

Skinner's Academy

Woodberry Grove, London, N4 1SY

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	Select
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Standards in English and mathematics are average. In Year 8, they are above average.
- Students' behaviour is good and they are generally keen to learn. They feel safe and well supported at school. They welcome the extra-curricular experiences, especially the business and enterprise opportunities.
- The quality of teaching is good. Despite the significant staff changes, there is a relentless determination to develop teaching that stretches and challenges students to achieve well.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress in the sixth form and achieve well. Standards at AS and A level are predicted to be above average after two years of falling results.
- The Principal has communicated a strong vision that 'good is not good enough'. The considerable changes in staff have been managed extremely well. Staff show a determination to do well.
- Senior leaders have worked effectively to raise the quality of teaching and improve students' achievement throughout the school.
- The governing body provides a strong challenge to school leaders. Governors are not content unless students' achievement is good or better.
- Strong partnership work, including links with external agencies, supports vulnerable students to learn well and enjoy their education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' progress, although good, still needs to be consistently faster in all subjects.
- There is inconsistency in the leadership and management of middle leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning of nearly half of the school's lessons and undertook joint lesson observations with senior leaders from the school. They visited 31 lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of students, parents and carers, staff, members of the governing body and the School Improvement Adviser.
- Inspectors looked at students' books and the school information showing students' progress.
- The school's website, self-evaluation, development plans, performance management information, teaching observation records, governing body minutes and exclusion information were also scrutinised.
- The inspection took account of 28 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View) and 66 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Samantha Morgan-Price, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional Inspector
Geoff Walls	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Skinners' Academy is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The academy's specialism is business, enterprise, and information and communication technology.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is much higher than that found nationally; this is also the case for students who speak English as an additional language. Few students are at the early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium, which provides funding for children in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from armed service families, is much higher than that found nationally.
- A few students are placed at a local pupil referral unit for a short period of time.
- The predecessor school stopped enrolling students three years prior to the academy opening. The school currently has students in Year 7, 8 and 9 and the sixth form. There have not been any Year 11 students since July 2011.
- In 2011, the school's GCSE results met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The sixth form will close in July 2013 and reopen in two years' time to enable the current Year 9 students to access post-16 education on-site.
- The academy is sponsored by The Skinners' Company, a City of London livery company that is a charitable trust.
- Staff and students moved into a purpose-built building in November 2010.
- Since the academy opened in September 2010, there have been considerable changes in staff. Over three quarters of the teaching staff are new to Skinners'.
- The Principal and Vice_Principal are leaving at the end of July 2013. New appointments have been made for these posts and to extend the senior leadership team at assistant Vice-Principal level. These new appointments will start in September 2013. The academy received a monitoring inspection in April 2012. It was judged to be making good progress towards raising standards.
- No students are entered early for examinations

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that none requires improvement and students' progress is accelerated by July 2014 by:
 - providing more challenging work that encourages students to think for themselves in lessons, especially the most able
 - ensuring that marking is purposeful and effective in providing guidance to students so they understand how to improve their work
 - consistently apply measures to ensure all pupils behave well at all times.
- Ensure that all leaders responsible for subjects, or areas of the academy's work, are effective in raising achievement by:
 - using information on students' progress more precisely to improve students' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- There are no students currently taking GCSEs. In 2011, which was the most recent year, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics was broadly average. These students entered the school in Year 7, with Key Stage 2 results that were significantly below national averages. A* to A grades in English, French and other languages were slightly above national expectations.
- The school's information suggests that current students are making improved levels of progress. All year groups are on track to achieve the challenging targets set by the academy. Students in the sixth form are set to achieve the best results in the last three years. Students' work seen during the inspection supports this.
- The school has narrowed the gap for those students who are eligible for the pupil premium. They are achieving improved average point scores. In Year 8, this group's achievement is equal to that of their peers.
- Improved attainment is linked to good-quality teaching and very strong support for those students who are falling behind.
- Students make equally good progress in English and mathematics. In Year 9, progress in mathematics is the strongest in the school. Issues resulting from the instability of staff in mathematics have been addressed well.
- In 2011, Year 11 students made excellent progress, especially in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching in these subjects is mostly good.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. However, the academy recognises that a few students requiring extensive school support need stronger individual action plans to improve their achievement.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as others. The academy has targeted a few students from Black Caribbean heritages, as their progress is not as good as their peers, throughout the school. This has had a positive impact on their achievement. They are now achieving better.
- The academy's actions to improve literacy skills are good. Interventions are strategically planned to provide support for those most in need. As a result, students with low literacy skills improve quickly. The measures to improve reading are having a good impact on raising levels of reading throughout the school.
- Good teaching motivates students to achieve well. In the best lessons seen, their willingness to achieve challenging targets led to students taking responsibility for their work, as illustrated in a Year 9 lesson. Students demonstrated a good understanding of the social and physical issues that affect birth weight. They were also able to effectively interpret data and draw accurate graphs.
- Students enter the sixth form with broadly average GCSE grades and make good progress in their AS-level, A-level and BTEC courses. The majority continue onto higher education. The proportion of students offered places at top universities is increasing and has improved on 2012.
- The performance of the very few students placed at the pupil referral unit is improving, especially their behaviour.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers use their expertise and experience well to promote good learning. They are generally ambitious for students and support them to achieve challenging targets.
- Teachers generally structure lessons that lead to activities that engage students and enable them to apply the skills and knowledge they have learnt.
- In effective lessons, teaching assistants work well with individual students and groups to assist

their learning. The high expectations of teachers ensure that the range of activities is well matched to students' needs and abilities. Tasks are well planned for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Work in these lessons, builds well on previous learning and students' understanding is reinforced. New learning goals are made very clear. The expert questions posed by teachers probe students' understanding and alternative strategies are used when work is not fully understood.

- The good group and paired work encourages students to work on their own. They make good assessment of how well they have achieved their goals. In discussions, students are clear what makes a good lesson.
- There is good emphasis on developing literacy, as subject-specific vocabulary is enforced well across all lessons.
- Results from discussions and scrutiny of work confirm that students understand their levels of attainment.
- In the few lessons requiring improvement, work fails to challenge the most able to achieve well. Work is not demanding enough, and fails to ensure they think for themselves. The residual low-level disruption, especially boys, is not always managed effectively. This has, on occasions, slowed the pace of lessons.
- Some good examples of marking were seen in some subjects, especially English. Some marking is detailed and provides effective comments to help students understand what they need to do to improve their work. In these examples, assessment grades are referred to frequently. Students can clearly appreciate how well they are attaining. However, some marking does not provide sufficient guidance to how students can improve their work and is not undertaken regularly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are well behaved and motivated to achieve their best. Year 9 and sixth form students are strong role models. Sixth form students set good examples of excellent behaviour.
- Behaviour for learning within lessons and around the academy is generally good. Students have responded well to the rewards and sanctions to improve their behaviour. There is a strong ethos to remove misbehaviour and engage students in lessons. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions for the past three years. However, fixed-term exclusions are given to support the positive environment, where students can learn well.
- A very few staff, parents and carers, and pupils expressed some concerns regarding behaviour. However, behaviour over time is improving well. The school has effective strategies to deal with misbehaviour.
- Students feel safe and well supported by staff. The school has good measures for securing the well-being of students.
- Attendance is above average for secondary schools.
- Parents and carers, and students, describe the school as a large part of the local community, where diversity is celebrated well. All staff are known, visible and accessible to parents and carers, and pupils, throughout the school day.
- Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and they know who to turn to if they have concerns. The very few incidents of bullying are tackled swiftly and effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- Despite significant staff turbulence and relocating to the new building, the Principal has been successful in communicating a vision of good achievement for all during the past three years. The academy has been left in a strong position to further improve students' achievement. The four key priorities are well known and shared by all staff. This has resulted in leaders, managers

and teachers ensuring pupils achieve well. No groups of students are underachieving. The academy promotes equality of opportunity well.

- Swift and effective actions have been taken to improve the sixth form and stabilise staffing. As a result, students in the sixth form are achieving significantly better than they have in the last three years since the academy opened. Stronger leadership of the sixth form has contributed to these improvements well. Close attention is paid to ensure where vacant posts exist, that only teachers of the best quality fill them.
 - The academy ensures that procedures to safeguard the well-being of pupils are met.
 - There are some new leaders responsible for subjects or areas of the academy's work. Although all leaders share the vision of school improvement, some are not using students' achievement information effectively to ensure that teaching is consistently good or outstanding in their departments. Data prepared for students requiring intensive school support does not always incorporate individual plans needed to fully address their different needs.
 - Performance management is effective and fully encompasses the Teachers' Standards. Senior leaders have not shied away from ensuring that only staff with the highest expectations work at the academy. This is the main reason why some teaching positions remain unfilled or new leadership appointments have been made. Teachers are not rewarded unless their ambitious targets, linked to students' progress, are met.
 - There is a high level of accountability throughout the academy starting from the senior leaders. The checking of teaching informs leaders and managers of what needs to be addressed to improve pupils' learning and experiences. The results of monitoring also inform leaders what professional development is required for staff. For example, support for teachers to improve their ability to assess students' learning has had a positive impact. This has improved the depth of teachers' questions and how they check students' achievement in lessons.
 - The academy's self-evaluation of its work and the next steps are accurate, although a few areas of the self-evaluation are rather descriptive. The key priorities are firmly based on this, and middle leaders' planning stems from the academy's priorities. At the senior level, pupils' achievement and other data are used well to assess how effectively plans are working. However, some data could be better refined by setting clear milestones in order to help leaders understand when the smallest steps in achievement have been completed.
 - The curriculum has been well devised to support students in all year groups. This is the first year that the academy has embarked on a three-year Key Stage 4 programme, for the current Year 9 students. Many curriculum developments are in response to students' needs. For example, enrichment activities and the personal, social, health and emotional lessons are now better structured and enable students to have more time to benefit from these subjects. Students can undertake vocational courses in business, health and social care, and information and communication technology. Options are planned to be extended when the academy has further Key Stage 4 students.
 - There are good opportunities for students to develop their literacy and social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. Urban environmental issues are incorporated well into related subjects. Students are supported to take active citizenship roles in the community. The increased use of peer assessment is promoting respectful relationships as well as kind, critical friends. The curriculum in the sixth form is to undergo a total review for the planned relaunch in September 2015. The present curriculum has limited AS-level and A-level courses, although there are opportunities to undertake vocational programmes.
 - The business partnerships to support the academy's specialism are growing quickly and include an information technology visit to a top web browser company.
 - The School Improvement Adviser has critically reviewed the academy's progress well. Good support has been given to improve overall teaching and the provision in the sixth form.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Evidence from minutes supports how robust governors are in their challenge to the school. The governing body has worked extremely well with the Principal to develop a school with
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high ambitions for pupils' achievement. They are knowledgeable of the significant hurdles senior leaders have encountered to improve staffing levels and to ensure the transition to the new building went smoothly. They have a good understanding of the academy's performance. As one governor said, 'We don't just look at groups, we want to ensure all students are making the best progress.' Since the monitoring inspection, they have played a greater role in monitoring and challenging the academy's performance.

- They have a good understanding of how well teaching is improving. They are able to clearly identify how well students are achieving and how this compares to other institutions nationally. They have had effective training on student performance data. Governors have supported the school well in its drive to improve teaching and to ensure performance management measures are effective. Governors have very closely monitored the performance of the sixth form, which had been significantly underperforming. However, there is a heavy reliance on senior leaders' reports on how effectively the funding from the pupil premium is contributing to the rise in achievement. The Chair and other governors have looked closely at succession planning and have played an important role in selecting the next Principal to lead the academy and continue the good work. Governors do recognise that they need to raise their profile with parents and carers.
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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	136137
Inspection number	399776

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
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	667
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	The Earl of Malmesbury
Principal	Jenny Wilkins
Telephone number	020 8800 7411
Fax number	020 8800 1382
Email address	enquiries@skinnersacademy.org.uk

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