

London Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134798
Local Authority	NA
Inspection number	381745
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline White 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1464
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip O' Hear
Headteacher	Angela Trigg (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2007
School address	Spur Road Edgware Middlesex HA8 8DE
Telephone number	020 8238 1100
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Email address	office@londonacademy.org.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 52 lessons and 50 teachers. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, and groups of students. They observed the academy's work and looked at its data on students' performance, and records of the support provided to them and of their progress. Inspectors scrutinised the academy's improvement plans, policies and procedures, including health and safety and risk assessments. The inspection team analysed 48 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and 147 from students.

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

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across subjects, but particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in raising students' attainment.
- The success of strategies to improve students' literacy skills.

Information about the school

London Academy, which has joint specialisms of business, enterprise, information and communication technology and applied learning, is larger than most academies and there are more boys than girls than in most mixed schools. A high proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Over two thirds of the students are of minority ethnic heritage. This proportion is much higher than average. The main groups are of Asian and Black African heritage. Approximately 43% of the students speak English as an additional language. A much higher proportion of students than in most secondary schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The academy has local authority-designated specially resourced provision for special educational needs for 30 students who have speech and communication difficulties.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The academy provides a good standard of education for its students and some aspects of its work are outstanding. Within an extremely caring and supportive environment, students, including those in the sixth form, many of whom face considerable challenges in their young lives, flourish and achieve well. The Principal's clear vision of a learning community that develops in its students the skills and values that will enable them to live their lives as respectful, caring and responsible citizens is both shared and realised. Throughout the inspection, students spoke with feeling about their pride in the academy. Their good behaviour and high attendance indicate their commitment to, and enjoyment of, learning. One comment from a student reflected the sentiments of many: 'I like it here. They help me do my best and I feel as though I matter.'

The academy is an inclusive community that celebrates its diversity and is highly successful in promoting equality of opportunity. Students respect each other and have a keen appreciation of how enriching their multicultural context is. They say they feel absolutely safe at the academy and are in no doubt that issues they raise will be taken seriously and dealt with efficiently by staff. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins students' rising aspirations and growing self-confidence.

Talented and cohesive senior leadership has been effective in improving outcomes for students. Rigorous monitoring of students' progress and ambitious target setting has raised attainment. There are inconsistencies in teaching but, overall, it is good. Well-focused interventions, revision sessions and personalised support contribute powerfully to students' good achievement. Overall, students make at least good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those students with speech and communication difficulties who receive specialised support achieve well and are fully included in academy life. The most effective teaching is characterised by skilful questioning that challenges students to think hard to develop their responses, and imaginative, challenging activities that require them to apply their understanding and exercise independence. These strengths are not yet shared by all teachers. In addition, some teachers are yet to develop sufficient expertise in using the available, detailed information about students' prior attainment to ensure a tight match between learning objectives and students' needs.

The good curriculum offers students extensive choice and is tailored to their needs.

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The academy's specialisms broaden and enrich provision and have precipitated mutually beneficial partnerships. For instance, the academy led a cluster of schools in developing a business and finance diploma. The Education Business Partnership has worked with the academy on several curriculum initiatives, such as master classes in business and modern foreign languages. Excellent partnership work supports students' good achievement and the outstanding aspects of their personal development and well-being. For example, partnerships enhance opportunities for students to become involved in community activities and develop a sense of belonging and duty. Students welcome responsibility and make an exceptional contribution to the success of the academy and the wider community.

A considerable number of students join the academy with literacy skills that are underdeveloped. There are carefully designed programmes to accelerate students' acquisition of these crucial skills but a comprehensive cross-curricular approach to their development is not yet embedded.

The academy is highly self-evaluative; improvement plans are focused on the right priorities and systems for monitoring its work are comprehensive. Middle leaders are fully involved in these processes. Some subject leaders are still gaining experience in reading the strategic messages derived from monitoring and translating them into actions that generate consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. However, as a team, middle leaders are a considerable and highly committed force for improvement. Alongside senior leaders, the governing body is very dedicated to the success, safety and well-being of every student. This unswerving focus underpins good capacity for sustained improvement. Impact is evident in students' rising attainment, improved attendance and the development of an ethos in which students thrive. In the words of the academy's mission statement, students are inspired 'to be leaders for tomorrow'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching and learning at least good by tackling inconsistencies in classroom practice and planning. Continue to give emphasis to:
 - embedding a cross-curricular approach to the development of literacy skills
 - using assessment information to plan learning activities that stretch all students appropriately
 - sharing the best practice in developing students' capacity to learn independently and apply understanding
 - developing subject leaders so they are equally expert in driving improvements in teaching and learning.

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Achievement is good. When students join the academy in Year 7 their attainment is low, particularly in literacy. From their starting points, they make good progress, with many making outstanding progress. Inspection evidence, provisional performance data and the academy's assessment information show that attainment is rising and broadly average at the end of Year 11. Provisional data for 2011 show an increase in students achieving the higher A* to C grades in GCSE English, mathematics and science, and marked improvement in the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, compared to results in 2010.

All groups of students from all ethnic heritages, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those entitled to receive free school meals, make comparable rates of progress. The excellent support for those made potentially vulnerable by personal circumstances and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities enable most of these students to make at least good progress. There are no underperforming groups of students. However, there remains some variation in achievement between different subjects.

Learning was good in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection. Most students are interested, diligent learners. In the best lessons, they engage wholeheartedly with the challenging targets they are set and have good opportunities to work independently or in small groups where the pace is appropriate to their needs. In some lessons, although students' progress was satisfactory, teacher exposition tended to dominate and some students did not move on to higher levels of learning when they were ready to.

There is genuine warmth and high levels of trust between staff and students. Incidents of any kind of bullying or harassment are rare and are dealt with effectively. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy was consistently good with most displaying common sense and consideration for others. Students have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and show insight and maturity in reflecting on moral and social issues. Much emphasis is placed on developing students' awareness of potential risks to their health and well-being and, consequently, they have an excellent understanding of these matters. Students demonstrate an ability to think deeply about the benefits and responsibilities of multiculturalism. As one student said: 'We come from all over, we get on and we make the most of each other.'

Students realise their own capacity for their future economic well-being through their high attendance and good punctuality. They develop enterprise skills, personal qualities and team work by participating in a wide range of clubs, competitions and educational visits. The academy knows and understands the context of its students and families extremely well. Students' diverse needs are identified quickly and well supported. For the vast majority, this helps to secure appropriate and relevant provision for their future education, employment and well-being.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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

How effective is the provision?

In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations that require students to think for themselves and take responsibility for their learning. These teachers use good subject knowledge and a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in students' learning to plan and deliver lessons that challenge them. Stimulating activities that include opportunities for collaboration engage students and secure their participation. Assessment provides precise feedback about how students can improve their work. Learning is evaluated throughout lessons against clear, shared success criteria. Students are encouraged and supported in assessing their own and other's work. For example, in an enterprise lesson, students made outstanding progress in creating high-quality presentations because they had been involved in developing sophisticated success criteria for their work and, through detailed discussion, sustained by excellent questioning from the teacher, used them to evaluate the quality of their work. Where practice is less effective, teachers do not challenge students as skilfully and, in particular, fail to extend the more able. Often this is because their use of assessment information when planning lessons is less precise, lessons are too teacher-led, a 'one-size fits all' pace prevails and opportunities to accelerate learning are missed.

The curriculum is continually revised to meet the needs of students and offers a wide

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

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range of vocational and academic courses in Key Stage 4. The curriculum’s effectiveness is reflected in the rising number of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above. In 2010, this figure was significantly above the national average at 81%. Learning is enhanced by the high take-up of a variety of well-run, accessible enrichment activities.

Exceptionally high levels of support and care are carefully targeted to improve the confidence, self-esteem and achievement of all students. Transition arrangements between key stages and on entry to, and departure from, the academy are well thought through, reduce potential stress and support successful outcomes for students. Those students whom circumstances make potentially vulnerable benefit greatly from personalised programmes that include meticulously coordinated support from a number of agencies.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

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Senior leaders are highly ambitious for students and tenacious in building on and sustaining improvements. The drive to improve teaching is at the heart of their agenda. They have faced a significant challenge this year in inducting a relatively high number of inexperienced teachers to the academy. Strong line-management and systematic professional development provide effective support and challenge to staff.

The well-organised governing body works closely with senior leaders to shape the strategic direction of the academy. It provides good support and challenge and is unstintingly committed to the improvement of students’ life opportunities.

There is a thorough approach to managing the safety of students, including safe recruitment procedures, clear guidance and principles on child protection and sound risk assessments. Staff work very effectively with a range of external agencies, such as the police, health and social services, to promote the safety and well-being of all students. The academy invites, and responds to, the views of parents and carers. Regular, well attended consultation evenings together with interim and end of year reports keep parents and carers well informed of their child’s progress.

The academy is a harmonious and highly cohesive community that knows its context very well. It makes a thoughtful, sustained positive contribution to its local neighbourhood. Students’ global perspective and understanding of the spectrum of different communities within the United Kingdom is less well developed.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

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

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good, with recent improvements in outcomes for the students arising out of effective leadership and management. Most students make good progress from their starting points. The progress of individuals is closely monitored and variation in students’ performance is reducing. The percentage of students achieving A* to E grades in most AS and A-level, including applied, courses has risen above the national average. This is as a result of consistently good teaching and the high-quality, individualised support that students receive. In well-planned and structured lessons, students benefit from teachers’ good subject knowledge. They greatly appreciate the strength of their relationships with staff and recognise this as an important factor in their enjoyment of learning.

Students’ personal development is good. They feel safe, express loyalty to the academy and make a valuable contribution to its ethos. Sixth formers are good role models often leading the way in fund raising for charitable organisations and mentoring younger students. The guidance programme raises students’ aspirations and ensures they are confident and well informed about opportunities in higher education and the world of work.

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

Approximately 3% of parents and carers replied to the inspection questionnaire. The academy believes this below-average response is because it asked parents and carers to complete a very similar questionnaire only recently. Although few in number, the parents and carers who returned questionnaires were highly supportive of the academy and unanimous in agreeing that their children enjoy attending it.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at London 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1464 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	46	26	54	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	58	19	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	25	52	21	44	0	0	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	40	28	58	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	42	26	54	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	48	21	44	1	2	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	27	31	65	3	6	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)	21	44	21	44	4	8	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	20	42	27	56	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	29	32	67	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	25	31	65	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	48	22	46	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	21	44	26	54	1	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



11 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of the London Academy, Edgware HA8 8DE

Thank you very much for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your academy recently. We were impressed by your courtesy, helpfulness and the great pride that you take in the academy. These are our main findings.

- Yours is a good academy where you feel absolutely safe and very well cared for.
- Your high attendance, outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, good behaviour and good teaching and learning combine to ensure you all achieve well.
- The academy is very successful in encouraging you to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the academy and the wider community.
- The curriculum meets your needs well and you appreciate the good number of clubs and activities available. The academy works extremely well with other organisations to enhance your learning experiences and personal development.
- In the good sixth form, attainment is rising and students enjoy their studies.
- Leaders, managers and members of the governing body are doing a good job in running the academy and know its strengths and areas for development well.

The academy's leaders are ambitious. They want to build on its success and ensure you have the very best life opportunities. We worked together to consider the priorities for improvement. These included tackling some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, giving emphasis to how well your literacy and independent learning skills are promoted across the curriculum, and the further development of some subject leaders. You can help by working with your teachers to become more independent in your learning.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection. We hope you continue to enjoy academy life and wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White

Her Majesty's Inspector

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