

Walthamstow Academy

Billet Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 5DP

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Standards at GCSE are rising rapidly and are now above the national average.
- Students' achievement in English is improving well and students show good enjoyment of their work in the subject. Achievement in mathematics is outstanding, because students work hard and are very well taught.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well in science subjects, particularly at A level.
- The support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is very well managed and these students make outstanding progress.
- Students supported by the pupil premium achieve well and the gap between these students and others is now very small.
- Teachers use their very good knowledge of their subjects and of individual students to plan demanding work that interests them. Teachers develop their skills very well through a very carefully targeted training programme.
- Students are very keen to do well and show this by listening carefully and taking advantage of the very good range of opportunities for learning they are offered outside lesson times.
- The principal and senior managers communicate what the academy needs to do further to improve very well to all staff.
- Information about students' progress is used highly effectively by senior leaders, subject leaders and year leaders to check the success of teaching, plan extra support for individual students, and set demanding targets for both students and staff.
- The governing body and partners from the academy trust check progress against academy plans very carefully. They gather a wide range of information about the academy's performance, which enables them to offer very good support and challenge to academy leaders and to help shape the future direction of the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement is not consistently high in a wide enough range of sixth form subjects.
- Some teachers do not use questioning to check students' understanding carefully enough, especially with younger students.
- Teachers' marking is not always frequent or detailed enough to make sure students know what they need to do to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, including 10 joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons, tutor periods and an assembly. They looked at samples of students' work and interviewed groups of students across the age range.
- Meetings were held with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of subject departments and year teams, teachers, members of the governing body, and representatives of the academy trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of academy documents, including: the academy's self-evaluation, academy-development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing-body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 47 questionnaires returned by academy staff, together with the 14 responses submitted by parents to the on-line, Parent View, survey.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Pepper	Additional Inspector
John Ubsdell	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Carpenter	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Walthamstow Academy is an average-sized school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for groups of pupils, including those looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than in most schools of this size and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs receiving extra support through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- The school offers work-related training for some Year 11 students through making use of alternative provision from Waltham Forest College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching to outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - give written feedback to students consistently in all subjects to indicate what they need to do to improve their work, and provide regular opportunities for students to respond to these comments
 - use questioning of students of all abilities to make sure they have understood what they are expected to learn, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve rates of progress in the sixth form in some A level and AS level subjects by making sure that students receive regular comments on how well they are making progress towards the examination requirements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are improving strongly and are now above average at GCSE. This represents very good progress for students from their starting points when they join the school. The school's own reliable monitoring of current students' progress, and the high quality of work seen in lessons show that this very good progress is being further improved in Years 10 and 11 this year.
- Students' achievement in English is improving well. The proportion of students making expected progress is above average and the proportion exceeding this is increasing, because teachers are now setting very high expectations for students' work and the students respond very positively to the good quality teaching they are receiving.
- Achievement in mathematics is outstanding, because students work hard and are very well taught. The proportion of students making more than expected progress has been well-above average for the past three years. Most-able students do particularly well with nearly a quarter of all entries graded at A* or A. Early entry to GCSE has been used for a small number of the most-able students in mathematics, but only so that they can go on to more demanding work in the subject.
- Students make good progress in science. GCSE pass rates at A*-C and A*/A are above average, and a significant proportion of the most-able students go on to make good progress at A level. Students show good interest in their work in science and they are challenged to use their mathematical skills well. In some classes for younger students in particular, the quality of written work is not consistently high because teachers do not give enough comments to show what standards they expect or to tell them how they can improve their work.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving, but it is not yet high across the full range of subjects. Standards in work-related courses are above average and students make good progress because they understand well what they need to do to achieve high examination marks. The number of students staying to complete their courses is above average in the applied courses and broadly average overall. Students make expected progress or better at A level in the sciences, mathematics and English, with both uptake and results improving over time. At AS level the picture varies more with only biology and French showing a clearly rising trend in student achievement over the past three years.
- The gap in attainment between students supported by the pupil premium and their peers is now very small, because the support for these students is very effectively managed, and teachers have a very good knowledge of their individual needs. In both English and mathematics, Year 11 students were less than one fifth of a GCSE grade behind in 2013, which is a strong improvement from a gap of half a grade in the previous year.
- Well-managed support for disabled students and those with special educational needs enables them to make outstanding progress in lessons. They benefit from smaller classes and highly effective support from teaching assistants, who know them well. The progress of students who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, and they achieve very well.
- 'Catch-up' funding to support Year 7 students who have fallen behind is used well and they make good progress. They are supported well through extra classes in English and mathematics, which they attend regularly. Their progress in reading, comprehension, spelling and numeracy is

checked regularly by trained staff, who adjust the support accordingly.

- The academy has detailed plans for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. These are checked carefully by the relevant subject leaders, with a good impact on students' progress in these skills in a range of subjects. For example, students benefit from frequent opportunities to develop their confidence in speaking in class and effective support is provided for weaker readers when they enter the school. Students develop their mathematics skills well because of the good attention that is given to their progress.
- The academy checks carefully the progress of students educated off-site and they show good motivation and attendance. They make good progress in their work-related courses and move on successfully at the end of year 11 to further college-based training courses.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving strongly, with several outstanding features. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan demanding tasks that interest students, setting high expectations for their progress and explaining carefully what students should be able to do by the end of a lesson. They use the clear academy guidance well to make sure they plan tasks that meet the needs of different groups of learners effectively. Teaching is good in the sixth form.
- Questioning is used very well in GCSE and sixth form classes to build on what students have learned previously and to check that they have understood key ideas in the lesson. However, some teachers do this less well with younger age classes, so that they are not always clear when some students have difficulty in understanding what they need to do, and this slows the progress these students make.
- Homework is used appropriately in different year groups to give students opportunities to practise their skills by themselves and the students say they appreciate the after-school help that staff give them in carrying out these tasks.
- Teachers manage classroom behaviour well, so that relationships are very positive, maintaining a clear focus on their tasks. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to support the progress of less-able pupils well. They show good initiative in knowing when to help and when to stand back and give students opportunities to try out their own ideas.
- Teachers check students' general progress appropriately through marking major assignments each half term. In the best cases, staff are developing a dialogue with students by expecting them to respond their comments. However, feedback to students on their written work is not consistently good. There is too much variation within and between departments in the frequency and detail of written marking, so that students are not always clear about what they are getting wrong and what they need to do to improve in the future. The presentation of written work was also seen to decline where books were not marked regularly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students say that they enjoy coming to the academy and their positive attitudes contribute very well to the harmonious working atmosphere clearly evident in the academy. They show great maturity in their conduct around the academy and their behaviour outside lessons is often impeccable; students of all ages respond well to each other and to adults, they look after the buildings well and they move around the site in an orderly and purposeful manner. The great majority of parents, students and staff alike say that

they feel behaviour is good and improving.

- Behaviour in lessons is good and often outstanding. Students arrive at lessons on time and settle quickly to their work. They listen well to each other and to the class teacher, following instructions carefully. Sixth form students show responsible attitudes to their learning, working hard on individual tasks and collaborating well on group tasks. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare, but occasionally younger students allow their attention to wander when the teaching does not involve them fully in whole-class work.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students have great confidence in the academy's procedures to deal with any bullying incidents or incidents of a racial nature and say that they are very rare. Students from all backgrounds work well together and feel very safe in the academy.
- Attendance has been consistently high for the past three years. Regular checks and rapid follow up of causes of concern has meant that very low levels of persistent absence have occurred during this time. The academy has worked well with students to make them aware of the impact of poor attendance on their progress, and all staff are aware of individual students' attendance figures. The academy offers very good support to pupils who have behavioural difficulties so that there have been no permanent exclusions in the past two years, although fixed-term exclusions have risen at one time as new, higher expectations for behaviour were put in place.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal and senior managers through their highly effective arrangements for the checking and support of teaching and students' learning are making sure that standards continue to rise and that very high GCSE achievement is maintained.
- High expectations for students' attainment and progress are shown by the very demanding academic targets set for all students. Progress towards these targets is checked carefully and they are explained in good detail to students who show very good motivation in working to achieve them.
- The tracking of students' progress is very well organised and a strength of the academy. Assessments are made each half term in all subjects and there are well-established systems to ensure that all teachers apply the correct standards. The analysis of these results is used very well by both senior and middle managers to identify students needing further support and possible weaknesses in teaching. In the sixth form, procedures for tracking students' effort and progress are well managed and effective, so that students report that they are very well informed about how to make good progress.
- The monitoring and support of teaching in the academy is increasingly effective. Senior and subject leaders are well trained in gathering a comprehensive range of information about the work of each teacher and its impact on students' learning. The analysis of this information is used to identify the development needs of staff members in excellent detail and staff report that they feel very well supported in their professional development. As a result of this, the turnover of staff which was high in previous years is now greatly reduced and the proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing.
- Academy staff have a very good awareness of the academy development priorities because they are all involved in the planning process and are carefully held to account for their own contributions to the expected improvements. The principal has established very clear expectations for the detail in these improvement plans and ensures that progress towards the

expected outcomes is tracked regularly and timely action taken where a shortfall is identified.

- Students are offered an increasing range of work-related and academic subjects at GCSE and in the sixth form to enable them to make good progress in their personal and academic development, so that their needs are met well. The outstanding promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in very positive outcomes for their safety and well-being, and helps them develop their confidence as learners very well as they progress through the academy. Students receive very good guidance on the next stages in their education, both from outside speakers and from specialist staff. Sixth formers have been notably successful in recent years in accessing university courses.
- The coordinator for disabled students and those who have special educational needs manages the provision well, ensuring that support staff are trained well, and that support is given to identified students appropriately. In this way all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and there is no discrimination.
- The arrangements for safeguarding meet all national requirements and are highly effective. Staff are kept up to date well on safeguarding practices, record keeping is detailed and the complaints policy is implemented consistently.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well organised and governors are experienced in offering academy leaders both challenge and support. Together with partners from the academy trust they monitor progress against academy plans very carefully.
- Governors gather a wide range of information about the academy's performance and are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the academy. They take an active part in planning for development priorities and shaping the academy's future direction.
- Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching through the regular receipt of academy review documents and they know the expectations for higher grade teachers.
- They work closely with trust representatives from United Learning to monitor expenditure in the academy rigorously. They hold the academy to account well for the use of pupil premium funding and for the allocation of salary increments within the performance management policy.

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	132727
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	428949

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

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	987
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Skewes
Principal	Emma Skae
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
Telephone number	020 8527 3750
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