

Capital City Academy

Doyle Gardens, Willesden, London, NW10 3ST

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' achievement in English and humanities is inadequate.
- Students who start the academy with weak skills in reading and writing do not improve quickly enough. They fall behind in subjects where they need good standards of reading and writing to succeed. The gap with their peers widens and they do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Not enough is being done to narrow the achievement gap between students eligible for the pupil premium funding and other students, especially in English.
- Teaching is inadequate. Teachers focus too much on developing their own skills instead of checking that students understand the work they set and making sure that they are learning enough in their lessons.
- Behaviour requires improvement because a small number of students are disrespectful and noisy when routines change or when they are taught by new staff.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students' achievement is not consistently good across all subjects and courses.
- Senior leaders and governors do not ask leaders of subjects and teachers searching questions or check their work thoroughly enough. As a result, they do not take sufficiently rapid action when performance does not improve.
- Governors have not challenged sufficiently well the leaders' overly positive evaluations of teaching and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership, good teaching and targeted support from additional adults are improving achievement in mathematics and science in Year 7 and in the sixth form.
- Sporting, artistic and cultural activities are used well to develop students' social skills, raise confidence and build self-esteem.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons. Eighteen were jointly observed with senior leaders and leaders in charge of subjects, including short visits to lessons to assess the quality of learning for students who receive additional support.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior leaders, leaders in charge of subjects, two governors and ten groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) received by the end of the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the academy's work, scrutinised the academy's information about students' achievement, particularly those students eligible for pupil premium funding. They examined records relating to behaviour, attendance and exclusions, and looked at documents used by leaders and governors to check and evaluate the academy's work.

Inspection team

Anne Wellham, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Timothy McGuire

Additional Inspector

Jalil Shaikh

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

David Guttmann

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Capital City Academy opened in September 2003. The academy is sponsored by The Capital City Academy Trust.
- It is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The students receiving support in the academy from this additional funding are in the care of the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language are much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is just below average. The proportions of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average. The main identified needs are moderate learning difficulties.
- The academy provides education or training for a very small number of students away from school using a range of local organisations to provide one to one or small group support.
- The sixth form is in a consortium with Queens Park Community School.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy receives funding for Year 7 students to catch up on their reading skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching is helping all students to learn by:
 - checking that teachers know how to use information on students' different abilities and starting points to plan work that students can understand
 - making students practise and develop their reading, writing and speaking skills in every subject, and checking to see how it is making a difference
 - training additional adults in how best to develop students' reading and writing skills, drawing on existing good practice in mathematics and science.
- Raise achievement for all students in English, especially those eligible for additional funding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers can check the levels students' are working at accurately, and providing good quality training if they need support
 - making sure that teachers know which features of their teaching help students to learn best
 - checking that activities provided for students eligible for support help them to make rapid progress and catch up with other students.
- Make sure that senior leaders and governors tackle weaknesses urgently and effectively by:
 - checking the performance of leaders of subjects and teachers against how much progress students make and how well they develop their reading and writing skills
 - taking immediate action if performance is not good enough, checking whether the action is making a difference and looking for an alternative if it is not working

- making sure that governors challenge senior and middle leaders by asking them to provide clear evidence to support their evaluations
 - undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved
 - undertaking an external review of the academy’s use of the pupil premium to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Students' achievement has not improved quickly enough since the last inspection. The proportion of students who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, remains below the national average. Students achieve low GCSE results in English and do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The academy's predictions of what Year 11 students taking examinations in 2013 would achieve in English were inaccurate because not all teachers were able to make secure judgements about the students' levels of work. As a result of targeted training, teachers now check the levels of current students more accurately. For example, the teachers' judgements matched those of the examiners for a small group of more-able students who entered early for GCSE in November 2013. Nearly all these students were successful in gaining A*-C grades and some exceeded their targets.
- In 2013, the achievement of Year 11 students who were supported by pupil premium funding was inadequate in English. The gap between the results of these students in English and other students in the school widened. Attainment was six months behind that of other students in the school and twelve months behind students in other schools. The gap in mathematics closed for these students, matching the achievement of other students in the academy.
- Senior leaders and teachers in charge of subjects do not have a clear picture of how well students eligible for the pupil premium funding, disabled students or those with special educational needs are learning. The information they collect about the progress of these students is not analysed precisely enough to find out what helps them learn best. As a result, not all students have an equal chance to learn.
- Weak skills in reading, writing and communication hold students back as they move through the academy because urgent action has not been taken to help them catch up. Although many students start with low reading ages and a large proportion speak English as an additional language, teachers do not give them the chance to practise and develop their reading, writing and speaking regularly and then check to see whether they are making enough progress.
- Students' skills in reading, writing and speaking are improving more quickly in the current Year 7 because of a more coordinated approach by new leaders. Students study relevant projects that are matched to their needs and abilities, in addition to studying English, mathematics and science. Additional funding for Year 7 to catch up in reading is used well to tackle students' underachievement. This is combined well with attendance at SHINE, a summer holiday and Saturday club, and closer work with parents. Careful tracking of students' attendance, attitudes to learning and their progress shows that it is making a difference.
- Progress in other year groups is more variable because this approach is not followed through. Not all teachers know how to use information on students' different abilities and starting points to plan work at the right level. Students start to fall behind because they do not understand what to do and the more able get bored because they are not challenged enough.
- Students who stay on into the sixth form make good progress in level 2 courses because of high expectations from sixth form leaders and good teaching. Progress at AS level is not consistently good because not all students make the transition from GCSE work quickly enough.
- Students who are better suited to alternative routes after completing AS-level courses receive relevant guidance and support. A smaller number of students continue to A level where they make good progress and continue to university.
- The few students who study off site receive high levels of support. They follow carefully structured individual programmes to support the development of relevant life skills.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Too much teaching requires improvement and some is inadequate. Students' experience of

learning depends on the teacher they have and this is too variable. Students are too dependent on whether the teacher can explain the work clearly in the lesson because they do not have the skills to look things up for themselves.

- Teaching does not improve students' reading and writing skills quickly enough, particularly in English and humanities. Despite leaders designating this area of learning a high priority, teachers do not have enough guidance or training in how to move students on. Students develop their skills more quickly in mathematics and science. This is because teachers work with additional adults to develop ways of getting students of the same ability up to the level of understanding they need to progress over a series of lessons.
- Since the introduction of the new behaviour policy in September 2013 the rules about how to behave in a lesson are clear to staff and students, and all but a few students respond well. Students who had lapsed into poor habits last year report that their attitudes to learning have improved because staff, including new teachers, are now more consistent in their approach. Basic routines are in place; teachers wait to greet students at the door of the classroom, students wear the correct uniform, bring the equipment they need and there is no graffiti on books or tables. However, time is sometimes wasted when teachers are unable to settle a few noisy students quickly.
- Teachers create detailed lesson plans with structured activities using a range of different approaches. These plans do not make a difference to learning in many lessons because not all teachers have the skills or experience they need to pitch work at the right level. When students cannot understand, either because they cannot read the work or their language skills are too weak, they learn very little. Inexperienced teachers carry on regardless and stick to the plan so a few students get frustrated, became noisy and start to disturb others or they opt out and sit the whole time in silence without having the chance to ask the teacher, an additional adult or another student what to do.
- The impact of teaching on students' achievement in Year 7 is greater than in other year groups. Expectations are higher and the purpose of the work is carefully planned and explained so that students work at the right level for their ability.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and moves students on quickly in level 2 courses and at A level where the abilities of students match the level of course they are studying. There are high expectations of teachers and an explicit steer from leaders make it clear what skills are required to teach at this level. Feedback through detailed marking and an expectation that students will respond to the advice given by teachers and take responsibility for improving their work motivates students to learn well. Teaching is less effective in developing students' skills and knowledge at AS level where their progress is more variable.
- Students' work is marked regularly. If this does not happen it is picked up quickly by subject leaders. When the work was set at the right level, particularly for more able students and those with lower abilities, good quality marking identifies clearly and precisely for students what went well and gives advice on how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The few students who are less positive about the new systems to reward good behaviour and punish poor attitudes take their chance to disturb and create noise if there is any inconsistency from staff in applying the rules.
- Students in all year groups report that behaviour in lessons depends on the quality of teaching and is worse when there are frequent changes of teachers. Students report that occasionally students struggle to understand lessons so they let off steam in the corridors, but they respond quickly to reminders about how to behave.
- The majority of students welcome the new rules and recognise that behaviour has improved and that lessons are orderly and calm. They have seen the effect of improved behaviour on their learning and are annoyed with the few students that continue to kick against the system. Year 11 students report that behaviour has improved. They are able to focus on improving their

learning and getting the best grades in their examinations.

- Students generally behave well around the academy. The buildings are clean, attractively decorated with displays of students' achievements and well cared for. Students are proud of the appearance of the academy and show respect for the facilities.
- Determined leadership has brought about improvements, from a dip in 2012. This can be seen in students' improved attendance, a reduction in persistent absenteeism and fixed-term exclusion to levels which are slightly better than the national average.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are realistic about bullying and the efforts that the academy takes to deal with it. Students are able to discuss different types of bullying and recognise that it can be subtle in making students, who are different, for whatever reason, feel uncomfortable. They are very aware of the risks associated with cyber-bullying and know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Students feel safe in all parts of the large site and respect the buddies in orange jackets from Year 10 and the sixth form who help them during lunch times. Teachers set a positive example by demonstrating good manners. Sixth formers are good role models for younger students.
- Governors check policies carefully to make sure that the safety of different groups of students are not compromised. For example, whilst supporting the policy of holding detentions after school, amendments were made to make sure that the exit for students was well lit and supervised if they left after dark.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The academy has been on a challenging journey during the five years that the Principal has been in charge. There was a track record of improvement leading up to the last inspection. Senior leaders became complacent and did not tackle dips in achievement and behaviour with enough urgency or carefully check whether the pupil premium funding was being used well enough.
- New and inexperienced staff were not managed well enough by some leaders of subjects and struggled to appreciate what was needed to improve the learning of students with very wide-ranging needs. Results at GCSE in 2013 did not improve significantly and were below that of other schools. Since September 2013, leaders have responded with more urgency. Behaviour is improving and good leadership, good teaching and targeted support from additional adults are improving students' achievement in key areas such as mathematics and science, in Year 7 and the sixth form.
- Leaders' judgements of the quality of teaching have been too generous. The system to observe teachers put too much emphasis on what teachers were doing and the methods they were using, rather than checking whether students are learning. As a result, teachers got feedback on what looks good in the classroom rather than understanding what helps students to learn.
- A new and more effective system to check the quality of teaching is being used this year. This uses a range of evidence and links teaching to the progress made by students in a particular class or subject. There is a more realistic understanding of what makes good teaching. Senior leaders and leaders of subjects who observed teaching with inspectors during the inspection were able to identify accurately aspects of learning that were good and those that needed significant improvement.
- Students' reading and writing skills do not develop quickly enough because there has been a lot of discussion amongst leaders about what to do but little action taken. Teachers are unsure of who leads on this in the academy and the good practice that does exist is not shared across subjects.
- Changes in leadership at senior and middle leader level are providing a clear direction of how to tackle weaknesses and halt the decline in achievement. Strong leadership in mathematics and science is steadily improving results and closing the gaps in students' learning. The English department has a stable staff for the first time and the mistakes made last year are accepted and are being tackled. However, there is a lot more to be done to match students' achievement in mathematics and science.

- The leaders responsible for improving the learning of all disadvantaged groups, including those eligible for pupil premium, those whose speak English as an additional language, disabled students and those with special educational needs, have conducted a sharp, direct analysis of why things are not working , and identified what needs to be done more quickly. The organisation of provision for students in Year 7 is making a difference to achievement.
- Determined leadership from a Vice Principal on all aspects of behaviour and training in behaviour management for inexperienced staff give a clear consistent message to staff and students and is raising expectations across the academy.
- Good leadership of the sixth form is steadily improving teaching and students' progress. Leaders recognise that progress is not consistently good for students studying at AS level and are taking effective action to tackle this.
- The academy does not receive support from the local authority or an academy chain. Occasional external reviews of key aspects of the academy's work have not been consistently effective in raising achievement or improving teaching.
- Most students live in the local community and many have a limited experience of how people from different backgrounds approach life in other parts of London and the country. Collaborative projects with the Royal National Ballet, the Akram Khan company and Queens Park Rangers football club, opportunities to join a range of clubs, taking part in sporting, artistic and cultural trips and activities all help to develop students' curiosity, confidence and self-esteem and broadens their spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness. However successful these projects are, the efforts put into these aspects of the academy's work has diverted leaders' attention away from the urgency of improving students' basic skills so that they can achieve and compete with other students nationally.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body does not challenge leaders sufficiently well about students' underachievement. They understand information about students' achievement and are aware of issues in English and the lack of progress of different groups of students. Despite this, they have been too easily satisfied with the responses they have received from senior leaders and leaders of subjects. They have accepted the academy's evaluation of teaching without questioning why this is not improving achievement. They do not challenge leaders with sufficient rigour to explain how additional funding for pupil premium is spent and whether it is making a difference to the achievement of those students.
- Governors bring a range of knowledge and expertise to the academy and make a good contribution to students' understanding of wider society. Governors are influential in checking safeguarding requirements and have attended a range of relevant training. They have set up strong links with parents, staff and students to gather their views. They consider aspects of safety that link to behaviour and the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs and other students that are disadvantaged. They scrutinise evidence about teachers' performance and make decisions independently of the Principal about whether teachers should be rewarded by a pay increase although this does not accurately reflect the profile of teaching in the academy.

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	134226
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	441291

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1201
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Theresa Sackler
Principal	Alex Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2012
Telephone number	020 8838 8700
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