

# Inspection of The Academy School

2 Pilgrims Place, Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead, London NW3 1NG

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Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils really enjoy school and they are enthusiastic about their learning. Friendships flourish between pupils of different ages. Bullying is very rare and never tolerated. Pupils feel safe because they see staff and each other as being part of one big family. Staff take time to get to know pupils well and support them to fulfil their potential.

The school has exceptionally high expectations for pupils' achievement. Leaders have designed a broad and rich curriculum. It develops pupils' knowledge very well, alongside building self-confidence and self-esteem for example through drama and dance. Leaders also stretch pupils academically, for instance with ambitious curriculums for Latin and philosophy. Pupils are avid readers and carry an 'emergency book' with them just in case they finish their current one. Year 6 pupils get to write their own novel and this is celebrated when pupils 'publish' their books at a launch day. As a result of the excellent curriculum, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, either at age 11 or 13.

Pupils' attitudes embody the school's ethos of mutual respect and equality. They are kind and caring to each other, saying that this is a school where 'it is ok to be different'. Pupils are keen to learn. They ask thoughtful questions, and teachers skilfully adapt their teaching to deepen pupils' understanding. Learning is rarely disrupted. Teachers know how to keep pupils focused on the task in hand.

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

The school has designed an exceedingly ambitious curriculum that prepares pupils very well for their progression to secondary school. Pupils achieve consistently highly across the curriculum. The sequence of learning in each of the subjects is logical and allows pupils to build successfully on their prior learning. For example, in their study of the Tudors in Year 4, pupils learn about the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. Pupils revisit the Tudor period in Year 8, where they use their prior knowledge to consider the causes of the dispute between Spain and England and the role of the Spanish Armada.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They have high expectations of pupils in lessons and select activities that help pupils to understand and remember key knowledge securely and in depth. For example, in English, Year 6 pupils recalled and applied their knowledge of iambic pentameter when reading and analysing Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 29'. In Year 5 history, pupils used their knowledge of monarchy and democracy to understand the origins of American independence. Teachers are quick to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and they address these as they arise. Teachers use assessment well to adapt their teaching so that pupils are secure in their understanding before moving on to a new topic.

Leaders assess all pupils when they join the school. The school quickly identifies any pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where

appropriate, the school seeks external assessments to identify the specific educational need a pupil has and what support is needed to overcome any barriers. Leaders share with staff the agreed approaches to supporting pupils. Staff then adapt how they teach the curriculum in order to meet pupils' needs. Examples of this include breaking longer texts into smaller chunks and highlighting key vocabulary. As a result, pupils with SEND study the full curriculum and achieve well at the end of their time at the school.

Leaders make reading a priority at this school. All pupils read daily. In addition to the books that pupils read as part of the curriculum, they read books from a school reading list. This list is diverse and introduces pupils to a range of genres and authors from around the world. Pupils can choose books from their class bookshelves or from the library. All of this helps to promote reading fluency and pupils' interest in reading. Leaders assess pupils' reading when they join the school. For those pupils at the earlier stages of reading, the school provides a targeted reading and phonics programme. This makes sure that pupils secure their understanding of letter sounds and how to use them to read and write words accurately. Pupils also read books that match the sounds that they know. This enables these pupils to become accurate and fluent readers quickly.

Pupils are keen to come to school in the morning and they behave very well. They have positive working relationships with their teachers. They trust teachers to treat them fairly and to use rewards and sanctions consistently. Attendance is very high because pupils enjoy their learning, feel safe and like the family feel of the school. Leaders have made sure that their vision of a small, family school has been realised in practice.

Leaders provide pupils with a wide and carefully planned range of activities beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils attend a variety of after-school clubs, for example dance, drama, sports, chess and robotics. Pupils from all year groups are part of the school council, and through this, have got involved in implementing improvements to the school playground. All pupils are part of the annual school production. Pupils enjoy raising money for charity. For instance, every pupil designs Christmas cards in art and these are printed and sold to parents. This year, pupils chose to donate the money raised to a charity for the homeless and to the Moroccan earthquake appeal. Pupils attend several educational trips related to the curriculum. For example, they have been to the Wiener Holocaust Library and Shakespeare's Globe theatre. All pupils learn about relationships and sex education in an age-appropriate way. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are taught helpful and relevant information about careers. Leaders invite former pupils and parents into school to talk to pupils about their jobs.

The proprietors are highly knowledgeable and play a pivotal role in helping the school maintain and build on the high-quality provision in place. They have also appointed an advisory board to provide external oversight and challenge to their work. The well-focused and ambitious work of leaders and the proprietors means that all the independent school standards are met.

Staff enjoy working at the school and feel very well supported by leaders. Parents are also very positive about the school and the education that their children receive.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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.

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 131291   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 202/6396   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Camden   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10299180   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent school   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent day school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 6 to 14  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 82   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Academy School (Hampstead) LLP   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Chloe Sandars  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Garth Evans  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £23,373  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 020 7435 6621  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.academyhampstead.com/">www.academyhampstead.com/</a>     |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:office@academyhampstead.com">office@academyhampstead.com</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 26 to 28 November 2019   |

## Information about this school

- The last standard inspection took place in January 2019. The school's overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is located at 2 Pilgrims Place, Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead, London, NW3 1NG.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgment about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 headteacher, the proprietor body, a member of the advisory board, the designated safeguarding lead and subject leaders. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school to check compliance with the independent school standards. They also toured the school's premises.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and drama. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and held discussions about the curriculum. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects, including art, geography, Latin, French and science.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes was observed.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and staff's workload. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors looked at parent responses to Ofsted's survey.

## **Inspection team**

Mark Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Newby

Ofsted Inspector

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