

Pimlico Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135676
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	361463
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1268
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Nash
Headteacher	Jerry Collins
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2009
School address	Pimlico Academy Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 48 lessons and observed 40 teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of Governing Body, leaders and managers, teaching staff and students. They observed the school's work and carried out a number of joint observations of lessons with the school's senior managers. They scrutinised the academy's development plan and departmental reviews, a range of academy policies, governing body minutes, internal teaching and learning observations, and students' work. They analysed the questionnaire responses completed by 328 parents, students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The pace of all students' learning and progress in lessons and in out-of-class support sessions.
- The impact of teaching, assessment and the structured interventions in the curriculum on raising standards.
- The sixth form curriculum, IAG and induction for Year 12 students.
- The capacity of the senior leadership team and the impact of their actions since the last monitoring visit.

Information about the school

Pimlico Academy was opened in September 2008, sponsored by Future. The Principal joined the academy in September 2008 and almost all staff of the predecessor school transferred to the academy when it opened. The new building has been completed ahead of schedule. The academy has subject specialisms in history and visual and performing arts and is the only history specialist institution in the country. The sixth form is part of a local authority collaborative with two other schools. The majority of the academy's students live in wards that are amongst the most socially deprived in the country. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. Nearly one quarter of all students are of White British heritage and the number of students who are advanced bilingual learners, or at early stages of acquiring English as an additional language, is high. The largest minority ethnic groups are Black Caribbean and Black African. Boys significantly outnumber girls. One third of students have moderate learning difficulties, dyslexia, behavioural, emotional and social needs and/or disabilities. This proportion is above the national average, as is the number of students with statements to meet their special educational needs.

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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Pimlico Academy is outstanding as the Principal's outstanding vision and leadership of his staff have ensured a true equality and high quality of educational opportunities for all students to excel. Since its opening in 2008, this ethos and practice have successfully raised educational aspirations and accelerated standards of learning from a very low base, and resulted in a genuinely cohesive learning community. The academy's students are from a diverse range of cultural and social backgrounds and arrive with broadly national average levels of attainment; the vast majority of these make outstanding progress in their personal development and studies and attain above national average GCSE standards at 16.

An excellent pastoral system and academic guidance, together with a stimulating learning environment, has resulted in students feeling safe and highly valued. They display respectful, exemplary behaviour and good leadership qualities. The vast majority are highly motivated and enjoy school greatly. Attendance and punctuality are exemplary. Year 9 students make the right choices in their subjects owing to the outstanding academic guidance and advice on next stages in learning together with personalised curriculum options in Key Stage 4. In addition, specialised literacy groups for Years 7 and 8 help younger students strengthen their reading skills. The academy has recognised the need to widen its sixth form curriculum and to ensure better induction for students progressing from Year 11 to Year 12.

Teaching and assessment are good and enable mostly good and some outstanding progress for the majority of students in lessons. Although teachers have excellent data on their students' abilities, not all are using this information to shape relevant questioning and tasks that meet the needs of boys, those requiring higher levels of challenge in their learning or those who have low levels of literacy, language and writing skills. Moreover, there are some inconsistencies in teachers' checking of learning. Nevertheless, excellent tracking, highly responsive additional support, and personalised extra-curricular interventions are provided for students not on track to achieve their potential. These out-of-lesson sessions are well attended by students.

A robust focus on self evaluation at all levels of the organisation and an ethos of continuous improvement through detailed monitoring of teaching has contributed significantly to raising standards. In some instances, lesson monitoring does not contain equal rigour of focus across all key stages, especially in the sixth form. In particular, observers focus less on the progress of individuals during learning activities and ensuring the checking of all students' learning by teachers.

The Principal, his management team and the sponsors have provided strong leadership in engaging a wide range of external partnerships, including local communities and parents. These, along with the excellent in-house Raising Aspirations programme, have

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underpinned the success of the academy. Overcoming the numerous challenges of high staff turn-over, poor student behaviour and low educational standards through establishing a highly positive ethos of achievement and inclusion within a relatively short time, serve to demonstrate the academy's outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and assessment across all key stages by June 2011 through:
 - more consistent monitoring of the progress and learning of all students during lesson observations
 - ensuring that activities, tasks and questioning techniques create challenge for all students, especially boys and those of higher ability
 - out-of- lesson support strategies for those with language and literacy difficulties, including dyslexia, informing lesson planning across all subjects.
 - Improve outcomes further in the sixth form by September 2011 through:
 - widening the curriculum's vocational and academic pathways
 - restructuring induction and support for Year 12 students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Given their relative starting points, but low reading ages, Year 11 students in 2010 made outstanding progress and 59% of these attained five A* to C grades (including English and mathematics) in their GCSE examinations. According to the academy's tracking data, current Year 11 students are predicted to surpass this; moreover, the sharp focus that academy leaders have on the attainment of Black Caribbean students is beginning to reduce the gap in attainment for this group.

In a large number of lessons, students were responsive to well-structured tasks, actively contributed to discussions and visibly enjoyed their work. In addition, students at the early stages of learning English, individual students with moderate learning difficulties and those with challenging behaviours receive well-targeted out-of-class support and, overall, the majority make outstanding progress. However, the progress they make during lessons is more variable owing to the quality of the support they receive in developing their literacy and language skills. In some lessons teachers do not extend learning opportunities that build on students' heritage or cultures so that students would be more challenged to reflect deeply and develop higher-order thinking skills.

The newly-built academy buildings are highly secure and students report that they enjoy learning in such a safe and attractive environment. They have a strong awareness of healthy lifestyles; an unusually high number of students enjoy the academy's restaurant facilities and varied sporting activities. Students form a harmonious community and their behaviour is outstanding. A strength of the academy's learning environment are the inspirational displays comprising students' work alongside sayings from world leaders, poets and scholars. These contribute to students' self esteem, strong moral development and broadening their social and cultural horizons. Students are highly proactive in shaping academy activities through, for instance, commenting on what is taught through the

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curriculum and self assessments using the 'Strength, Improvement and Target' marking system. Along with mentoring and volunteering opportunities and a range of external speakers, students are helped to develop their enterprise and computing skills. They display the responsible attitudes and aptitudes they need to equip them for further education and the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and assessment of learning are good. In the best lessons observed by inspectors, teachers have strong subject knowledge and use this to inspire learning effectively. In most subjects, teachers plan activities in line with students' abilities, guiding discussions and questioning to ensure that all students participate. In an outstanding English lesson all students, including those with learning difficulties, successfully dramatised classical poems into role plays that interwove classical and modern day English into the text, while demonstrating effective peer assessment and group work.

In some lessons, teachers do not always plan activities and questioning that will challenge all students, especially boys and the more-able students, and in some instances, they do not consistently check and extend these students' learning. Academic support for less-able students and those with language difficulties and dyslexia is not sufficiently well-targeted during lessons. This is because the effective learning strategies taught to these students out-of-lesson are not included in the lesson planning process by the subject teacher.

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The outstanding curriculum is exceptionally well-matched to students' needs, and to the belief that they should aim high. Excellent arrangements for transition into Year 7 get students off to a flying start. All students benefit from wider learning experiences through citizenship and a range of cross-curricular activities, including good use of the academy's specialist subjects in performing arts and history. Numbers of students accessing the specialist music provision has doubled in the last year. Younger students accelerate their reading skills through the nurture 'Bridge Groups' and the Speech and Language Centre provides effective specialist support, including therapies, for vulnerable students and their families.

The progress of all students is rigorously tracked in academic and pastoral reviews, through the effective vertical tutoring system. Years 9 and 11 receive excellent advice and guidance on subject choices and parents are kept well informed. They are able to contribute to their children's learning through the popular parents' evenings, workshops and website.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Through the Principal's outstanding leadership and excellent management of his staff, the academy has successfully transformed its learning culture. Managers work cohesively as a team, sharing the core values of ensuring success in students' academic studies and personal development and well-being.

The academy's self-evaluation process is collaborative and rigorous and includes significant input from the governing body which provides high levels of support and challenge to staff through, for instance, agreeing curriculum action plans, undertaking lesson observations and safer recruitment practice. The academy's development plans give a highly effective account of its strengths and the areas where it needs to improve. Departmental plans fully reflect this analytical approach and strongly focus on raising achievement and standards through detailed information relating to lesson observations, work scrutiny and learning walks. However, the link between this evidence and that relating to analysis of student performance data lacks some clarity. This is because, during lesson observations in all key stages, managers do not consistently monitor the learning and progress of specific groups and ensure that teachers are sufficiently checking, extending and supporting the learning of all students. A strength of the academy is the sharing of good practice across subjects, by the teaching staff.

Safeguarding procedures are robust across all aspects of the provision. Senior leaders and a governor regularly monitor these arrangements and maintain good written records.

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Students' outcomes at individual level and by group are rigorously monitored in line with the equalities policy, and interventions and curriculum strategies are shaped accordingly following evaluation. This excellent practice has contributed to the cohesive community within the academy, as has the enormous range of productive external partnerships. Strong support for parents, carers and families exist through the school's successful extended provision.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Outcomes for sixth form students are good. National published data indicate that students entering the sixth form with slightly below average levels of GCSE attainment are helped to make good progress, relative to their starting points. A level standards are at the national average. AS level standards are below national averages. The learning and progress observed by inspectors in lessons was a little more variable in a minority of lessons. Nevertheless, the vast majority of students demonstrated a sense of self direction and ambition.

The quality of teaching is good. In one media studies lesson, students gave mature and balanced responses on the social network forum in relation to current news and produced imaginative pieces of work. In some lessons, especially history, students benefit from very well-structured teaching and development of higher order thinking skills. However, some students lack the confidence in written skills that would enable a more effective transition from Key Stage 4 and help them be more successful in their AS level examinations.

The leadership and management of the sixth form, in response to this, are prioritising the need for a more appropriate curriculum in line with students' needs and more effective Year 12 induction. Academic guidance is good as students review their personal learning targets and progress with tutors and receive highly valued support and feedback.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with the education received by their children. A small minority had concerns about the quality of communications with the academy. Inspectors found academy / home communications to be mainly of good quality.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pimlico Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 328 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1268 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	158	48	151	46	16	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	173	53	145	44	7	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	154	47	151	46	14	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	131	40	170	52	10	3	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	130	40	177	54	7	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	125	38	157	48	30	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	112	34	176	54	24	7	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	110	35	175	53	16	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	102	31	182	55	19	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	141	43	158	48	14	4	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	82	25	173	53	37	11	10	3
The school is led and managed effectively	141	43	163	50	14	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	154	47	157	48	10	3	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



4 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Pimlico Academy, Westminster, SW1V 3AT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your academy recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you. We were impressed by how polite and courteous you were. We judged that Pimlico Academy is an outstanding academy.

Congratulations to all of you who regularly attend and are punctual to lessons and activities, as this has helped you be successful in your studies. Between Years 7 and 11, most of you make outstanding progress in your learning and attain above average standards in GCSE examinations. If you are not making the progress you should, the school is very quick at providing you with excellent subject support outside lessons. We were impressed by the inspirational displays of your work around the building - well done! The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding. The academy's highly responsive curriculum and many stimulating extra-curricular opportunities you have, help you achieve success in your studies and develop as responsible and caring citizens. The academy has raised your aspirations and provides you with excellent advice and guidance on the courses to take in Years 9 and 11 and prepares you very well for the next stages in your learning and life.

To help the academy improve further, we have asked senior leaders to do the following.

Monitor your progress and learning more closely during lesson observations and help teachers plan more appropriate activities and questioning that helps all of you achieve your potential, especially boys, those who are more able and those who receive additional support outside lessons.

Improve outcomes further in the sixth form through providing you with a greater choice of more appropriate courses for some of you and more supportive induction for Year 12 students.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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