

The Archer Academy

3 Beaumont Close, Bishops Avenue, London, N2 0GA

Inspection dates 9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and governors base their work on a clear, simple vision which commits the academy to achieving the very best it can for its students. It is a vision shared by all who work and study in the academy.
- Governors know the academy very well and are ambitious for its success. They provide, focused support and challenge to the academy's senior leaders. They have ensured great support for leaders in their opening of a brand new academy based on two sites.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. Their superb attitudes towards learning play a key part in the good progress they make. They feel very safe.
- Parents strongly support the work of the academy and are very happy with the education it provides for their children.
Relationships between all in the academy are warm, friendly and supportive because they are rooted in very clear expectations for behaviour.
- Teaching in most subject areas is good, and sometimes outstanding.
- Teachers plan their lessons very well. They make use of the excellent information they have about their classes and usually make sure the work is matched to the needs of all students. They have exceptional subject knowledge.
- Teachers' assessments are thorough and regular but students' responses are not always of the very best quality.
- Most groups of students, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well.
- The impressive curriculum provides breadth, balance and challenge. It meets the needs of students very well, enabling them to make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in a range of subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some aspects of the academy's development plans lack precision. This makes it more difficult for leaders to accurately assess the impact of actions, in departments, on students' progress.
- Some more able students are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work to secure the progress of which they are capable.
- Students are not always required to improve their work after assessments have taken place. As a consequence, they make slower progress than they should.
- Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy remain in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons, two assemblies and two tutorial sessions. They observed teaching and scrutinised students' work and listened to some students read. Five lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered the views of 71 parents through the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. They evaluated the views of parents collected by the academy.
- Through the Ofsted staff questionnaire, the views of 20 members of staff were analysed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with two members of the governing body, including the Chair.
- Inspectors assessed a range of documentary evidence. This included academy improvement and development plans, minutes of governing body meetings, and internal and external reviews of the academy's performance.
- Records of students progress were evaluated, together with anonymised performance management information, and records of staff training. The single central record, referrals to the local authority, case studies organised by the academy, and behaviour tracking and attendance records were also scrutinised.
- All students were involved in sitting internal academy examinations during the inspection. These were not visited by inspectors

Inspection team

Debbie Clinton, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joanne Stuart

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Lynton Karmock-Golds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Archer Academy is a smaller than average secondary free school which opened in September 2013.
- The academy has admitted students into Years 7 and 8 only to date. It is popular and over-subscribed.
- Year 9 students will begin studying for some GCSE and BTEC qualifications in September 2015.
- The current headteacher is leaving the academy at the end of the summer term. The academy's deputy headteacher has been appointed in his place and she will take up her post in September 2015.
- The academy is currently situated on a compact site for Years 7 and 8 students. In September 2015, all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will move to the academy's other, newly re-modelled site. In September 2016, the current site's re-modelling will be complete and Year 10 will move back to this permanent base to be joined by a new Year 10 in September 2017. Years 7, 8 and 9 will remain in the other permanent base.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than the national average. The largest ethnic group is from any other White heritage. The next largest group is of any other ethnic origins.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students at the academy eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional income for disadvantaged students, is above the average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students are challenged to achieve more highly through teachers:
 - asking more searching questions which require students to think more deeply about their responses
 - insisting on the highest of standards in the quality and depth of students' written work
 - consistently applying the academy's presentation of work and marking policies.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of middle leaders further by:
 - involving them fully in the academy's improvement planning
 - making them more formally accountable to senior leaders and the governing body
 - checking that they consistently apply the academy's policies and procedures through their staff teams.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and his deputy lead the academy well. There is very strong support for their leadership from parents and staff. Staff morale is high and the Archer ambition to become outstanding as quickly as possible is shared by all.
- Leaders have set the very highest expectations for standards of behaviour. High levels of respect, courtesy and manners between students and staff are the norm. All in the academy provide the warmest of welcomes to visitors and guests. Leaders have ensured that this is a happy, safe academy where strong relationships underpin high professional expectations. This very particular ethos makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy's self-evaluation is strong and mostly accurate. There are very good systems in place to monitor the quality of the academy's work, including the effective scrutiny of outcomes for individual students and groups of students. While these systems provide accurate information for senior leaders and governors, their inconsistent application means that the evaluation of staff, subject and wider curriculum performance is not always accurate.
- The quality of the academy's improvement plan is not reflected in all subject development plans. These vary in quality and depth and, as a result, the pace of improvement across the academy is not consistent in all areas. In English, there is clear evidence of strong development planning resulting in outstanding outcomes for some groups of learners. This is less so in other curriculum areas where the plans lack precise success criteria. This makes measuring success or otherwise more difficult.
- Middle leaders have benefited from working with skilled senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching. Most are monitoring teaching accurately in their areas as a result of such coaching. They diagnose what needs to improve and support teachers and support staff to develop their skills. However, the impact of this scrutiny is not consistently seen in all subjects, such as areas of thematic learning and enrichment.
- Leaders provide effective, high quality support for newly qualified teachers. Training and professional development are well matched to individual staff needs.
- Leaders routinely target students who are underperforming and put effective interventions in place. The academy's use of its pupil premium budget, having been less effective in its first year, is now tightly focused on actions to support entitled students. Consequently, while a gap in performance in English and maths persists between eligible and non-eligible students, the academy's checks on the progress of disadvantaged students indicate some narrowing of the gap.
- Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the academy. Governors and leaders are resolute that the academy will serve its immediate, highly diverse, community well. As a result, students, parents and staff are unwavering in their belief that the academy looks after all its students with equal commitment. They are also clear in their belief that the academy promotes genuine tolerance and equality of opportunity for all.
- The school's curriculum is a particular strength. Leaders and governors have developed a rich curriculum. It combines academic rigour with broad and deep coverage of the skills and knowledge needed for students to, eventually, successfully progress onto higher education and employment. They have made very good progress in this regard. High quality teaching in the school's subject curriculum is providing firm academic foundations for those students currently attending, before they embark upon their Key Stage 4 and post-16 qualifications. The wider skills developed in thematic and enrichment opportunities ensure Archer students approach the wide variety of courses with confidence. The academic and wider curricula combined provide a strong preparation for life in modern Britain. Nevertheless, leaders agree that the effective checks on student progress across the curriculum need to be universally accurate – this is not the case at present.
- The academy takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Case studies reveal that staff and leaders are tenacious in their care for students and when working with agencies beyond the academy. Minor issues of compliance within the academy's safeguarding policy were corrected before the conclusion of this inspection. Safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created effective systems to manage the performance of their staff. Teachers' performance is closely linked to student outcomes, although this relationship is less clear for those engaged in teaching in the thematic and enrichment curricula. Evidence of staff performance is scrutinised by the headteacher with increasing rigour before decisions are made about pay progression.
- The academy commissions reports from a small number of external services and consultants to evaluate the impact of its work, including from the local authority. Senior leaders have made good use of such

reports in driving forward improvements. This is less in evidence in the work of middle leaders.

■ The governance of the academy:

- Governance of the academy is highly effective. Governors know the academy's strengths well and are very well equipped to challenge for the improvements needed in its less effective practice. They bring together an impressive range of skills and experience and set high expectations for success. They routinely engage in training and development to enhance their own leadership skills and annually audit those skill sets to ensure they are fit for the needs of the academy. The Chair of Governors is tenacious in her search for any new governors needed to 'plug the gaps' if a skills deficit emerges through the audit.
- Governors scrutinise information about the quality of teaching and students' achievement in relation to both academy and national performance averages. They carefully scrutinise information about students' progress and have been closely involved in the monitoring of the academy's planning for GCSE and BTEC teaching from September 2015. However, governors know they need to apply a more forensic analysis to the impact of the thematic and enrichment curricula on students' performance. Systems for the monitoring of the performance of staff are understood well by governors and they inform their scrutiny of the headteacher's pay recommendations. Evaluation of the academy's financial management and performance is similarly confident and accurate.
- Governors monitor the impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up spending in the academy closely. They increasingly challenge leaders to account for the impact of these expenditures on students' achievement, particularly in relation to attendance and the current performance gaps. However, they do not always focus so sharply on the progress different groups of students make through the year because some aspects of the academy's planning, particularly at middle leader level, lack precise success measures.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and statutory duties are well attended to. Governors thus ensure students are safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. There is a clear sense of 'the Archer way' and students adopt those values in all they do.
- Leaders judge that behaviour is exceptional in all contexts and inspectors agree. Students demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning in lessons and inspectors witnessed no examples of low-level disruption. This was particularly impressive in the context of a disrupted week caused by examinations.
- Students' pride and self-esteem are evident in their excellent conduct. They wear their uniform smartly, rarely drop litter, speak with each other and with adults with respect, and display good manners at all times. Students of a wide variety of backgrounds, cultures and abilities socialise well, including in unsupervised situations. Disabled students are accommodated seamlessly into social activities.
- The academy has no exclusions, very few internal exclusions or isolations and is rightly very proud of its 'low key' approach to behaviour management which is underpinned by clear expectations for all in the academy community.
- Attendance rates are above average for all students bar the disadvantaged. The academy is taking robust action, in line with its improved pupil premium policy, to address this gap. It has already narrowed from the previous year.
- Leaders expect excellent punctuality, and students respond accordingly. Students arrived on time for school, and for each lesson, as matter of routine each day.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students have a wide, comprehensive understanding of how to keep safe. They described, in detail, the great lengths the academy goes to, to ensure their safety while travelling to physical education lessons on coaches or while walking to a local park for breaktimes. They are very aware of the great efforts of the academy's staff to keep them safe. The comprehensive risk assessments produced for managing the movement and transport of students exemplify the rigour with which leaders and governors approach their safeguarding duties.
- All members of staff know about safeguarding arrangements in the academy and they receive regular update training. In lessons, staff show a keen awareness of health and safety risks and this encourages a similar awareness in students. It is clear that this helps students to understand the necessity for rules and

to recognise risks.

- The academy states that it deals firmly and swiftly with any incidents of derogatory, homophobic or discriminatory language and students confirm this. Students have a sophisticated understanding of different forms of bullying and of the damage it can do. Academy records indicate that bullying is rare and, when it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly.
- Inspectors agree with parents, staff and students who believe that the academy goes to considerable lengths to ensure that all are safe in its community.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is typically good in all areas and is sometimes outstanding. As a result, most students, including those with special educational needs and some disadvantaged students, make good progress. The most able students make good, and occasionally outstanding, progress overall. However, the brightest students are sometimes insufficiently challenged. In some areas, the tasks set for them are too easy, and teachers' expectations of the work produced are not high enough.
- Productive learning relationships are at the heart of hard-working classrooms in this academy. Along with a highly successful approach to developing literacy, this underpins the good progress that students make. Leaders and teachers have ensured that literacy, in all subject areas, is a real strength. This is especially so in students' oral and discursive work, where the use of English is confident and well developed in the overwhelming majority of students. Leaders acknowledge there is more to do to ensure such strength in numeracy beyond mathematics lessons.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is an evident strength. Where students are challenged to think deeply, for example in a Year 7 top set mathematics lesson, the teacher provided work for an enthusiastic group which was significantly challenging for their age. In their calculation of the areas of a variety of shapes, students used mathematical language with ease and confidence – something they were clearly used to doing. In using such deep mathematical understanding over time, many students in this class are making outstanding progress.
- The quality of teachers' planning, in most areas, is also a strength. Secure data management systems mean that teachers can use accurate, up-to-date information when planning for each individual. In physical education lessons, for example, the detailed planning used by teachers results in at least good progress for all. In Year 7 rounders lessons, planning is used for each individual student to ensure their learning is extended in every lesson. For example, different learners were using balls of varied weights to hone their throwing and catching skills. As a result, all students were sufficiently challenged to move their skills on. However, in some subjects, identical tasks are set for wide ranges of students, resulting in a lack of challenge for some and thus limiting progress.
- Leaders have created an effective assessment and marking system. In many subject areas, assessment is challenging and the strong progress made by most students reflects that demanding learning. However, in key areas such as some thematic learning, such challenge is not always in evidence. Consequently, some brighter students felt that their thematic work could demand more of them, and inspectors agree.
- Students, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress over time because they receive effective support from skilled adults. Students with physical disabilities are particularly well catered for, enjoying the benefits of the additional specialist teaching support and a new physiotherapy suite.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From mostly very high starting points, the majority of students make at least expected progress against the academy's ambitious expectations, and against national expectations. Learners' work shows that higher than average proportions of students are on track to make expected and more than expected progress in English and mathematics. This progress is mirrored in a number of other subjects, although is less so in the thematic curriculum, where evidence over time is more mixed.
- Girls outperform boys in the majority of subjects. Sometimes, this gap is a significant one, as it is currently in Year 8 English and mathematics. Academy leaders are well aware of this concern and are already taking effective steps to narrow this gap as quickly as possible.
- The most able students make at least good progress, across the curriculum. A significant number of them increasingly make outstanding progress in the mainstream curriculum. This is less so in the thematic subjects, although leaders are taking appropriate steps to improve consistency in this regard.

- Similarly, the progress of disadvantaged students is inconsistent. The academy has made effective progress in narrowing, and sometimes closing, the gap between disadvantaged students and others in some subject areas, but this is not sustained. Again, leaders have comprehensively reviewed their spending and intervention plans. As a result, the academy's most recent performance information indicates some narrowing of the gap in a number of subjects, including English and mathematics. Evidence from students' work in lessons confirms this shift.
- The great majority of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their starting points. Many of them make outstanding progress. This is the clear effect of teachers and support staff encouraging learning with skilled, precise interventions in a wide variety of subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress over time from their individual starting points. Disabled students are particularly well catered for and their progress is always at least good. This very positive picture is the combined result of effective tracking and skilled interventions led by the new special educational needs co-ordinator and her team.
- Students receive strong support in the development of reading, writing and communication. Upon entry into the academy, every student is tested to clarify precisely what their needs are in these key areas. This very robust information is then shared with teachers and support staff who use it to plan appropriate lessons and bespoke interventions. It is this effective practice which enables the majority of students to make at least good progress and for an increasing number to make outstanding progress.
- The richness of the academy's curriculum is significant in relation to students' progress. The diversity of subjects and themes, combined with skilled teaching, results in genuine challenge for students. This demanding curriculum encourages self-confident, assertive young people who are, largely, ambitious for their own success and for that of their peers.
- No students attend alternative provision.

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	139594
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	450102

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Avis Johns
Headteacher	Mick Quigley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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