

Inspection of The City Academy, Hackney

Homerton Row, Hackney, London E9 6EA

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
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?

Pupils at The City Academy, Hackney are kept safe. Leaders and staff promote a 'warm but strict' approach that creates a calm and purposeful learning environment. Behaviour is typically calm and orderly, and leaders have high expectations of behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom. Incidents of bullying are rare. However, pupils know whom to tell when it does occur, and leaders deal with it quickly and effectively.

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum with clearly defined goals for what pupils should learn and remember. Through the curriculum, pupils also learn to understand, appreciate and respect differences. For example, in English, the texts chosen help pupils to learn about and reflect on the experiences of others. All pupils follow a broad curriculum and achieve well, especially in the sixth form.

Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of enrichment opportunities through a compulsory additional studies programme and extended school days. For example, in Year 7, all pupils learn a musical instrument of their choice, and in Year 12, all students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Students in the sixth form play an active role in the school and wider community. They are given leadership opportunities and work with younger pupils through mentoring roles and in-class support.

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

Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum called 'The City Experience'. This curriculum places equal value on academic, creative, sporting and language subjects, as well as supporting pupils' personal development. Subject leaders have thought carefully about how best to sequence the knowledge that pupils need to learn. This sequencing has been designed so that pupils embed their knowledge before moving on to more complex ideas.

Teachers present subject matter with precision and follow clear structures and routines. They demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Teachers use this to deepen pupils' learning effectively, particularly when delivering the curriculum in the sixth form. Teachers also use assessment to check understanding regularly. In the sixth form, the use of assessment is especially helpful in checking that students are learning and remembering the intended curriculum. For example, in Year 13 art, students are provided with high-quality models and rubrics to help them to understand important learning and to articulate and justify their next steps. This contributes to students' excellent progress through the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow a broad curriculum. In specific nurture classes, pupils with SEND receive high-quality support from expert teachers and assistants. These pupils also benefit from the school's 'SEND-first' approach, which focuses on careful planning, questioning and regular assessment. However, in some instances, teaching does not incorporate this

approach fully in Years 7 to 11. This means that, at times, support and adaptations for pupils with SEND are not fine-tuned to pupils' individual and specific needs. In the instances where this occurs, it affects how well pupils learn.

Leaders support those at an early stage of reading through one-to-one phonics sessions. Other pupils receive support through the school's additional studies programme. However, this work is not fully embedded. Thus, although pupils are receiving support to catch up in reading, it is sometimes not well targeted to pupils' needs.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour, and lessons are rarely disrupted. When low-level disruption occurs, teachers implement the school's behaviour policy to deal with it swiftly. While fixed-term suspensions are high, they are used appropriately. Leaders have taken steps to reduce the number of suspensions, for example by providing training for behaviour mentors and allocating additional staff to the school's reflection room.

The school's curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is well sequenced. Pupils explore a wide range of topics through tutor time, PSHE education lessons and assemblies. Most pupils remember the content in detail. For example, younger pupils can confidently discuss healthy eating, mental health and staying safe when online. Leaders ensure that pupils are exposed to various careers through the PSHE education programme. This is particularly strong in the sixth form. As a result, students feel knowledgeable and supported in making decisions about their future destinations.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development through an additional studies programme and extended school day. Pupils can participate in a wide range of sports teams and clubs, including modelling club, chess club and knitting club. Sixth-form students access a particularly rich set of opportunities. For example, students receive professional tutoring from external mentors. They also take part in a weekly university support programme and have access to their own bespoke programme of enrichment activities.

Leaders are highly reflective. They understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff feel well supported and think that the school is well led. A small minority of staff feel that workload is an issue. Leaders are currently looking to strengthen the way in which staff are supported to manage their workload through a review of the marking and assessment policies.

Governors understand the school's work and use their knowledge to provide appropriate challenge. Leaders and governors are taking active steps to make sure that all parents and carers feel informed and included in the work of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. The safeguarding team is appropriately trained and works with local agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need.

Leaders conduct regular training for staff to make sure that they are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues, including those more prevalent locally. As a result, staff know what to look for to keep pupils safe and how to report their concerns.

The school's curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils know whom to speak to if they are worried, and they feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the support provided to some pupils with SEND is not tailored closely to their individual needs. When this happens, it reduces how well pupils are helped to learn the intended curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge, skills and expertise to support pupils with SEND appropriately. They should focus on ensuring that all pupils with SEND build their knowledge and skills across the curriculum.
- Leaders' work to support weaker readers to catch up is not fully established. Some support for weaker readers is not sufficiently focused on helping pupils to overcome their specific difficulties, which in turn affects how confidently these pupils access reading materials across the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that they establish and embed a thorough approach to assessing and supporting pupils with their reading, so that pupils who require support can learn to read well and access the full curriculum.

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.

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	135835
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10267977
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,139
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Emmerson
Principal	Anna Sarchet
Website	www.thecityacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 January 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of City of London Academies Trust.
- The principal took up post in September 2022.
- The school uses four registered alternative education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and senior leaders. They also met with the chair and other members of the governing body and the chief executive officer from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of their work. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors held meeting with leaders responsible for the school’s safeguarding arrangements. They also looked at safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through both discussions and their responses to Ofsted’s online surveys.

Inspection team

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