

King Solomon Academy

Penfold Street, London, NW1 6RX

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The academy's mission, 'To provide a rigorous and transformational education that prepares our pupils for success at university and beyond' has become a reality at this outstanding academy. Endeavour, trust and concern for others prevail.
- The headteachers model excellence in their work and demonstrate determination, rigour, foresight and creativity.
- Leadership at all levels ensures an unyielding pursuit of excellence. Pupils, staff and parents are proud to be associated with the academy.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are welcoming, courteous and polite to each other, staff and visitors at all times. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning, are happy and feel very safe. Pupils support each other's learning very effectively.
- Achievement is outstanding at all key stages. All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make excellent progress. The academy is working to provide even greater challenge to the most-able pupils.
- Pupils' progress is much higher than the national average, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The overall quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers' expert subject knowledge inspires pupils to be highly motivated, enthusiastic learners. There are slight inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking.
- Academy leaders regularly analyse and review the performance of every pupil thus ensuring that any lack of progress is acted on quickly and effectively.
- Concern for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional; it permeates all their activities.
- Governors are very knowledgeable and have an accurate view of the academy. They are supportive but not afraid to set demanding targets for leaders and staff. As a result, leaders and governors ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve.
- The academy's significant links with other organisations (for example, City Year) have a highly positive impact on the academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, of which 6 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors observed an assembly, joined the pupils for lunch and observed the start-of-day routines.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, the Director of Education for ARK (the academy sponsor) and a member of the governing body.
- Inspectors studied a wide range of information about the work of the academy, analysing pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, the quality of work in books and folders and looking at documents used by senior and subject leaders for planning and evaluating the academy's performance.
- Interviews were held between inspectors and three groups of pupils about their experience and life at the academy. Reading sessions were also observed.
- The inspection team took account of 67 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 79 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Kate Griffin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Jalil Shaikh

Additional Inspector

David Gutman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- King Solomon Academy is a much smaller than average all-through academy.
- The academy opened in 2007 with just 22 pupils in Reception. This year there are pupils in the primary phase from Nursery to Year 5. Secondary provision was introduced in 2009 and now there are Year 7 to Year 10 pupils. There are thus no pupils yet to whom the government's floor standards (which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress) are relevant and no sixth form students.
- The academy does not make use of alternative provision.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children with parents in the armed forces) is in the top 20% of schools nationally.
- The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is also in the top 20% of schools nationally, as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported by school action.
- The percentage of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is high.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers follow the academy's policy about the comments they write when they mark pupils' work.
- Develop further the programmes designed to stretch the most-able pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Throughout the school, pupils from their starting points make progress that considerably exceeds the rate expected.
- On entry to the Nursery, children's skills are below the levels expected for their age. They progress rapidly, particularly developing their social skills and confidence.
- Pupils make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception and throughout Years 1 to 5 because teachers and other adults help them to improve their speaking and listening skills. Teachers provide activities that make learning interesting and engaging. As soon as they join the academy, pupils are encouraged to develop a love of reading and, as a result of this, their progress in all subjects is improved.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in literacy. In Key Stage 3 and Year 10 they progress very quickly and as a result they are able to make good progress in other subjects
- To ensure that the progress and attainment data are reliable at Key Stage 3, the academy sets English tests that have been specially commissioned and similar mathematics assessments are set on a termly basis. The results of these tests show that the vast majority of pupils are on track to reach high standards and make outstanding progress.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is outstanding, as is the progress of those who speak English as an additional language. Some of these pupils have arrived in the school recently with little English. They receive well-focused support and, as a result, they quickly acquire the English they need for learning.
- The pupil premium allows pupils to be taught in smaller groups and this helps them to make outstanding progress. These pupils make even better progress than their peers, narrowing the gap in attainment that is seen nationally.
- The academy's day is longer than in most schools and extra support is given to help pupils who find the work difficult. As a result, they are able to achieve at least the levels of progress expected. This is also true of pupils who benefit from the Year 7 catch-up programme.
- The academy provides a curriculum designed to ensure that university entrance is a realistic ambition for a great majority of students. Leaders are aware of the abilities of their most-able students and are developing a further range of activities for them, to provide even greater academic rigour.
- The academy's data are externally verified by their sponsor, and the resulting meaningful analysis is being used well in the classrooms to plan for what pupils of all abilities need to learn next. As a result, it was possible to confirm the academy's view that the vast majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are on track to make outstanding progress and reach high standards.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- During the inspection over half of the teaching seen throughout the academy was outstanding; this closely matches the academy's evaluation.
- There are many opportunities for teachers, for example, through small groups of staff, to share their practice and plan how to deliver the best teaching. This builds well on their evidently good subject knowledge.
- The absolute commitment of all staff to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning throughout the academy is exceptional. There is a willingness to accept and act upon feedback, even when not totally positive.
- High-quality planning ensures demanding, well-paced and interesting lessons that offer pupils exceptional learning experiences, particularly in the early years.
- The teaching of key skills, such as letter formation and counting in the primary sector, is outstanding and the physical environment for the teaching really supports the learning.

- Pupils comment on each other's work with sensitivity and confidence. This helps to create an inclusive learning environment.
- Information and communication technology is used well in lessons, including in the primary phase. Teachers video activities with instant playback, enabling pupils to comment on how they could improve.
- The approach to literacy is a real strength in the academy and literacy skills are developed consistently well across all phases; this has a significant impact on pupils' progress in all subjects.
- Target setting is both challenging and realistic and pupils are confident in the staff's knowledge of their abilities. As a result, they realise that it is possible to reach the standards needed to go to university.
- Pupils say that they are being given high quality advice on ways to improve and there was evidence of high-quality marking, particularly in terms of literacy; however, teachers do not always give pupils written pointers as to how to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants and volunteers contribute well to lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The academy is an exceptionally safe, caring and supportive environment for learning and personal development. The vast majority of parents and carers agree that their children are safe, happy and well looked after.
- Pupils take great pride in their academy; they welcome guests with confidence and talk enthusiastically about it over lunch.
- Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. Behaviour in and out of lessons is exceptionally good. They understand the importance of behaving well and they try hard to achieve the high standards set throughout the academy.
- The academy has an unusual way of promoting good behaviour: there is a constant drive for a 'feel good factor' that does not rely on a 'stick and carrot' approach. The way that staff engage with the pupils is exemplary and, as a result, pupils learn how to talk to adults in a positive way.
- The support for pupils starts before they come to the academy as the headteachers visit the homes of every new entrant. The staff know all the pupils by name and they take a close interest in their progress and well-being. Consequently, pupils feel very secure and safe, and are clearly aware of potential risks involving safety, alcohol, drugs and relationships. They are very well informed about all forms of bullying and are confident that swift and effective action would be taken should it occur. No pupil at the meetings could think of an occasion when it had.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and they are punctual at the start of the day and at lessons.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy's mission of providing a transformational education that prepares pupils for success at university and beyond is at the centre of all that it does and it is the cornerstone of its considerable success.
- The headteachers are driven by their belief that all pupils can succeed however disadvantaged their backgrounds and they have been successful in developing a team of staff equally committed to that vision.
- The work of the academy is checked extremely well, with very quick action taken to improve any areas that are not performing to the high standards set. Pupils' progress is checked rigorously and a wide range of methods are used to support any individual or groups whose progress is less than expected. This ensures that excellent attention is given to promoting equality of opportunity so that the progress of all groups is outstanding. Discussions with pupils and

feedback from parents provide further evidence of the excellent provision.

- The academy's work in training its own staff and its involvement in the training provided by ARK is excellent. Particularly noteworthy is the way the academy approaches succession planning and the training of those new to teaching to ensure that the excellence of the current workforce is maintained.
 - Despite the evident success of the academy to date, there is no hint of complacency and the academy's leaders are constantly seeking to improve; this is clear in the ways that they view the curriculum. They carefully researched good practice before deciding upon the offer when the academy opened and as the pupils have moved through they have adapted to ensure the needs of all pupils are met. High-quality planning ensures demanding, well-paced and interesting lessons that offer pupils exceptional learning experiences, particularly in the early years.
 - In addition to the innovative curriculum there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are greatly appreciated by the pupils. The commitment to all pupils is further evidenced by the way the school orchestra is organised – every pupil plays a musical instrument, the instrument and the tuition are provided by the school and all play in the orchestra. This initiative has a positive impact in many ways throughout the academy.
 - Pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is developed not only through the activities described but also through the everyday life of the school. Everyone treats one another with courtesy and respect. Guests are welcomed into classrooms by a pupil who outlines confidently the activities taking place. All have a set school lunch which is served and cleared by the pupils.
 - Academy leaders have been very successful in attracting volunteers to work in the academy; they work well in lessons ensuring that pupils concentrate on their work and they help maintain the brisk pace of the lesson.
 - The representative of ARK, the sponsor of the academy, was strong in her praise of the work that has been done and in particular of the generous way in which the academy is prepared to share its successful practice with other schools.
 - ARK representatives have provided a good strategic steer to the future development of the academy. They also support the academy through their recruitment of senior staff and ensuring strong governance.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are totally committed to the mission of the academy and they work hard to help both staff and pupils achieve their objectives. They are prepared to use their various skills and expertise in support of the academy. They check the performance of all groups of pupils carefully and often. They are well aware of the achievements of the pupils supported by the pupil premium funds and know that the funding is used very effectively. They work hard to ensure that the academy is able to add to these funds so that all pupils benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching throughout the academy and what is done to improve it where necessary. There is a strong link between teachers' performance and pay, increments being withheld if the targets are not met. Governors challenge academy leaders skilfully and take a key role in driving the ongoing agenda for improvement and development. They ensure that statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding.
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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

Unique reference number	135242
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	413468

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	662
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Beller
Headteacher	Venessa Willms and Max Haimendorf
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	020 75636900
Fax number	020 77249349
Email address	office@kingsolomonacademy.org

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