

City of London Academy Islington

Prebend Street, Islington, London N1 8PQ

Inspection dates

13 to 14 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Since the arrival of the headteacher in 2012, the school has been transformed into an exciting environment where pupils and staff thrive. Outcomes are outstanding and pupils' progress is exceptional. This is a school where 'no child is left behind'.
- Teachers use information about their pupils to plan excellent lessons. They facilitate pupils' learning by providing outstanding guidance. All pupils consistently respond to this help from their teachers.
- Leaders set very high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and their achievements.
- The curriculum is under constant review by leaders to ensure that it meets pupils' needs. The curriculum enables pupils to excel. The extra-curricular provision supports pupils in developing confidence and additional skills for their future lives.
- The exceptional provision for personal development and welfare ensures that pupils quickly develop the skills they need to succeed in this school and in their future careers.
- Leadership at all levels, from governors to pupils, is outstanding. The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a great strength. Leaders, staff and pupils all appreciate the many opportunities to 'step up' and contribute to the smooth running of the school.
- The sixth-form provision is good. The school has joined the local sixth-form consortium. Pupils have been recruited to this new provision and staff have been appointed.
- Leadership in the sixth form is strong. The range of study programmes the school can offer is affected by the small numbers of students in the sixth form. Teaching in the sixth form is variable and this affects students' progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders in the sixth form should keep the provision under review so that:
 - students' progress in the sixth form reaches the same high levels as pupils' progress in key stages 3 and 4
 - teaching is consistently of the highest quality
 - students benefit from the wider range of courses on offer in the consortium.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is relentless in her drive to set high expectations for all pupils. Supported by a strong governing body and the highly effective senior team, the headteacher ensures that standards rise considerably and continue to do so. Pupils' outcomes are consistently high, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders track pupils' progress carefully. They check the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. They train and support teachers immediately when any weaknesses are identified. Earlier in the year, senior staff decided that pupils' reading was not as good as it might be. Training was put in place. Pupils read regularly in school and are confident to read aloud in lessons.
- Teachers, including newly qualified teachers, really value the training they receive on how to develop their teaching approaches. They spoke highly of their training to support the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders set up a borough-wide group to support developments for teaching assistants. The quality of all this training is evident in lessons, where teachers and teaching assistants are extremely effective in supporting learning.
- There is a well-thought-out curriculum which enables pupils to achieve outstanding results in public examinations. Pupils are encouraged to study a broad range of arts subjects. Every pupil in Year 7 learns a musical instrument. The extra-curricular offer is very wide and includes a cadet force, sports, debating and an equality and diversity group. Leaders introduced many of these activities to support pupils in developing self-confidence.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum is taught in assemblies, and in personal, social, health, careers and equality (PSHCE) lessons. These aspects of development are threaded through all other subjects. Pupils enjoy their lessons and develop strong skills in empathy, listening and respect for others.
- Most pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities. 'Pupil leaders' and those involved in the many extra-curricular activities are very confident. Pupils are articulate and show great pride in their school.
- Leaders use all the additional funding very well. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who start Year 7 behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils with SEND all make exceptional progress.

Governance of the school

- Governance is an immense strength of the school. Governors are well informed and very astute. Through their annual audit of skills, they ensure that there is an appropriate mix of skills on the governing body. They undertake very regular training.
- Governors hold leaders to account very effectively. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and provide challenge and considerable support where possible.
- Governors are extremely well informed about safeguarding matters, including local

risks. They give a great deal of support to pupils to develop skills which help them avoid these risks.

- Governors use their wide range of contacts to offer opportunities to pupils to support them in developing strong skills. They regularly meet with pupils and parents and carers to gather views and check that pupils are safe.

Safeguarding

- The school has a high number of vulnerable pupils. All staff are exceptionally well trained and alert to the potential risks posed to their pupils. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders avoid external exclusions as far as possible because they know their pupils may be at risk when they are not in school. Pupils are taught how to keep safe and they feel safe in school. The safer schools police officer, together with staff, teaches pupils about local risks such as gangs and knife crime and how to avoid these risks.
- Staff are trained regularly in safeguarding and view this responsibility most seriously. Leaders provide a range of help for their most vulnerable children, and some of this support continues until they are young adults.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and they use this skilfully to facilitate pupils' learning. They give pupils expert advice about how to improve their work. Pupils act on this advice and make outstanding progress. Pupils really enjoy their learning because of this positive learning environment.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. Teachers establish clear routines in lessons and pupils respond to these expectations. Pupils are proud of their work and are keen to share their success. Teachers use highly effective questioning to help pupils deepen their understanding. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and to learn from them. The climate for learning in lessons is exceptionally good.
- Teachers use information about pupils very effectively to develop pupils' learning. Pupils are clear about their targets and are confident that they will achieve them with their teachers' help. Pupils make outstanding progress in all subjects and across all year groups because of this excellent support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Leaders recognise that many pupils arrive in Year 7 with low self-confidence and low self-esteem. Teachers develop programmes in PSHCE and offer extra-curricular opportunities to build pupils' confidence. The PSHCE lessons cover British values and pupils can debate and understand these values. Older pupils in school are articulate,

well informed and self-confident.

- Pupils understand how to be effective learners because of the very effective teaching in lessons and the excellent relationships with their teachers. All pupils are keen to share their work, including those pupils who are less able and those pupils with SEND. Pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning promote their outstanding progress.
- In PSHCE lessons, pupils learn how to stay safe. They know how to deal with all types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does happen teachers deal with it very well. Older pupils are taught how to avoid radicalisation, extremism and other risks. Parents, pupils and staff say that pupils are very safe in school.
- Leaders invest a great deal of time in supporting pupils to develop healthy bodies and minds. Many staff in school are trained in specialist support for mental health. The school uses external agencies well to support their most vulnerable pupils. Pupils feel that their concerns are 'listened to' and that leaders act to address their needs.
- The school uses three alternative providers. The education welfare officer visits these providers regularly to monitor pupils' progress. The school maintains contact with these pupils and their families to ensure that the support pupils receive helps them with their behaviour and personal development. Leaders believe this support is effective because their pupils' attendance and attitudes improve in the alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good. A small number of Year 7 pupils arrive in school unable to understand the high expectations the school has of their behaviour. Leaders and teachers put a great deal of support in place for these pupils. They are also supported by older pupils and they learn how to manage their own behaviour. Pupils who have been excluded in the past are self-reflective and believe that the school really helps them to improve.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. This is the result of leaders' actions and excellent support from the school's pastoral team.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is very good and any off-task behaviour is dealt with very effectively by teachers. The number of exclusions is below average. Teachers use the internal exclusion unit very effectively. Pupils use their time in the unit as an opportunity to catch up on learning and to reflect on their behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils' outcomes, including disadvantaged pupils' outcomes, in GCSE examinations are very strong across all subjects. Current pupils make outstanding progress in all subjects across key stages 3 and 4. Students' progress in the sixth form is good, but not as strong as in the other key stages.
- Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress because of the excellent teaching and the caring environment in the school. Pupils with SEND make very good progress because of the 'wrap-around care' they are given. Inclusion leaders ensure that teachers receive very detailed information about all pupils with SEND. Teaching

assistants work closely with teachers to provide exceptional support in lessons for these pupils.

- Leaders constantly track pupils' progress and put additional support swiftly in place when they fall behind. At the start of the academic year, leaders identified that the most able boys were not making strong progress. Actions were put in place and the most able boys now make outstanding progress.
- Pupils are supported effectively to develop their ability and enjoyment of reading. Pupils read regularly in class. They volunteer to read and clearly enjoy this. Pupils are guided in their choice of reading books and read for pleasure.
- Pupils are given very good careers advice and guidance which starts in Year 7. All pupils in Year 11 undertake work experience. Pupils are prepared very well for the next stages in their education or employment because of their excellent examination results and the strong careers guidance.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership in the sixth form is strong. Leaders have an accurate view of their provision. The number of students in the sixth form is low. This reduces the range of courses the school can offer and limits the opportunity for students' discussions in lessons. With the agreement of governors, the school joined the local sixth-form consortium and students will start their courses in September 2019. Pupils in Year 11 have already applied to the consortium and staff have been appointed to new roles.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teaching is particularly strong in English and sports science, where teachers' expectations are extremely high, and students achieve very well. However, in some subjects, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not consistently high. In 2018, students' outcomes in public examinations fell from a stronger position in 2017. The school has been affected by some difficulty in recruiting teachers in a few subjects. Teaching in the sixth form is more variable than the rest of the school.
- Careers advice and guidance is very effective. Students say they find this support very helpful. All students undertake work experience in Year 12. The school uses contacts from local and London city employers to ensure that the work experience is of a high quality. Last year, all students went on to higher education or employment because of this very good support.
- The personal development and welfare programme for sixth-form students is excellent. Students are well informed about local risks and they train to support younger pupils who are more vulnerable to these risks. Student leaders are excellent role models. Sixth-form students are well informed about radicalisation and extremism and how to seek help if they or their peers are at risk.
- Students who re-sit GCSE mathematics and English in the sixth form make excellent progress because of effective teaching.
- In the past, between 50% and 70% of Year 11 pupils went on to the school's sixth form, although applications for the consortium are much higher than in previous years.

Retention of pupils from Year 12 into Year 13 is very high because of the strong care and guidance pupils receive.

- Students' progress on both academic and vocational courses is strong this year.

School details

Unique reference number	135587
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10058970

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	750
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	110
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Richard Verrall
Executive Headteacher	Clare Verga
Acting Headteacher	Sonia Jacob
Telephone number	02072268611
Website	www.colai.org.uk
Email address	info@cityacademyislington.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2018

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher works across two schools, The City of London Academy, Islington and the City of London Academy, Highbury Grove.
- The school is a stand-alone academy. The academy trust is the City of London Academy Islington Limited.
- The sponsors for the academy trust are City, University of London and London City Corporation. Both sponsors have four representatives on the governing body. The governing body is responsible for all aspects of governance.

- The school uses three alternative providers, ELAT, Westminster Kingsway and the Hospital School.
- The school has recently joined the Islington Sixth Form Consortium. Pupils will start their courses in September 2019.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in key stages 3 and 4, in the sixth form and across a range of subject areas. They visited a staff briefing where training was delivered. Inspectors carried out checks on pupils' books and talked to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors met with pupils, teachers, middle and senior leaders, and governors. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents related to pupils' behaviour, safety, teaching and learning, and pupils' progress and attainment.
- There were 39 responses from parents to Parent View, including 18 free-text responses. Inspectors considered 11 responses from pupils and 23 responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Joan McVittie, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Goddard	Ofsted Inspector

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