

King's Cross Academy

Plimsoll Building, 4 Wollstonecraft Street, London N1C 4BT

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Governors and trustees are single-minded in their drive to raise aspirations and to secure equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Senior leaders are pivotal in creating a school which is both inclusive and exciting. They have forged very effective partnerships with schools, businesses and universities. This is beneficial for both pupils and adults.
- Senior leaders are excellent role models. They constantly evaluate the impact of their work, creating an open and transparent culture. As a result, both staff and pupils confidently reflect on what is working well and what needs further attention.
- Staff benefit from very effective support from senior and middle leaders. This is securing good and strongly improving teaching and learning.
- The school puts pupils' physical and mental well-being at the centre of their work. Pupils develop confidence, self-belief and self-reliance. Pupils say they feel safe and that adults will always listen to and help them.
- Most parents and carers appreciate that the school promotes their children's academic and personal development well.
- Pupils have a zest for learning. They are highly motivated learners, always willing to give their best. They are well behaved and respectful. Pupils work and play independently and harmoniously with their friends. They embody the school's motto of 'Love learning together'.
- Pupils learn and develop effectively because teaching is good. Activities are meaningful and promote enjoyment and a thirst to find out even more. A myriad of enrichment activities provide memorable learning experiences for children and pupils.
- Variations in the quality of teaching across key stage 1 result in inconsistencies in the progress pupils make. Some teaching does not stretch the most able in mathematics, or provide enough support for pupils in developing their writing. This prevents pupils from making outstanding progress in these two subjects.
- Pupils who find learning difficult and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make at least good progress.
- Provision in the early years secures sustained and substantial improvements in all areas of children's learning. Adults are proficient in providing children with quality learning activities in vibrant classrooms and outdoor spaces.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistency in the quality of teaching in key stage 1 so that all pupils make sustained and substantial progress in writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils, including the most able, are routinely given work which makes them think hard about their learning in mathematics
 - work in mathematics builds precisely on what pupils already know and can do
 - teachers identify exactly what pupils will be learning in their writing, and pupils can understand the 'success criteria' that teachers use to raise their achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Senior leaders, including governors and trustees, are highly ambitious for the school. The school has flourished since opening almost two and a half years ago. Staff morale is high; all share leaders' clarity of vision of equality and success for pupils, irrespective of their backgrounds, gender or ability.
- A wide range of monitoring activities, including in-depth termly discussions with teachers about the progress pupils are making, mean that leaders know the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They plan precisely to target the right priorities for improvement. Leaders make sure that their work on raising pupils' achievement, behaviour and well-being is having maximum impact.
- Assessments are used well to keep a close check on the progress pupils make. Early interventions for those who find learning difficult and booster sessions for the most able pupils are put in place to prevent any underachievement.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well supported. They invest heavily in boosting the quality of teaching through whole-school improvement programmes, as well as specific training and development. As a result, teaching is good and improving strongly.
- Senior leaders model how to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. As a consequence, middle leaders, particularly phase leaders, are already adept at providing guidance and training for their colleagues. This incorporates mentoring and coaching for new teachers. This recent additional layer of leadership is proving to be a key driver in securing stronger capacity for improvement.
- The curriculum is designed to provide pupils with relevant and highly stimulating learning activities which develop their knowledge and understanding successfully. Staff promote children's and pupils' language and communication skills at every opportunity. They know this is crucial for pupils' thinking and learning capabilities. Additionally, everyone can communicate using British sign language, enabling effective interaction between pupils and those who attend the special school. It is no surprise that both children and pupils make outstanding progress in their communication and language skills.
- Activities designed to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as fundamental British values, are threaded through both planned curriculum time and extra-curricular activities.
- The school is outward-looking and has forged outstanding partnerships with many local companies and educational institutions to enable children and pupils to benefit from a wide range of activities. These include, for example, lunchtime clubs led by a sporting company; musical workshops; local engineers who teach information and communication technology (ICT) and coding skills; scientific projects such as waterproofing boats; and art programmes with students from the nearby university. These activities inspire pupils to learn in real-life contexts with people from a wide range of professions, opening up their world to endless possibilities for adult life.
- World-renowned artists and musicians regularly visit the school, often in collaboration with the neighbouring special school, providing pupils with outstanding role models for

them to aspire to and enriching their artistic experiences.

- The school has also made valuable links with schools locally and further afield. This enables all to share good practice in teaching and to moderate assessments to improve their accuracy. It also gives other schools the opportunity to benefit from projects with the companies that have partnerships with the school.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively, keeping it under review to ensure that it has the intended impact on pupils' outcomes. The funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to provide additional support, as well as enabling pupils to learn to play an instrument and to attend breakfast and after-school clubs. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils make good and sometimes very strong gains in their learning.
- The leadership of special educational needs is effective, keeping a close check of the impact of interventions on pupils' learning. Teachers, teaching assistants, specialists and therapists make a strong contribution to the learning of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as do resources shared with the special school.
- The sports premium funding is used to enable pupils to spend more time engaged in a wider range of sporting activities, increasing their competitive spirit and raising their confidence further. This is having a significant impact on pupils' physical and emotional well-being.
- Leaders engage with parents well. Termly meetings enable parents to find out more about their children's achievement. There are workshops and opportunities to visit classes, as well as use of the 'virtual classroom'. This gives parents greater insight into how the school promotes pupils' learning, and what they can do at home to support their children. Almost all parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school's work via the online Ofsted survey.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees have a clear vision for the school and its place at the centre of a new urban community. All have substantial and relevant skills and play an important part in the school's performance and direction. Governors and trustees are involved in setting the school's priorities because they know incisively how well the school is performing. As governors of a new school, they are mindful of providing leaders with the appropriate balance of support and challenge. Governors were quick to point out that 'we do not take things at face value'. This is evident in the meticulous checks they make, including regular visits, meetings and reports. In particular, they keep a sharp eye on the impact leaders have on raising the quality of teaching and strengthening pupils' achievement. They make sure that all their statutory responsibilities are met, including safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have secured a nurturing but vigilant culture for safeguarding pupils. The designated safeguarding lead is well informed and makes sure staff are fully up to date with all the required safeguarding procedures. Any concerns are promptly communicated to the designated safeguarding lead and, if required, to external agencies. Case studies confirm that the school follows up any referrals diligently to

make sure vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need. If there are concerns that outside agencies are not responding promptly enough, the safeguarding governor will step in to secure a timely response.

- All the required checks on staff to make sure that they are suitable to work with children are undertaken scrupulously. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents confirm that they appreciate the work that the school does to keep their children safe.
- Collaboration with leaders and governors from the adjacent special school secures agreed ways of working, including keeping pupils safe. This includes similar admission and exit arrangements for both sets of pupils and parents at the start and end of the school day. Governors regularly check safeguarding procedures and make sure that all the statutory requirements are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils make good progress because teachers make learning interesting and relevant. For example, the texts selected for reading enthuse pupils and link to the topics they are studying. Learning is also brought to life by visitors to the school and visits within the local community.
- Staff emphasise key vocabulary, including technical vocabulary, and use this to make links to pupils' previous learning. This builds up a strong and secure base of knowledge and understanding for pupils.
- Teachers ask probing questions, encouraging pupils to think about their work and to deepen their understanding. They check how well pupils are doing and quickly spot any misconceptions or gaps in learning. They provide good opportunities for pupils to apply and hone their knowledge and understanding in literacy and mathematics, as well as across the curriculum.
- The teaching of reading is effective, beginning with systematic and regular teaching of phonics. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was well above average in 2017 and is predicted to rise still further in 2018. Success with phonics also has a good impact on the progress pupils make in their writing.
- The school ensures that all pupils read regularly, including those pupils who do not read frequently at home. Pupils read in groups and one-to-one, often with the help of the 80 volunteers from a local business. Pupils read with good comprehension, fluency and intonation. The school successfully promotes pupils' love of reading for pleasure.
- Teaching assistants make sure there is the right level of support for pupils who find learning difficult and for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They know when to help pupils and when to let pupils work things out for themselves. This increases pupils' confidence and ability to sustain their concentration.
- All staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They constantly encourage pupils to be inquisitive, to ask questions, to be independent in their thinking and in their work. Indeed, pupils' enthusiasm is tangible; they can hardly wait to get on with their work at the beginning of lessons.
- Recent work to secure greater mastery in mathematics is securing stronger progress in

this subject. Nonetheless, despite clear evidence that more pupils are achieving in greater depth, there are still too many occasions when the most able pupils are not given demanding tasks. Sometimes, pupils repeat work that they have already mastered, as shown by their work in books and discussion with pupils.

- There is also some inconsistency in teachers' explanations of what pupils are to learn. When teaching was more effective, learning steps were explained well; pupils' understanding was checked and clear feedback was provided to clarify strengths in their learning and to set out what they need to work on next. In some cases, however, pupils' work demonstrated a lack of clarity about what was expected of them. For example, they showed uncertainty about precisely which grammatical ideas they needed to practise and apply in their writing. There are times when the 'steps to success' in their work books are too difficult to read and understand. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of in writing.
- The school has rightly recognised that more work needs to be done to improve pupils' presentation and handwriting skills. A new handwriting scheme has recently been implemented, the impact of which has yet to be seen.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are remarkably reflective about their learning because thinking skills and discussion are woven through all learning activities. They are encouraged to take responsibility, for example by self-assessing their work, and to take risks and experiment. This engenders immensely mature and responsible learners. Pupils are confident, articulate and thoughtful individuals. They have a positive sense of self-belief and maturity beyond their years.
- Pupils develop key skills, such as personal responsibility, honesty and respect through taking on roles such as peer mentors, play leaders and 'class meeting representatives'.
- Pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds get on well together, have mutual respect and show tolerance of differences. They have an acute sense of right and wrong and understand the need for democracy. For example, they present their views in assembly to secure votes for their election.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school and this is confirmed by the school log books. Pupils know how to keep safe, including when online. They trust adults to take care of them and know their welfare is given top priority.
- Pupils' physical health is promoted very effectively by healthy lunches, activities where pupils shop for and prepare vegetables and fruit, and numerous sporting activities, for example. Opportunities to talk about their worries and concerns through class discussions or by using 'social and emotional post boxes' support pupils' mental well-being successfully.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are exceptionally polite and well mannered. They are very proud of their school and welcome visitors with warmth and excitement. Pupils confidently ask visitors who they are, why they are in school and if they are going to visit their class.
- Pupils behave in lessons because they become totally engrossed in their learning. They work collaboratively with their friends and rarely become distracted, even if the work does not always stretch them enough.
- The playground is well resourced and good use is made of the small spaces available. Pupils play together harmoniously and welcome pupils from the special school.
- Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. As a result, attendance rates have improved and are now in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced over the last two years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school's assessments indicate that, from widely different starting points, pupils make good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. As a consequence, current pupils' attainment in these subjects is above average, with a growing proportion of pupils working in greater depth.
- Pupils' progress is very strong in reading. Some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across key stage 1 result in variations in the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics, although it remains good overall.
- There are no significant differences in the progress made by particular groups of pupils. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities sometimes make very strong progress as a result of well-thought-out interventions which address their needs precisely.
- Baseline and end-of-year assessments show that pupils make outstanding progress in their physical development, and good progress in other areas of the curriculum, including science. French is taught from Reception onwards. Pupils regularly practise their French when bilingual Eurostar train drivers visit their classes. Indeed, being a train driver is currently one of the top future careers options for many children and pupils.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- In 2017, from a wide range of starting points, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well above average. Projections suggest that this will improve still further this year.
- The proportion of children exceeding the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics is also high, reflecting strong, sustained and substantial progress. This is an improvement on 2017, when fewer children exceeded the early learning goals in writing and mathematics than the national averages. Higher achievement reflects leaders' efforts to provide more intensive support for individual children and small groups.
- Leadership of the early years is outstanding and demonstrates an excellent

understanding of effective early years practice. Staff in the early years team work well together to ensure highly effective provision.

- Adults are skilled at observing children at work and intervening at the right moment to extend their language, understanding and skills. They know exactly what needs to be done to provide them with activities, social interaction and encouragement that enhance their progress.
- Adults model communication and social skills well. As a result, children share and take turns in their play and work. They use their increasing vocabulary to communicate their needs and explain their ideas with growing clarity and confidence.
- Regular assessments enable staff to plan a wide range of highly stimulating activities that closely support individual children's learning. The majority of observations are recorded electronically to build up a picture of children's achievements. This information is sent to parents termly to keep them well informed of their children's progress.
- Children are extremely curious about the world around them. Both classrooms and outdoor spaces capitalise on this, instantly capturing children's attention, providing highly interactive, practical and relevant activities.
- Each activity, whether adult-led or chosen by children, has a clear learning purpose. For example, children wrote about Jack and the Beanstalk, counted two digit numbers using beans, built castles and role played inside and outside the classroom to hide from the giant.
- The teaching of phonics is very effective from Nursery upwards. Workshops for parents provide a shared understanding on how reading is taught. Parents appreciate the support they receive to enable them to help their children at home with their literacy and mathematical skills.
- Staff ensure that children are ready for school through home visits and visits to pre-school settings, various workshops and meetings. As a result, children settle quickly into the well-established routines when they start school.
- The early years unit is exceptionally well resourced with high-quality apparatus and learning areas. Routines are well established and this, together with the very warm and positive relationships, enables children to feel confident and safe, prompting them to explore with great delight.
- Children are more than ready for the challenges of Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	140686
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10048321

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Robert Evans
Headteacher	Emyr Fairburn
Telephone number	0207 504 0533
Website	kingscrossacademy.org.uk
Email address	admin@kingscrossacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- King's Cross Academy is sponsored by Kings Cross Academy Trust, formed by the Kings Cross Central Limited Partnership (KCCLP), including Clara and Michael Freeman. KCCLP is the owner and developer of the King's Cross regeneration project.
- The academy is co-located with the Frank Barnes School for deaf children. The whole site includes residential apartments, retail properties, higher education institutes, leisure and social amenities.
- The school's administration manager and some administration staff also work for the Frank Barnes School. The school has access to this school's special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities resources, including a sensory room and specialists and therapists.
- Pupils from both schools share the hall and outdoor playground areas. All the staff and pupils at the academy learn British sign language so that they are able to communicate with pupils at the Frank Barnes School.

- This is the school's first inspection since it opened in September 2015.
- The school is smaller than most primary schools. Key stage 1 comprises two Year 1 and Year 2 classes. In the early years foundation stage there is one Nursery and two Reception classes. There are currently no key stage 2 classes, but as the school grows more staff will be appointed for this key stage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, including those pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils are from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds and almost half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. There are no pupils in the early stages of learning English.
- The school has recently appointed six middle leaders, including an early years leader, and three new teachers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning across key stage 1 and the early years foundation stage. All observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' work was scrutinised during observations and additional work sampling was undertaken.
- The inspector explored pupils' views through informal discussions with pupils and talking to a group of pupils. The inspector listened to pupils reading in Years 1 and 2.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and governors, including the chair; two of the governors are also trustees. A meeting was held with a local authority representative.
- Questionnaires submitted by eight members of staff were scrutinised, as well as 77 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 27 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- A range of documentary evidence was examined. This included the school's self-evaluation, development plans, checks on the quality of teaching, safeguarding documentation including risk assessments, various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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