

# Inspection of a school judged Outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: City of London Academy Islington

Prebend Street, Islington, London N1 8PQ

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Inspection dates:

1 and 2 April 2025

## **Outcome**

City of London Academy Islington has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Laurence Glees. This school is part of City of London Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mark Emmerson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Catherine McGuinness.

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

The school has established a calm and focused school environment with high expectations. Pupils participate happily in learning and in the wider life of the school. As a result, published academic outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 11 are positive. In the sixth form, students are well prepared for their next academic steps.

Pupils' respectful behaviour represents leaders' high behavioural expectations. Pupils move around the school between lessons calmly and purposefully. Usually, they settle quickly, contribute to group discussions and complete work readily.

Pupils build their leadership skills here. Elected student ambassadors and prefects represent the academy at public events and lead school assemblies. Pupils in Year 8 take it in turns to be the school 'conciierge', by helping visitors and supporting the school office for the day. Students in the sixth form volunteer at a local school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school organises a range of clubs for pupils to deepen their interests beyond the classroom. These include art, basketball and chess clubs. Boys' and girls' football teams compete against local schools. Pupils from Year 9 to Year 13 are encouraged to take part in the combined cadet force. As part of this, pupils are taught to work together and to

learn new skills through military-themed, adventurous activities. These include navigation, first aid and camping.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is ambitious and broad, including in the sixth form.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Normally, teachers present new information to pupils with clarity. Where necessary, staff model how to answer questions and build successfully on pupils' prior knowledge. In the sixth form, in psychology for example, teachers use questions to probe students' understanding and consolidate students' knowledge. In many subjects, teachers check that pupils understand their learning and provide pupils with relevant and timely information on how to improve. For example, in English, teachers ensure that pupils refine, redraft and improve their work. In some subjects, however, checks on pupils' understanding are not as clear. When this occurs, teaching does not pick up on some pupils' misconceptions when they arise.

The school identifies pupils with SEND accurately and provides appropriate support. Typically, teaching and resources are clearly adapted so that pupils build their curriculum knowledge steadily. In a few subjects, however, teaching is not sufficiently adapted for pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils are given tasks that are too hard and so they do not complete them successfully.

Pupils who require support to improve their reading skills are identified by the school quickly. These pupils read books matched to their current reading knowledge and skills. They take part in activities to improve their reading swiftly, including reading with an adult. This supports pupils to catch up and gain confidence.

Pupils speak highly of the many opportunities to learn about future careers that the school provides. All pupils have access to independent careers advice. Pupils in Year 10 undertake meaningful work experience activities. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum also prepares pupils successfully for life beyond the school. For example, pupils are taught how to respect others and to stay safe online. The school also organises educational outings for pupils. These help pupils to understand theories that they have learned in class in real life. For example, pupils who study geography in Years 10 to 13 carry out fieldwork off site.

The school and trust have completed much effective work to secure clear expectations of behaviour and conduct. As a result, pupils know and follow established routines set out by leaders. This encourages pupils successfully to remain engaged in learning during classes. Pupils who struggle to meet these expectations are provided with a range of effective support from within and beyond the school. However, this support has not had the intended effect for some of the pupils who receive it. The proportion of pupils who are suspended from school for fixed periods has been high in the last few years. While the school has ensured that high behavioural standards are maintained in school overall,

when pupils receive repeat suspensions, they are unable to take advantage of learning and struggle to catch up on the work that they have missed.

Pupils' attendance rates dropped after their return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic. The school is doing all that it reasonably can to improve pupils' attendance. The school works closely with families of pupils who are persistently absent. With support from the trust, the school has renewed and reorganised its attendance expectations this year. Accordingly, punctuality rates have improved. However, it is too soon to see the positive effects of the new attendance measures.

Those responsible for governance hold leaders to account effectively. They challenge leaders, provide support where necessary and gather the views of parents and staff. Leaders consider the workload and well-being of staff when decision-making.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the school need to do to improve?**

#### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a few instances where pupils receive repeated suspensions, valuable learning is missed and pupils struggle to catch up with their peers. The school should build on its work to support pupils to improve their behaviour so that fixed-term suspensions from school decrease and pupils benefit from all that the school has to offer.
- In a few subjects, work is not routinely adapted for pupils with SEND and is too challenging. As a result, pupils with SEND sometimes struggle to complete work, which hinders them from building their knowledge as securely as they could. The school should ensure that teaching and resources are appropriately adapted for pupils with SEND, so that they are routinely helped to understand and remember what they have learned and build their curriculum knowledge securely.
- Processes to check pupils' understanding are less clear in some subjects. Sometimes, pupils develop gaps in their knowledge or misconceptions that are not identified and addressed. The school should ensure that pupils' misconceptions are identified and addressed routinely across subjects.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

## **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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135587
<b>Local authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345908
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	920
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	117
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Catherine McGuinness
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Mark Emmerson
<b>Principal</b>	Laurence Glees
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.colai.org.uk">www.colai.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The principal of the school started in September 2024.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school joined the City of London Academies Trust in 2020. Prior to this, the school was a standalone academy, co-sponsored by City, University of London and the City of London Corporation. The City of London Academies Trust is now the sole sponsor. City, University of London remains a 'strategic partner'.
- A small proportion of students in the sixth form who wish to study subjects not offered by the school study these at City of London Academy, Highbury Grove, located a short distance from the school.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## **Information about this inspection**

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders. The inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- The inspectors met with representatives from the trust, including the CEO, chair of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

## **Inspection team**

Guy Forbat, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nigel Clemens

Ofsted Inspector

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