

City of London Academy - Islington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135587
Local Authority	None
Inspection number	361464
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater 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	769
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Regan
Principal	Ms Ann Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Prebend Street Islington, London N1 8PQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 41 lessons, gave feedback on the lessons to the 41 teachers seen, and held meetings with parents, groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the academy's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the academy's monitoring and evaluation of lessons and students' attendance and progress, improvement and curriculum plans, minutes of meetings held by the governing body, and key policies and procedures including safeguarding, equality and diversity. In addition, they looked at the questionnaires completed by 150 students and 33 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of more-able students, boys in English, and students eligible for free school meals, to determine whether teaching, especially teachers' use of targets and assessment, is sufficiently challenging.
- Progress in developing students' literacy skills.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the academy.
- The quality of monitoring and evaluating students' learning and progress.

Information about the school

The academy is sponsored by the City of London Corporation and City University London. Its specialist subjects are business and enterprise. The academy opened in September 2008 in the premises previously occupied by its predecessor school. It moved into its new building, on the same site, and extended to post-16 provision, in September 2010. A special school for students with physical disability is due to open on the shared site in 2011. The principal took up the posts of principal designate in February 2008 and of principal in September of the same year. The academy is smaller than most secondary schools and there are more than twice as many boys than girls. The proportions of students known to be eligible for free school meals, from minority ethnic groups and with home languages other than English, are high. A high proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, covering a wide range of needs but mainly behavioural, emotional and social difficulty or specific learning difficulty. An above-average number of students join or leave the academy other than at the usual times. There were significant changes in staffing during the past two years, but staffing is now stable. The academy recently gained an award from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for Parental Engagement and was awarded International School 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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The academy is satisfactory and improving rapidly. In the two years since the academy opened, the principal, ably supported by senior leaders and managers, has embedded ambition and driven improvement effectively in all areas of its work. As a result, much of the academy's work is good and some is outstanding. This is driving improvements in teaching and students' achievement, which are satisfactory. Through robust self-evaluation, challenging targets and appropriate priorities in improvement plans, the principal and leadership team have raised teachers' expectations of students' academic and personal development. As a result, students' attendance is improving rapidly, significant progress has been made in English and mathematics, and good improvements are evident in other outcomes. While attainment is low due to variable performance across subjects and students' weak literacy skills, it is improving strongly and promoting students' satisfactory achievement. There is no significant variation in the achievement of different groups. The governing body is highly challenging and supportive of the academy's work and holds subject leaders to account for public examination results. It provides strong links to higher education through City University London and to companies in the City of London, which enhance the academy's specialist status and raise students' aspirations. The rapid progress has been sustained whilst the principal and senior staff managed the building of the new academy on the same site as the existing school, and managed the successful transfer into the new building. Given the rate and extent of progress, especially during these conditions, the academy has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Procedures for safeguarding students, and their care, guidance and support are outstanding, particularly in the engagement of external agencies to support students and their families. The academy knows each individual student very well and monitors their personal development rigorously. As a result, attendance is good and behaviour is satisfactory and improving. The academy makes an outstanding contribution to promoting community cohesion through its international links. Students value diversity within and outside the academy. Consequently, they work and play together well.

The curriculum is good and improving rapidly. It is broad, balanced and flexible to meet the differing needs of the students, for example in the provision of study support or early public examination entry. It leads to most students continuing their education or training. While at the time of the inspection the sixth form had been in existence for only three months, evidence shows that it is good. It is supported well by high quality links with City of London University.

Due to significant staffing changes in the past two years, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but with an increasing proportion of good teaching. It promotes students' satisfactory learning and progress in lessons. In the majority of lessons, teachers do not use targets or assessment to set tasks at different levels to support and challenge

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all students, particularly the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good progress. In addition, students are given limited opportunities to develop their literacy and independent learning skills, for instance in researching, investigating or problem solving. Relationships between staff and students are positive in all lessons, although there is some low level disruption in lessons that do not engage all students. In these lessons, behaviour management strategies are not applied consistently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment across all subjects to ensure it more closely matches the national average by improving the quality of learning and accelerating progress in lessons.
- Improve the quality of learning and accelerate progress in lessons by:
 - improving teachers' use of targets and assessment to support and challenge all students, particularly more-able students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - increasing the opportunities for students to develop their literacy skills and to apply independent learning skills, for example in researching, investigating and problem solving
 - ensuring a consistent approach to behaviour management
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning are satisfactory. GCSE results over the past two years at five or more A*-G grades are in line with the national average and at five or more A*-C grades including English and mathematics are well below average but above the government's target. The quality of students' learning and their progress are satisfactory in the majority of lessons and improving rapidly in English and mathematics. Students say they make good progress in their mathematics and science lessons because they know their target levels or grades and how to improve their work to reach the targets. This is not the case in all subjects. Students enjoy the practical tasks in mathematics and science, such as problem solving, using computers for data handling, and investigations. They say music and humanities lessons also 'are fun' because they involve performing, debating and presentations, but they do not find all subjects so engaging. Boys in particular would welcome a more varied approach to support their writing in English. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as other students in lessons where they are supported by teaching assistants. Their needs are not met consistently in all lessons because teachers have received limited guidance on how to support those students in their lessons with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Students say they feel safe in the academy and that any bullying is addressed robustly. They are confident to talk to staff if they have any concerns. They say that behaviour is improving and that everyone is friendly. Behaviour was seen to be satisfactory in lessons, and around the academy students of all age groups were getting on well together.

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Through the curriculum, and good participation in sport and healthy lunch options, students develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They make a good contribution to the academy and the community, for example as members of the academy council, in fund raising for charity, performing for local elderly residents and, in particular, as ambassadors who help to ensure the academy is an orderly community. While students have many opportunities to develop workplace skills, their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology result in this area being satisfactory. Students' attendance is improving rapidly and is now good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are encouraged to reflect on religious and moral issues, as in assemblies. Their social and cultural experiences are especially strong, for example through the performing arts in the academy and in visits to venues in London, and also through international links with other cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

While the majority of teaching is satisfactory, a minority is good. Good and outstanding teaching is characterised by effective planning that leads students from their prior knowledge to new learning objectives through a variety of suitable tasks. For example, in an English lesson, good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to ascertain students' understanding and to model expectations of the required new skills. This enabled students to work independently on identifying writing techniques. Similarly, the pace of learning

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was brisk in a mathematics lesson where the teacher engaged groups of students in solving problems at different levels of challenge, and extended their explanations through probing questions. Satisfactory and inadequate lessons are characterised by all students being led by the teacher through the same tasks regardless of their abilities, with limited opportunities to respond or to develop their skills independently.

The good curriculum includes discrete business and enterprise lessons that make an effective contribution to developing students' understanding of financial management. Students have extensive opportunities to apply these strategies, for instance in running the academy shop, bank and juice bar. They also apply good organisational and leadership skills, for example as junior sports leaders in local primary schools. The curriculum is extended by a good range of well attended extra-curricular clubs and visits. While targeted support for some students is helping to address their weak literacy and numeracy skills, there are limited opportunities in lessons to develop the skills of all students in these areas.

A feature of the academy's outstanding care, guidance and support is the excellent use it makes of an extensive range of external agencies to support the health, safety and welfare of vulnerable students and their families. Its wide range of intervention programmes result in improved behaviour, attendance, attitudes to learning and achievement. Students say their learning mentors know and support them well and they feel well informed to make choices about future courses of study.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Subject leaders are developing appropriate skills in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Together with senior leaders, they promote improvements. While the rate of progress has been affected by staffing changes, which are now stable, good procedures are in place to ensure it accelerates. A new system for monitoring the progress of students across all subjects has been introduced recently. It enables students' performance to be evaluated each term and, consequently, underachievement to be addressed more promptly. The system is not being used consistently by all teachers to ensure lessons support and challenge all students to make good progress towards their targets.

The academy engages parents and carers successfully in its work, as confirmed by its recently attained award. An extensive range of partnerships contribute effectively to students' improving learning and well-being. Due to the academy's effective policies and procedures for promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, there is no

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significant difference in students' attainment by gender, ethnicity or ability. Given that students' outcomes are satisfactory at this point in time, the academy provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	3

Sixth form

In the majority of the six lessons observed in the sixth form it is clear that students enjoy their learning and are making good progress from starting points that are lower than is usual for access to AS level courses. Good progress is confirmed by the academy's monitoring of students' progress towards their targets. Students are aware of their target grades and know what is required to achieve them. Their attendance and punctuality are good. They make a good contribution to the academy, for example as mentors to younger students and in leading various extra-curricular activities. The quality of provision is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge engages students in well focused discussions to develop their ideas and concepts. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Students say they value the provision of good information, advice and guidance about university and other training and employment opportunities. In the short time that the sixth form has been open, it has been well led and managed. Students' views are taken into account and there is a good match of courses to their needs. Self-evaluation of the sixth form is rigorous and informs its future development well.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
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

Overall, parents and carers are happy with the work of the academy. The lead inspector met with a group of parents and carers who confirmed a comment written in a questionnaire that communication with staff was outstanding. They praised the 'very helpful teachers'. A few parents and carers expressed concern in the questionnaires that the academy is not meeting their children's particular needs. The inspectors found that the academy is improving its procedures for the identification of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for monitoring their progress. Some information has been given to teachers to support students' learning in lessons, but this remains work in progress. A few parents and carers do not feel that the academy helps them to support their children's learning. The parents and carers who met with the inspector commented that they do not know what their children are learning because few teachers set homework. Inspectors found that the setting of homework is inconsistent across subjects. In addition, students are not informed how they can improve their work in all subjects. The academy is aware of these concerns, and concerns about lunch arrangements, and is addressing the issues.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at City of London Academy - Islington 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 769 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	33	20	61	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	21	26	79	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	42	16	48	3	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	30	20	61	2	6	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	6	18	24	73	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	18	21	64	5	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	15	23	70	3	9	0	0
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)	9	27	19	58	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	15	20	61	5	15	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	36	19	58	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	15	20	61	4	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	24	19	58	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	36	18	55	2	6	0	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.



3 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of City of London Academy - Islington, London N1 8PQ

Thank you for the support you gave to the inspectors when we visited the academy recently. We enjoyed seeing, and talking to you, in lessons and meeting with some of you. The following is what we found out.

The academy's GCSE results are improving. We have asked the academy to bring them closer in line with most schools.

Your achievement is satisfactory because your learning and progress in lessons are satisfactory. We have asked the academy to improve the quality of your learning and to accelerate your progress to ensure it is good in all lessons.

You feel safe in school and your behaviour overall is satisfactory. We have asked teachers to ensure everyone's behaviour is good in all lessons.

Most of you adopt healthy lifestyles and make a good contribution to the academy and your community, for example as members of the academy council and ambassadors.

Your attendance is improving rapidly and you are prepared appropriately for the workplace.

Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and you enjoy a growing number of links with schools in different parts of the world.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. We have asked your teachers to make better use of targets and assessment to support and challenge all of you to make good progress, and to enable more of you to reach higher grades.

While you have good opportunities to learn different things within and outside of lessons, we have asked your teachers to develop your literacy and independent learning skills, for example in doing more research, investigations and problem solving.

The staff provide outstanding care, guidance and support for you.

The academy's leaders and managers do a good job.

The new sixth form is good.

We hope you continue to enjoy and take pride in your excellent new building and facilities. We hope also that you make the most of the many opportunities you have to continue to learn and gain good skills for your future education and employment.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

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