

# City of London Academy - Islington

Prebend Street, Islington, London, N1 8PQ

**Inspection dates** 22–23 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students' achievement is good. Attainment is steadily rising and students are now making good progress from their starting points.
- Most groups of students make good progress as a result of the high quality care and the outstanding support provided to ensure that they can read well.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving strongly and so there is now a significant proportion of outstanding practice.
- The sixth form is good. Strong leadership is ensuring that sixth form teaching is good and achievement is rising.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students behave well in lessons and are polite and welcoming. They say that they feel safe and well cared for.
- The inspirational principal, well supported by leaders at all levels, including the outstanding governing body, has rapidly brought about change.
- The principal has been uncompromising in her high expectations of both staff and students and established outstanding procedures to raise the quality of teaching that have already had an impact on raising students' achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons teachers do not provide enough activities that enable students to contribute their ideas or that are exciting enough to involve them fully in their learning.
- Sometimes tasks are not sufficiently matched to students' abilities, being either too easy or too difficult.
- The quality of written marking is inconsistent so students are not always able to work independently towards their targets.
- Although students make good progress in the sixth form, the standards that they reach are not yet high enough because the courses provided do not always meet their individual needs.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, four of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, a representative of the governing body, a representative of the academy sponsors, and staff, including middle managers.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at: policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, data related to the tracking of students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of seven parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, along with two written communications from parents and 31 responses to the staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sa'ad Khaldi	Additional Inspector
Christopher Spencer	Additional Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above average with the largest group being of Turkish heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is very high.
- In 2011 the academy did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The Richard Cloudesly Special School, catering for severely disabled children, shares the same site.
- The academy sponsors are the City of London Corporation and the City University London. The academy is a business and enterprise specialist college.
- Nineteen students in Key Stages 3 and 4 follow alternative courses supporting their social and emotional needs. These courses offer a variety of vocational skills, combined with qualifications in English, mathematics and science.
- An executive principal took up post in May 2012 and a new principal was appointed from September 2012. The executive principal continues to provide support. A new sixth form leader has also been in post since September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment in the sixth form by:
  - ensuring that appropriate courses are provided to meet students' individual needs
  - sharing existing outstanding practice to develop teachers' skills further.
- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or outstanding, by:
  - always planning exciting, active tasks that engage the interest of all students and involve them fully in their learning
  - making sure that work is at the right level of difficulty to match students' individual abilities
  - fully promoting students' independent learning by providing them with opportunities to contribute their ideas
  - always providing clear written feedback on students' work to enable them to reach and exceed their targets.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with well below average levels in the basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics. Although in 2011 GCSE results and rates of progress were below those expected nationally, new leaders took rapid and effective action to tackle this, by setting high expectations of students' behaviour, improving attendance and dramatically raising the quality of teaching.
- Raised achievement in 2012 has been improved further. The academy's rigorous assessments indicate that the current Year 11 are now on track to reach average standards by the end of the year, and that most students are now exceeding expected rates of progress. An increasing proportion of students across the academy are now achieving the highest levels or grades.
- Although the academy has previously entered students for early GCSE science in Year 9, leaders have identified that this is not meeting students' needs sufficiently and have therefore decided not to do so in the future.
- Students enter the sixth form with below average GCSE qualifications. Although their attainment by the end of their courses remains below average, actions taken by the new sixth form leader to tackle this are beginning to show an impact and, during the inspection, the large majority of the lessons observed showed students to be making good or outstanding progress as a result of the good quality of teaching provided for them.
- The academy's actions to accelerate reading are outstanding. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, together with those at an early stage of learning English, receive support tailored to their individual needs. This results in rapid progress and in students showing increased self-confidence in reading, writing and speaking.
- There is a strong focus on promoting literacy across all subjects and teachers insist that students answer questions using correct grammar and in complete sentences. All students are expected to carry a reading book and read daily in tutor time. The library is popular and well used and students of all ages show enjoyment in reading.
- The academy provides very well for those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This is because the additional funding is spent on schemes to accelerate reading and to provide individual support for literacy and numeracy. The academy's tracking of progress indicates that the gap between their attainment and that of other students nationally is closing rapidly.
- Most students make good progress in lessons because of the good teaching they receive. They are keen to do well and in the best lessons are able to develop independence so that they are able to take responsibility for their own progress, for example by devising their own success criteria. However, not all students are involved in their learning in this way.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has shown rapid improvement and almost a quarter of lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding. Students told inspectors how much they value the improved teaching that 'helps us learn better and reach or exceed our targets'.
- There remains, however, some inconsistency, particularly in the way in which teachers plan their

lessons. This sometimes results in all students undertaking the same task rather than having it matched more closely to their individual abilities and this means that the more-able students find the task too easy.

- In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge extremely effectively. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, students were able to build and practise skills a little at a time, gaining confidence in their use of the language by repeatedly imitating their teacher in her expert pronunciation. The teacher's insistence that all the lesson was carried out in French in a fun and active way fully involved all students and enabled them to make rapid progress.
- Most teachers convey high expectations and ensure that their students understand what is required to gain the highest level or grade. Students say that teachers provide helpful verbal advice so that they know how to improve and develop their work. Some inconsistency, however, in the quality of written marking means that students do not always have a clear idea of their next steps in achieving their targets, or have the opportunity to respond to the advice given by practising skills or trying another challenge.
- In a few lessons teachers do not provide tasks that are sufficiently enjoyable or relevant to excite students in their learning. Occasionally there are too few opportunities for students to contribute their ideas or to develop independence.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students told inspectors how much they value the way that behaviour has improved since the executive principal took up post. They told inspectors that they are now able to learn better because their lessons are not disrupted and that they feel safe, secure and well cared for. Staff and the parents who responded to the survey, say that behaviour is now good.
  - Students behave well in lessons. Where teaching is less effective, they do occasionally lose concentration but respond quickly to teachers' reminders. Staff are consistent in the way that they manage behaviour and, as a result, students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
  - Leaders manage behaviour very effectively and use information from their detailed analysis of data to ensure that appropriate support is provided for those students who need it. Corridors are very well supervised by adults at all times, resulting in a calm and positive atmosphere.
  - Students are increasingly demonstrating respect and courtesy towards each other and adults. They say that they wear their distinctive uniform with pride and are proud of the changes in the academy. Older students support younger ones and students of all ages provide support for the severely disabled students from the nearby special school, who use the academy's dining facilities and for whom they act as mentors.
  - Students told inspectors that the academy works hard to eliminate all forms of bullying. They say that on the rare occasions it occurs it is dealt with sensitively and effectively. They are confident that they can approach any adult for support and appreciate that provided by the learning mentors. The academy has taken decisive action to tackle name-calling and derogatory language and students say that they are very clear that this will not be tolerated.
  - Alternative courses enable those who require extra support to follow courses combining work placements with qualifications. This has had a significant impact on keeping students at risk of
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exclusion engaged in their education. However, the academy does not check on students' attendance and progress on these courses closely enough to be able to judge how effective they are.

- The academy has tackled absence effectively and there are now good systems in place to ensure that students attend regularly. As a result, attendance rates have risen.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The principal has made raising the quality of teaching a key priority. Leaders check on the quality of teaching thoroughly and provide excellent support and training to improve it. This includes setting out their clear expectations of how each lesson should be planned and making all teachers aware of the success criteria for outstanding performance.
  - Those teachers whose practice is not yet good are closely supported and training provided, including the opportunity to be supported by outstanding practitioners. Pay rises and promotion are used effectively to reward good performance. As a result, the quality of teaching has dramatically improved and there is a high proportion of outstanding practice, although the impact of this has not yet been seen fully in examination results.
  - Leaders have identified that the variety of different subjects provided does not always fully meet the individual needs of students and enable them to achieve their potential and they are working to improve this. There is a whole-academy focus on literacy and the academy's provision for accelerating reading is a model of exemplary practice.
  - Students told inspectors that those from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together and show respect for beliefs different to their own. Students told inspectors how much they value the experience of supporting students from the special school. The new cadet force enables them to develop self-discipline and raise self-esteem. These activities support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, in addition to the opportunities provided in lessons to develop team work and to reflect on issues that affect them.
  - The pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide a wide variety of specialist and individual support, including the reading programme. This has resulted in the raising of achievement of this group of students. The impact of this funding is checked and analysed by leaders.
  - The academy fosters good relations with parents and provides effective support for those families facing challenging circumstances. It ensures that all students are treated equally and that discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
  - Leaders have a strong vision for the sixth form and have completely overhauled the provision to ensure that students succeed academically and are well supported. However, attainment is below average because not all courses are well matched to students' abilities and there have been inconsistencies in how well teachers deliver them. Leaders check students' progress closely and ensure that assessment is accurate. While there have been recent improvements in teaching there has not been enough sharing of existing outstanding practice. As a result of the changes already established, students are now increasingly making good progress towards their targets.
  - The academy sponsors have ensured that the academy is now under strong leadership and that a long-term vision for improvement has been established. Their appointment of an interim
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executive principal and a principal has ensured that the key areas for improvement have been quickly addressed.

- The new leaders of the academy have taken rapid action to provide the high quality of teaching and care, guidance and support that enable all students to reach their potential. The changes they have made have resulted in the increased self-confidence and raised aspirations of students and a strong ethos of staff team work. The progress of students is meticulously tracked and analysed and all teachers held to account for students' performance. The academy shows a strong capacity to improve further.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are very well informed and both support the academy's leaders and hold them to account very effectively. They promote high quality teaching and express their pride in the recent improvements. They keep a close check on what is happening, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and are fully involved in planning for future improvement. They understand about performance management and how this is linked to pay progression. They are aware of the performance of different groups of students in relation to similar schools and of how effectively the pupil premium funding is being allocated, fully checking on the difference the funding is making for eligible students. They ensure that all safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and that the policies and procedures for improving behaviour and safety have been effective. Governors ensure that they receive the professional training they need to develop further.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135587
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	406610

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	704
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	95
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Regan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare Verga (Principal) Mark Emmerson (Interim Executive Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2010
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