

Inspection of Pimlico Academy

Lupus Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 3AT

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 October 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Becoming better in a subject is taken very seriously by staff and pupils at Pimlico. Leaders give a lot of time and attention to planning what pupils must learn and in which order. This approach has been especially successful in the sixth form. Most sixth-form students thrive in their study of a wide range of academic subjects.

However, some pupils struggle with the exceptionally challenging books they study at school because they do not have the language, reading skills and knowledge to access these texts. As a result, these pupils are overwhelmed and learn less than they should.

All pupils access a remarkable range of high-quality opportunities outside of lessons. These aim to develop pupils' physical and mental well-being as well as academic interests. These opportunities include clubs to deepen pupils' subject knowledge, alongside activities to promote pupils' talents in art, music, sports and drama.

The school went through a period of considerable turbulence in the previous academic year. Leaders and trustees have worked hard to win back hearts and minds with much success. However, some parents and carers remain concerned about aspects of the school, including leaders' work to secure further improvements.

Pupils mostly behave well in lessons and around the school. They know the rules and can explain why they exist. Pupils said that sometimes bullying and the use of discriminatory language do happen. However, leaders take any incidents seriously. They act effectively to tackle this type of behaviour. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have stabilised the school after a brief period of turbulence. Their focus on the quality of education has not wavered. The trust's curriculum leaders support subject leaders to plan the learning programme in great detail. In every subject, teachers benefit from excellent professional development. As a result, staff know what it means to make strong progress in their subject and how to assess this.

Leaders have mapped out the sequence in which pupils need to learn knowledge, including the 'core knowledge' that teachers need to emphasise the most. Teaching typically revisits this knowledge regularly so that pupils can remember it. Consequently, most pupils recall key ideas and knowledge fluently in most aspects of the curriculum.

In the sixth form, curriculum leaders have developed well-organised plans for how their subjects are taught. Clear links are made to prior learning. This helps students to reinforce and develop their knowledge. Teaching helps students to grasp more difficult concepts and appreciate the scope of each subject. Over time, students

develop a rich knowledge of their subjects. This prepares them exceptionally well for life beyond school.

In most curriculum areas, leaders expect pupils to read widely about their subject and deepen their knowledge. They have identified the specific materials they would like pupils to read. However, in English, pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to read a sufficiently broad range of non-fiction and contemporary texts. Leaders' plans to address this are at an early stage.

The selection of texts is highly ambitious for all pupils from Year 7 onwards. Leaders choose books with the aim of building pupils' cultural capital. Some pupils struggle in some lessons because they do not have the necessary language, reading skills and knowledge to access the planned curriculum. This results in these pupils learning less than intended. While the teaching of reading is generally effective, the English curriculum does not have sufficient progression built into it to enable pupils with a lower starting point to develop their knowledge and skills systematically, and ultimately realise the school's ambition for them.

Leaders work with external agencies and families to ensure that the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are typically understood and catered for. This includes those pupils who attend the additionally resourced provision.

Most pupils focus well in lessons, with little disruption from others. Pupils are keen to show what they have remembered from previous learning. Occasionally, in Years 7 to 11, pupils fall short of the high standards that leaders and staff expect. Many pupils who inspectors spoke to said that some teachers do not follow the behaviour policy to deal with these incidents effectively. Some staff who responded to Ofsted's survey do not feel well supported by leaders in managing behaviour.

The provision for promoting pupils' personal development is of high quality. Subject specialists plan and teach the new social and personal education programme in Year 7. Concepts such as consent in the context of personal relationships and democracy have been well thought through. For example, pupils study what democracy looks like in their town or city. They then use this knowledge to consider the concept in a national context. Leaders have ensured that the personal, social, health and economic education programme responds to all pupils' needs. The programme develops pupils' awareness of issues to do with equality and diversity. Pupils learn about how to behave safely and respectfully with their peers. Students in the sixth form receive excellent advice and guidance which enables them to make the best choices for higher education.

Trustees have commendably ambitious curriculum aims. Their ambition is to provide pupils with 'the best that has been thought and said' and it is shared by leaders. Trustees and leaders have made significant progress with addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. However, some staff and parents remain dissatisfied with the trust's approach to improving the school. Leaders and

trustees do not always share information about their work in a timely and consistent way.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe. Staff are vigilant in looking for signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Recording of concerns is appropriate and precise. Leaders work well with external agencies to access support for pupils who need extra help. Trustees check that the school's records on the suitability of staff are well maintained and organised.

Pupils understand how to keep safe, including when they go online. The school's e-safety education has helped pupils to build their knowledge of who to tell and what to do if they are concerned about something.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum covering a range of challenging texts. However, some pupils struggle to understand what they are reading and so do not get the full benefit of their lessons. Leaders need to adjust the curriculum so that pupils starting with weaker knowledge and skills can build their vocabulary, reading stamina and knowledge over time.
- Leaders encourage pupils to read widely in most subjects. In English, however, there are few planned opportunities for pupils to read a sufficiently broad range of non-fiction and contemporary texts. Leaders should ensure that there is sufficient breadth and choice of fiction and non-fiction texts and support pupils to read widely, both for interest and enjoyment.
- Leaders have developed a comprehensive behaviour policy to promote high standards of behaviour. Most staff implement the behaviour policy effectively. However, many pupils are not confident that all staff follow the behaviour policy when dealing with poor behaviour. When this happens, they said that it causes some disruption to pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff are well trained and supported to implement the agreed policy consistently.
- Following recent instability at the school, leaders put in place a new communications strategy. This is helping many parents, staff and pupils to feel better informed about what is happening at school. However, some continue to express concerns about leaders' approach to tackling agreed priorities. Leaders and trustees should refine their communications strategy so that all parents, staff and pupils feel they are kept updated and that leaders are listening to their concerns.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135676
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	10199441
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1206
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lord Nash
Principal	Tony Oulton
Website	www.pimlico.futureacademies.org
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has been part of the Future Academies Trust since 2008.
- The school has additionally resourced provision for 14 pupils with speech, language and communication needs. All of these pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The principal has been in post since June 2021.
- Twenty-four new members of staff joined the school in September 2021. There are 17 early career teachers.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders from the trust, and the chief executive officer. They also met with two trustees, one of whom is the chair of the trust and both of whom are members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, history, languages, classics and music. They visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers, including those in their first few years of teaching.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and held discussions with leaders in a few other subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with leaders, trustees, pupils and staff to explore how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors considered 116 parent responses and 47 staff responses to Ofsted's surveys. No responses from pupils were received.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jude Wilson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Coyle	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence King	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021