMI

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
Number of pupils on the school roll	553
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine McGuinness
Headteacher	Mark Emmerson
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Homerton Row Hackney London E9 6EA
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Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	24–25 January 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robert Lovett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Patricia Barford

Additional inspector

Elizabeth Dickson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. They observed 25 teachers in 27 lessons, of which eight were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the Principal, other members of the senior leadership team, core subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the sponsors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and scrutinised documentation related to students' achievement, school self-evaluation, reviews of faculty performance and minutes of the governing body. Inspectors also took note of 77 parental questionnaires, together with 76 returned by students and 55 by staff.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009 in purpose built, award winning accommodation. The first intake of students was into Year 7. Although it remains smaller than the average sized secondary school, the academy has grown in the three years since it opened and now has students in Years 7 to 9. The academy is designated as an 11-19 school which will eventually house a sixth form and is expected to grow to approximately 1,100 students. About half of students are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion of students who are boys. The proportion of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs is above average. A high proportion of students are of minority ethnic heritage. The academy fully represents the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the local community. About 90% of students live within 0.5 miles of the academy. The academy has specialisms in business and financial services. It has Investors in People gold status.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. It has created an educational environment with opportunities to excel in a safe, inspiring and enriching atmosphere. Staff, students and their parents and carers have all made a significant contribution to the academy’s vision and success. Staff all agreed that they were proud to work at the academy and know what the academy wants to achieve. Parents and carers are equally enthusiastic. As one wrote the academy has ‘very high standards and expectations’. It is these which have provided the impetus for excellence. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent overall but spiritual development is relatively less strong.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding, being consistently good and usually excellent in all subjects and year groups. As a result, all groups of students make outstanding progress.
- Students behave exceptionally well and have highly positive attitudes to learning. Almost all who responded to the questionnaires or who spoke to inspectors have positive views of behaviour. There is a shared and explicit expectation of high standards of conduct. Students are making an increasingly positive contribution to the academy. Some older students would welcome opportunities for greater responsibility, such as playing a greater role in assessing the success of the academy and contributing to aspects of school improvement.
- The academy specialisms are represented most obviously through the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT), but pervade the ethos in a more fundamental way. There is a shared expectation that all staff and students will conduct themselves in a professional and business-like way. The joint enterprise of enhancing students’ life chances through high-quality learning is one where, as a representative of one of the sponsors said, ‘failure is not an option’.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the role of students in the life of the academy and in school

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development and improvement to reflect the growing sophistication and maturity of the student population.

- Ensure that students' spiritual development is as strong as their moral, social and cultural development.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Many students enter the academy with below-average levels of attainment and make excellent progress so that achievement rises rapidly. For example, the proportion of Year 7 students working at Level 5 and above has doubled in a term. Students in Years 8 and 9 have also made accelerated progress leading to high levels of achievement by Year 9. Achievement is outstanding in year groups and subjects. Highly effective interventions and support enables students with disabilities and those with special educational needs to make the same excellent progress as their peers. This is because of the cumulative effect over time of outstanding progress in individual lessons. Levels of accountability are high. Teachers meticulously plan lessons to ensure that the individual learning needs are met and potential underachievement addressed. Highly effective strategies to address underperformance ensure that all groups of students do equally well over time. Underperformance is not accepted and strategies to respond are rapid and effective. Emerging patterns of underachievement among groups of students are quickly identified and addressed. The relative performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and boys of Black Caribbean heritage was identified as a concern, effective action was taken and the attainment gap between these students and others has closed rapidly.

Students make good progress in lessons because teaching makes consistent links to the academy's key literacy foci, such as the need for students to respond using full sentences, across all subjects. Teaching is skilled, creative and of consistently high quality so that students' progress in lessons is rapid. Their very positive attitudes to learning and adoption of a professional approach ensure learning is always the main focus of everyone's energies. Very little time is lost in lessons. Students take their responsibilities seriously and ensure they are able to make a prompt and professional start to each lesson.

Quality of teaching

Teaching has improved since the monitoring inspection. Almost all is at least good and in about six in every ten lessons teaching is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers believe that their child is making good progress and ascribe this to the high quality of teaching. Teachers always ensure that everyone is clear about what it is they are expected to learn. They accurately assess how well students are doing and use this information very effectively to plan the next steps in learning and address any potential underachievement. Regular faculty and senior leadership team

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meetings consider achievement data for every student, identifying individuals at risk of falling behind and patterns of underachievement across groups of students. Highly effective strategies are put in place to ensure that all students are doing as well as they can. Students who are a focus for accelerated achievement are identified in teachers' planning and particular care is taken to involve them, check on progress and ensure high expectations are met. The ongoing assessment of progress during lessons is a significant strength. Teachers ask a range of questions and carry out observations to assess understanding. Reference to students' targets and National Curriculum levels is detailed and explicit, so that students know exactly how well they are doing and how to improve. Peer assessment is exceptionally well developed. For example, in an outstanding Year 7 physical education lesson students actively assessed each other's table-tennis skills and fed back assessments accurately based on national curriculum level descriptors. Their partners used this information to improve their performance so that in subsequent peer assessments, checked by another student, their performance often improved. Students give and receive valuable feedback from one-another with remarkable confidence and openness.

Teaching is exceptionally well planned and organised so that stimulating, high-quality resources are readily available, the different parts of the lesson flow seamlessly and the pace of learning is brisk. In an excellent Year 9 religious education lesson students made rapid progress in their understanding of the relative merits of oral and written religious texts and how these might influence belief systems. They engaged in mature debate about interpreting these texts as literal and divinely inspired or seeing them as allegorical truths. The same high levels of assessment, debate and creative teaching were observed in all faculties and in all year groups. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and are committed to the learning and welfare of their students. Because expectations are high and students are encouraged to be proud of their achievements, the quality of work in their books and folders is high. Students use rulers, write neatly and pride themselves on the way their work is presented.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour and conduct are outstanding. This is not to imply that all students behave in an exemplary manner all of the time. Those parents, carers and staff who replied to the questionnaire are very positive about students' high standard of behaviour over time. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about aspects of student behaviour, sometimes linked to individual concerns. While accepting that concerns may be difficult to resolve the senior leadership and pastoral teams are committed to ensuring that all students feel safe and valued. Students say that they feel safe, that bullying of any kind, including cyber-bullying, is rare and that they feel confident to approach staff with a worry or concern. They appreciate the individual contact they have with their personal advisers. Students enjoy learning and are committed to improvement. In consequence, attendance is high and students arrive in school and to lessons punctually so that they miss as little time as possible. The number of student exclusions is low.

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Behaviour in lessons and around the academy is excellent, reflecting the academy's high expectations and professional standards. As the age profile of students increases they value being given increasing amounts of responsibility, such as fulfilling roles as prefects, and elected roles such as house captains and members of the school council. Members of the school council enjoy meeting with governors and members of the senior leadership team. Older students have a clear view of what represents high quality teaching. They have been trained by senior staff to carry out lesson observations and have provided well-judged feedback on what they have seen. Students are eager to enhance their roles and responsibilities within the academy. Senior leaders recognise the added value this will bring to evaluating the impact of aspects of their work such as additional studies.

Leadership and management

The outstanding quality of leadership and management and the strength of the shared vision for the academy have been instrumental in its success. The principal has a clear and uncompromising view that all students can succeed and that it is the duty of the academy to provide an ordered and structured learning environment which reflects the motto of 'Values and Success'. He is extremely well supported in translating this vision into reality by senior and middle leaders who maintain a sharp focus on key priorities and on the achievement and welfare of students. The few areas for improvement identified at the time of the monitoring inspection have been fully addressed resulting in significant improvements in the quality of teaching, marking and assessment. The governing body knows the school well. It asks robust questions which challenge the academy and hold its leaders fully to account. Sponsors provided the early vision and direction for the academy and remain fully committed to the achievement and well-being of students. They support individual learners through the provision of personal advisers together with a wide range of support for the creative curriculum through arts initiatives linked to The Barbican Centre and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Senior leaders have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and where particular strengths lie. They provide accurate developmental feedback which has enabled teachers to improve their practice and has improved the quality of teaching. This eagerness to improve, coupled with exceptionally detailed and analytical self-evaluation, help ensure the academy is very well placed to maintain its high standards.

The curriculum fully reflects the strengths of the academy. Core curriculum areas are extremely well led. The promotion of literacy skills across the curriculum is exemplary. The academy libraries play a key role in the active promotion of reading, which results in students developing the skills and vocabulary to engage in high level debate and to write with confidence. The curriculum is designed so that core skills and high levels of creativity are nurtured in all subjects and faculties. The academy specialisms of business and enterprise are developed across all areas, particularly in ICT, which has a sharp focus on the development of ICT skills in a business oriented environment. The ethos and culture of the academy very actively promote equality of opportunity. Discrimination of any kind is rare and is not tolerated.

There is a strong and developing partnership with parents and carers. The

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reinvigorated Parent Staff Association has organised debates on topical themes such as 'Simplicity, Creativity and Discipline: How Children Learn' which are hosted by the student concierge service and attended by staff, students, parents and carers, members of the community and Year 6 pupils from local primary schools.

Safeguarding records, staff training and child protection induction procedures for new staff are detailed, up-to-date and comply fully with statutory requirements.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

26 January 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of The City Academy, Hackney, London, E9 6EA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. May I particularly thank those students who returned inspection questionnaires and who talked to us about life in the academy.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

- All aspects of the academy's work are outstanding, its vision encompassing the whole community. Leadership at all levels is exceptional.
- The academy's motto of 'Values and Success' provide the inspiration for high achievement and outstanding behaviour.
- Because teaching is consistently good or outstanding, you make excellent progress and achieve highly
- Assessment is exceptionally thorough and any underachievement is quickly identified and addressed. You also play your part in this through effective assessment and feedback of one another's work.
- The curriculum is innovative and rich, with an excellent blend of core skills and creativity across all subjects.
- The academy specialisms have a positive influence on all aspects of life at school.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

- As you grow older you are ready to assume more responsibilities. Many of you are eager to broaden these responsibilities and we have asked the academy to look at how to do this.
- While the curriculum is very strong we have asked the academy to consider ways of strengthening your spiritual development.

We wish you and the academy every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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