

City Heights E-ACT Academy

Abbots Park, Tulse Hill, London, SW2 3PW

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	Select
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The principal's clear vision of what he wants for the academy and his ambitious plans are creating an environment in which all students can achieve. He is well supported by other leaders, managers and governors in ensuring teaching and achievement continue to improve.
- Students make good progress in English and other subjects because they are taught well. Most students make good progress in mathematics but it is less rapid than in English.
- Teaching is good and improving strongly because leaders at all levels have high expectations and routinely track the impact of teaching. Teachers plan activities carefully and explain them well to students.
- Students' behaviour and safety are typically good. The vast majority have positive attitudes to their learning, show respect for others, look after the academy buildings well and say that they feel happy and safe.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive well-planned support.
- Governors are experienced and well trained. They have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development across the academy. They have a good understanding of students' achievement. They offer support and challenge to school leaders to ensure the academy continues to improve.
- The academy chain and the link with Dulwich College provide good advice and guidance. This ensures the principal and governors are fully supported and challenged.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a strong focus on developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- The enrichment programme allows students to experience a very wide range of activities which promote their self-esteem and confidence.
- The academy prepares students well for life in modern democratic Britain and is proud of the strong links it has with the local community it serves.
- Those students with autism who attend the special unit make good progress as a result of the effective support they receive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics is not as good as it is in English.
- Some of the most able students are not making enough progress to secure the highest grades possible in future examinations.
- Some boys are not performing as well as girls, particularly in mathematics.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a very small minority of students are not always good. This leads to low-level disruption affecting teaching and learning in a small number of lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons across both year groups. Members of the academy’s leadership team joined the inspectors for seven of these visits. Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons to evaluate aspects of teaching. Inspectors observed an assembly as well as a sample of tutor periods.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders and other staff. They met with the Chair of the Governing Body, and two other governors, one of whom was a representative from the Dulwich College partnership. They also spoke to a representative from the E-ACT chain.
- Inspectors met with different groups of students and spoke informally with students and staff throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 41 staff questionnaires and the views of 48 responses to Parent View as well as two telephone conversations with parents and one face-to-face discussion with a parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation about students’ achievement, records of meetings, and information relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and exclusions. Inspectors looked at the academy’s evaluation of its own performance, governing body minutes, and information about the curriculum, performance management and the academy’s improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lynton Karmock-Golds, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Graham Tyrer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- City Heights E-ACT Academy opened in September 2013 with its first cohort of Year 7 students.
- There are 147 students in Year 7 and 109 students in Year 8. The academy is currently much smaller than an average secondary academy.
- The academy is led by a principal who is supported by a senior team of one vice principal, two assistant vice principals and a director of business and resources.
- The academy is part of the E-ACT academy chain and is in an educational partnership with Dulwich College.
- The academy works closely with the London Borough of Lambeth and is involved in partnerships with local schools such as the Windmill cluster.
- The academy's specialism is modern foreign languages with a particular focus on Spanish.
- Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have very diverse ethnic heritages. Just over one half of the students are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding provided by the government for disadvantaged students, and this is above the national average.
- A small number of Year 7 students benefit from the nationally funded 'catch up' programme, which is for students who do not achieve Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of their primary schooling.
- The number of disabled students and those with special educational needs is currently small and below the national average.
- The number of children looked after by the local authority is very small.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. This includes students who speak Portuguese, Somali, Arabic, French, Spanish and Polish.
- The academy does not make use of any alternative provision.
- There is a specialist resource for students with autistic spectrum disorders which is part funded by the London Borough of Lambeth.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate teaching that falls below good over time so that:
 - all teaching is good or better
 - teaching consistently challenges all students, in particular the most able
 - teachers rigorously apply the academy's assessment policy and intervention strategies to close the gap between boys' and girls' performance.
- Eradicate all instances of unacceptable low-level disruption in lessons through a consistent application of the academy's behaviour management policy.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The principal, supported well by his senior leaders, provides effective leadership. Together, they are committed to moving the academy forward and challenging staff to give their best. This creates an ethos where good teaching and behaviour can flourish.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders show commitment and share the principal's vision of helping students to achieve against all odds. The 'can do culture' of high expectations trickles down to staff, students and parents.
- Leaders are very responsive and sensitive to the needs of students. This means that students receive well-planned and appropriate support in lessons and through other intervention strategies. This focus by leaders on planning and intervention helps students to make good progress and develop into confident learners.
- Senior and middle leaders set demanding targets for students and track their progress regularly. This means that staff can identify any underperformance quickly and take effective action.
- A programme of staff training supports the quality of teaching and there are regular checks on classroom practice. Only teachers who demonstrate strong performance over time move up the pay scale. Staff who require further support receive coaching and mentoring. All middle leaders receive leadership training. This serves to strengthen the quality of leadership and management in the academy and supports the drive for excellence.
- Effective use is made of the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding. As a result, students are making better progress in their learning. For example, those students receiving reading support quickly improve their reading ages. Some students make exceptional progress because of timely and appropriate support.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It meets the needs of students well. The enrichment programme is popular and students talk enthusiastically about the wide range of activities which include boxing, book club, debating, film club, gardening, Spanish radio,, cricket and cookery.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance about careers through their tutor group sessions and in assemblies. They routinely reflect upon modern-day values and their own place in society. Students are well placed to make sensible and considered decisions about their future lives.
- The curriculum actively promotes the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. As a result, students develop a respect and understanding of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles and are very well prepared for life in modern democratic Britain.
- The academy is an inclusive community where everyone is important. Good relations are fostered and discrimination is not tolerated. All staff share the same aim: a strong community that promotes tolerance, understanding, trust and respect for difference.
- There are effective systems in place to ensure students behave and attend well. Senior leaders and middle leaders routinely record and analyse this information to make sure no student 'falls through the net'.
- There is good provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs. All staff have a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and make sure all students feel safe and that there is no discrimination.
- Safeguarding procedures and policies are thorough and child protection arrangements are robust. The statutory requirements are fully met by those responsible for these key areas.
- Safeguarding requirements are fully compliant. The single central record for recruitment and vetting checks is in place and complies with statutory requirements. Staff and governors have child protection, safeguarding and safer recruitment training relevant to their responsibilities. All visitors are checked upon arrival.
- There is excellent liaison work between the academy, other schools and external agencies. The academy works well with the local authority and is an active part of the Windmill cluster which keeps leaders well informed and supports their focus on driving up standards.
- Parents are very positive about the leadership of the academy. Most believe that their children are happy, safe, well looked after, make good progress and are well taught.
- The leadership of the special unit for autism is a particular strength. Staff ensure that students with complex additional needs successfully access mainstream educational provision and make steady progress.
- The academy's sponsors have high expectations of the principal and his leaders. They ask searching questions and, at the same time, provide strong support. The sponsors continually look for ways to build upon the achievements already being made.
- There is evidence of sufficient capacity in the leadership team to further drive improvements through.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors' strategic management is very strong, particularly in relation to safeguarding matters.
- They are reflective and very knowledgeable. They combine their governance skills with a range of skills from education and other business links. This positions them well in fulfilling their statutory duties in relation to the recent Equality Act and the safeguarding of students. Governors ensure that there is a strong link between policies and practice. Consequently, the monitoring of safeguarding concerns is systematic. Governors understand the risks faced by students and keep up to date with training on topical issues such as Prevent, radicalisation and/or extremism, e-safety, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and gang-related crimes.
- Governors work closely with senior leaders, providing support as critical friends and holding them to account for students' achievement. This is done through regular meetings, visits and written reports. They use their knowledge of academic standards to advantage and seek independent guidance where it is required. Governors are thorough in their scrutiny of evidence and monitor very well how targets are set and met.
- Spending is kept under close review. The principal and the director of business and resources control the budget and personnel matters. The governors and E-ACT representatives give support and guidance and provide quality assurance checks.
- Governors scrutinise the use and impact of funding for disadvantaged students. They are very knowledgeable about how different groups of students achieve and hold senior leaders to account.
- Academic and professional outcomes are closely linked to teachers' performance and there is a clear message that payment is linked to the quality of teaching and the outcomes of students. As a result, not all staff receive an automatic incremental rise.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. In most lessons, students show good attitudes and are positive about their learning. It is not outstanding because these attitudes are not always consistent in a small number of lessons.
- The behaviour policy is successful. Staff and students know and understand what it means. As a result, disruption to learning in most lessons is rare.
- The majority of students are keen to learn. However, low-level disruption affects learning in a small minority of lessons. Nonetheless, students say behaviour is improving and staff deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and firmly. Most parents and all staff confirm this view.
- Students are friendly and courteous towards each other and to visitors. Behaviour around the academy is usually orderly and calm. Break times and lunchtimes are well supervised and students socialise with staff and each other well.
- Students say that bullying is rare. They understand that racism and discrimination are not acceptable. They are equally clear on homophobic and cyber-bullying.
- Students with challenging behaviours are responsive to the range of provision available to support them and are aware of the consequences of their actions. As a result, incidents of inappropriate behaviour have fallen.
- There is now a system for internal exclusion. As a result the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen and is broadly in line with other schools. There have been no recent permanent exclusions.
- Students in the special facility for autism feel happy and safe. They enjoy coming in every day and feel secure when in lessons and when moving around the building.
- Students are proud of their academy. They wear their uniform with pride and enjoy talking to visitors about their lessons and the many opportunities offered to them.
- Most students enjoy attending regularly. Attendance is slightly above the national average. Students are aware that coming to school every day is important. Persistent absence is around the national average. Staff work effectively with a number of specialist service providers and work closely with students and their families.
- Punctuality is good and is monitored and checked regularly by staff. Any student arriving late is identified and appropriate action swiftly taken.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is very good. All students say they feel safe and very well cared for. Students know exactly who they would turn to if there was a problem or an issue.
- Students are well informed about potential risks and how to minimise them because the staff deal with topical issues such as domestic violence.
- Students know the academy is a protective community where they can receive help and advice. Case studies show that students at risk of harm are supported successfully to receive the help needed to handle any personal difficulties and fears.
- Staff are highly visible throughout the day providing a safe environment for the students to work and relax in.
- Staff know who is responsible for safeguarding and child protection. They know what actions to take.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is effective and leads to students learning well. Since the academy opened, the proportion of teaching that is good or better has improved. This is because of the sharper focus on developing teachers' skills in helping students to make more rapid progress.
- There is effective teaching in the specialist resource unit. Students who come into the unit benefit well from the support they receive.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and their clear understanding of students' starting points to plan and structure lessons well. Tasks are carefully thought out and used to build on students' prior learning. Students are keen to share ideas with each other which improves their oral skills and increases their self-confidence. They respond quickly and accurately to skilful questioning and demonstrate creative and original ideas. This was seen when students were creating emotional scripts in English.
- Students are most responsive when the working environment is underpinned by good classroom management. When this happens, there is mutual respect between all, and work is stimulating. This prompts students to think because expectations of what they can achieve are shared and understood. This was seen in physical education and science lessons, where students were fully engaged and also challenged because the teacher created the right atmosphere for everyone to benefit and learn from each other.
- Teaching is not outstanding in a very small minority of lessons, when classroom management breaks down. When this happens, a very small minority of students take the opportunity to do less work and learning is affected.
- Teachers make effective use of open-ended questioning. Good attention is given to ensure that students use subject vocabulary accurately and they are guided well about how to respond in a structured and articulate way.
- Teachers demonstrate the standard of work expected, making effective use of resources, including the use of the interactive whiteboards. Students respond well to using whiteboards and laptops as aids to their learning.
- Students are well prepared for assessments and examinations.
- A small minority of teaching does not provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able. Some students also say that work in these lessons can be repetitive and unchallenging.
- Teachers are aware of a gap in performance between some boys and girls. They are adapting their teaching to engage and motivate these students. The impact of these strategies is not yet fully evident.
- Students are generally well supported in lessons, particularly in the Student Central area. Teaching assistants are well deployed and good attention is given to matching their specialist skills to the needs of students receiving behavioural or academic support.
- Teachers use the 'assessment for learning' policy consistently. Senior leaders have set high expectations for marking students' work. Most teachers regularly mark classwork and homework in line with the policy. They provide feedback to students which is clear and understood. Students say they appreciate the comments because it helps them improve their work.
- Most students take pride in their work, which is generally neat and tidy.
- Students' literacy, reading and mathematics are developing well across most subjects. Literacy is a particular focus for the academy and students are encouraged to read for fun as well as information. A

scrutiny of students' work shows examples of lengthy pieces of writing not only in English but also in many other subjects.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' achievement is good. They enter the academy with standards that are slightly below average in both English and mathematics. As a result of effective teaching and support, and students' willingness to learn, most make good progress over time. Some students make exceptionally good progress, particularly in English.
- Achievement is not outstanding because students' progress is not as strong in mathematics. However, the most recent information and inspection evidence indicate that improvements in the quality of teaching are beginning to have a positive impact.
- Senior leaders have introduced an assessment policy which is based upon students' starting points and measures their expected progress and attitudes to learning over time. The system works well with staff and is clearly understood by students and parents. This is having a positive impact on learning.
- Senior leaders and staff use very robust tracking systems to analyse data, spot underachievement and provide specialist support for those who are likely to struggle with academic work.
- In the absence of national comparisons for Year 7 and Year 8 students, the academy receives regular reports from external consultants and agencies which moderate and validate the judgements made by staff. These reports express confidence in the assessment system and the judgements made by the teaching staff.
- The academy sets tests and assessments which allow senior leaders and staff to regularly analyse students' progress. This information tells them which students are working well and where some students need more support. This is having a positive impact on progress.
- Regular reports are sent home which tell parents very clearly how their child is doing throughout the year. This has a positive impact on students' progress because students reflect upon their achievements and prioritise what they need to do to improve further.
- Some girls outperform boys particularly in mathematics. Senior leaders have already identified this as an issue and are putting plans together to narrow the gap.
- A minority of students are high achievers. Some of these students are not making sufficient progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress broadly in line with the average expected for their age group. The work of the staff in Student Central plays a significant part in ensuring most of these students make expected progress. Some students make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged students are making good progress and there is no significant gap when compared to their peers within the school.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorders, who receive exceptional support from the specialist provision, make good progress particularly in mathematics, technology, art and music.
- Most ethnic groups are making good progress and there is no significant gap when compared to their peers except a very small group of Black Caribbean boys. Senior leaders and middle managers have already identified this as a priority and intervention strategies are already in place.
- Most students who speak English as an additional language are making very good progress when compared to their peers.

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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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	137954
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	450010

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy AP Sponsor Led
Age range of students	11–18
Gender of students	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susanna Todd
Principal	Mr Jim Henderson
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	020 3691 4600
Email address	admin@chea.org.uk

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