

Capital City Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134226
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381639
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	Calvin Pike

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Maintained
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	1200
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Lowe
Headteacher	Alex Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
School address	Doyle Gardens London NW10 3ST
Telephone number	020 8838 8700
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Introduction

Inspection team

Calvin Pike	Additional inspector
David Turner	Additional inspector
Elizabeth Dickson	Additional inspector
Jennifer Bax	Additional inspector
Natasha Campbell	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 42 lessons delivered by 40 teachers, two assemblies and tutor group sessions. Seven of the lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior management team. Inspectors met with staff, including senior and middle managers, students from all key stages, and spoke to representatives of the trustee board of governors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at the academy's self-evaluation and planning documents, policies and minutes of the trustee's board and committees, performance data, safeguarding procedures and students' work in lessons. Inspectors considered the responses to questionnaires from 112 parents and carers, 150 students and 105 staff.

Information about the school

Capital City is larger than most secondary academies, with increasing numbers in the sixth form. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is higher than found nationally. Just under a tenth of students are of White British heritage. Of the many other ethnic groups in the academy, students with African, Caribbean and other White backgrounds represent the largest. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is five times the national average, although relatively few are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The academy meets the current government floor standards which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has sports and arts specialisms and has gained Sportsmark and Artsmark awards.

Since the last inspection, a new principal took up post in 2009 and senior leadership responsibilities have been restructured.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Capital City is a good academy that is improving quickly. Key factors influencing its accelerating progress are the principal's drive and trustees' constructive challenge to raise standards. Although attainment has risen consistently since the previous inspection, the academy is not outstanding as some variations in teaching quality hold back the progress of a small minority of students. The sixth form is good.

- Students achieve well from their starting points which are significantly below average. Attainment in Year 11, with the proportion of students gaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics, is broadly average. Unevenness in achievement between subjects and student groups is reducing, particularly for lower and middle attaining students. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

Good teaching across the school is characterised by clear planning and effective questioning that helps students develop independence in their learning, particularly in outstanding lessons. In the smaller proportion of satisfactory teaching, activities do not always match students' needs well and the quality of marking is uneven.

- Students' behaviour is satisfactory. Some students display negative attitudes towards learning and poor behaviour, as noted by a significant minority of students and their parents and carers. Most students say they feel safe, and their parents and carers agree. Attendance has improved over recent years and is now in line with that found nationally.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and managers have taken decisive action and improved teaching. Expectations of middle leaders and other staff are well defined. Performance management is secured through regular lesson observations. Although all middle leaders evaluate the quality of learning, a small minority do not do so robustly enough to raise standards consistently in their departments. The board of trustees supports the school well, knows the academy's strengths and weaknesses, and offers constructive

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challenge.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students attaining five high-grade GCSEs including English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use available information about students' progress to set challenging targets and select tasks that match students' needs
 - students have more opportunities to develop independence in their learning
 - all teachers mark students' work regularly, giving clear written feedback that shows them what to do to improve
 - leaders at all levels evaluate the work of their teams regularly, robustly and consistently to promote good learning and raise attainment for all groups of students.

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by sharing the good practice that already exists within the school to ensure that:
 - the learning objectives of all lessons build systematically on students' prior attainment
 - all teachers use probing questioning to check students' skills, knowledge and understanding and then amend tasks or levels of support in lessons when students have either learned quickly or are struggling to succeed
 - led by the senior leadership team, all staff understand and consistently apply a common set of approaches to improve students' behaviour and attitudes where they are less than good, and enable more students to become adept at managing their own behaviour within lessons and around the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most students enter the academy with standards that are significantly below average. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has risen consistently over the last four years and is just below average. The academy's attainment data and observations by inspectors indicate that gaps in performance between subjects are closing. In most lessons, students are keen to participate and contribute. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, students responded well to distinguish features of simple, complex and compound sentences. They applied this learning to analyse extracts from 'Tom Sawyer' and later wrote paragraphs to describe their own feelings.

Although girls made better progress than boys last year, their combined overall progress was faster than national averages. Lower and middle-attaining students made good progress but some higher attaining students did not achieve as well as

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expected. Inspection evidence shows that interventions are enhancing the progress of all students, including higher attainers, in most lessons. Achievement in English is stronger than in mathematics, especially for girls. Students use their literacy skills well in a range of subjects but are less practised or confident in applying their number and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.

Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress because their different language needs are identified early and provision enables them to acquire English quickly. African, Caribbean and white students who are not British made good progress. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make good progress due to the effective strategies that have been developed to support them in lessons and in focused groups. Students who join the school at other than the usual transfer times are helped to settle well and make good progress. Past data and inspection observations show that students eligible for free school meals have made better progress than their peers nationally for the last three years. They continue to achieve well. Questionnaire responses from the vast majority of parents and carers were very positive about the progress made by their children, which supports the inspection findings.

Quality of teaching

The majority of students, parents and carers consider that teaching is good. Inspection evidence agrees with this view and confirms the academy's records that show improving teaching as a result of well-focused continuing professional development in recent years. The good teaching is enhanced with some outstanding teaching in the sixth form and Years 10 and 11, although there is some satisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9. Teaching in English is consistently stronger than in mathematics. Across the curriculum, strengths are most evident in science, modern foreign languages and the academy's specialisms of art and sports.

In the best lessons teachers' expectations and the pace of learning for all are high. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and the well-planned curriculum, combined with awareness of students' progress, to plan lessons and precise interventions that build effectively on prior attainment. Students respond enthusiastically when activities are challenging and tasks are related to real-life situations. Year 10 students, for example, engaged quickly in a science lesson concerned with the salt content in familiar food products. They calculated and explained the implications of salt levels in their own diets and for the country as a whole. Well-focused questioning is used to check students' learning, give feedback, and enable students to assess each other to support improvement. On one such occasion, Year 10 art students created different textures in clay that linked with photographs taken on a recent trip, and then used shared criteria to evaluate each others' work.

Where teaching is less effective the activities set are not well matched to students' needs because plans do not always take full account of their previous learning. In this small minority of lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough for

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students to make consistently good or better progress. Teachers often talk too much with the result that students have limited opportunities to work independently. In these cases, teachers do not always assess students' levels of understanding while the lesson is taking place. Consequently, in these lessons the pace of learning is slowed up for some students when they become disengaged for short periods as they do not understand or the work is too easy.

Most pupils know how well they are doing as a result of regular testing in most subject departments, but the quality of day-to-day marking and feedback to students varies considerably. Consequently, students do not always know how to improve their work. Where teachers' feedback is informative, most students apply the advice given in order to move to the next stages of learning. The academy's good curriculum enables teachers to enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through separate citizenship and personal, social and health education courses. Teaching effectively supports this aspect of students' development in individual lessons and by planned links between subjects. Year 10 students in a religious education lesson, for example, confidently discussed the responses of different religious groups to transplant surgery and organ donation.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The large majority of questionnaire responses from students, parents and carers indicate that students feel safe in the school. Discussions with students confirmed this view. The academy's procedures for ensuring students' safety are robust and well managed. Although there is good behaviour based on mutually respectful relationships in most classes, a small minority of students become disengaged in some lessons and show limited ability to manage their own behaviour well. This is also sometimes evident when students move around the building. As a result, the pace of learning in a small proportion of lessons is held up, and the positive ethos of the school is affected by the behaviour of relatively few students. Although the academy has begun to focus on this issue, not all staff are vigilant in applying systems consistently to ensure the behaviour of all students is consistently good.

Students have many opportunities to develop team and leadership skills. As elected members of the school council, they contribute to the academy's evaluation of its success and decisions for its future. Students lead assemblies and initiate fund-raising activities for charities, such as Childline, and local and international communities. Routinely, older students take leadership roles, including as sports leaders, which help support and organise younger students at the start of day, during lunchtimes and after school. Large numbers of students log their voluntary work to earn 'The Leadership Academy' recognition.

Students and staff respect each others' viewpoints and beliefs, creating a cohesive community. Students recognise the academy's emphasis on raising their awareness of the wide range of bullying and safety issues. Mirroring the academy's carefully kept records, they confirmed that incidents of bullying, including of a physical, cyber or emotional type, were rare. When they occur, students considered that such

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incidents were dealt with effectively. In recent years, exclusions have been reduced and attendance rates have been improved.

Leadership and management

The principal's drive and ambition for students to achieve well, combined with the support and challenge offered by the board of trustees, underpin the academy's continued improvement. Developments in the roles of senior managers, including the introduction of directors of teaching and learning roles, have focused on raising the quality of provision. As a result, students make progress at a faster rate than is found nationally and gaps in performance of different groups are closing quickly. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, progress well because systems to support them have improved ensuring that provision now matches their needs effectively. These developments demonstrate that the academy promotes equality well, mirroring its good systems for tackling all forms of discrimination and its effective arrangements for safeguarding all students.

Professional development opportunities have been carefully directed towards areas identified by the academy as being relatively weak. Most teachers welcome these, although a small proportion of staff consider that the academy's policies are not implemented consistently. This is because while middle leaders monitor and evaluate provision for students in the areas for which they are responsible, some do not do so regularly or robustly enough to ensure that teaching is consistently good. To address this issue the academy has shared good practice more systematically to embed it firmly in all departments. Strong leadership from trustees and senior leaders and good leadership from the vast majority of middle managers, coupled with consistently improving outcomes over recent years, show that the academy has good capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum is good because it is well balanced and enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the academy. Progression routes to the sixth form are good. Careful planning, support and interventions ensure equal opportunities for learning within subjects. Good cross-curricular links help students to apply their skills and understanding in different subjects. This, together with separate lessons in citizenship and in personal, social and health education and good teaching ensure students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In recent years the curriculum in the sixth form has improved and it is now good as it offers a range of courses to suit students' interests and aspirations for the future. With effective advice and guidance, this has had a significant impact in encouraging students to remain to the end of Year 13 and improve their success in examinations.

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 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Capital City Academy, London, NW10 3ST

Thank you for the welcoming us when we visited recently. We enjoyed being part of your lessons and listening to your views. What you and your parents and carers told us in your questionnaires helped us when we were making our judgements. We judged that Capital City is a good academy. These are some of the things we found.

- You make good progress and the gaps in attainment between different groups of students in the academy are closing quickly.
- In most lessons you are keen to learn, enjoy lessons and behave well, but a small proportion of you lose interest quickly. These students sometimes display behaviour which holds up their own progress and that of others.
- The quality of teaching is good. However, this varies as some of it is not as strong, while in other lessons it is outstanding.
- You feel safe because many people in the academy take care of you.
- The academy provides you with interesting things to learn in most lessons and a good range of extra clubs and activities in which you can develop team building and leadership skills. This supports your good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

To accelerate you progress, we have asked your academy to raise the standards you achieve, especially for higher-attaining students. We have asked all teachers to use information about your progress to challenge all of you fully, and give you more opportunities to work independently. We want them to check your understanding regularly and change what are doing if you have understood it quickly or are struggling. We also want them to give you clear written feedback that shows you what to do to improve when they mark your work. We have asked leaders at all levels to ensure staff use common approaches to help all students manage their own behaviours in lessons and around the school.

You can help by letting your teacher know when you find the work too difficult or too easy.

Yours sincerely

Calvin Pike
Lead inspector

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