



Capital City Academy

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134226
LEA Not Applicable
Inspection number 283976
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Brooker

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

Type of school	Academy	School address	Capital City Academy
School category	Maintained		Doyle Gardens
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		London NW10 3ST
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8838 8700
Number on roll	969	Fax number	020 8838 8701
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Sir Frank Lowe
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr Philip O'Hear

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Capital City Academy opened in September 2003 on the site of its predecessor school. It is accommodated in a state-of-the-art building with very good information and communication technology (ICT) resources and excellent facilities to support its specialisms in sport and the arts. The student population reflects the diverse multicultural neighbourhood of South Brent: 93% of pupils are from ethnic minority heritages; and 60% have a first language other than English, of whom 11% are in the early stages of learning English. There is a preponderance of pupils from black Caribbean, Somali and other Black African heritage, but also a very diverse range of other backgrounds. Many pupils come from families that face significant disadvantage. At 34% the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Many pupils have had disrupted education and, in the case of refugees and asylum seekers, considerable emotional and social difficulties. Pupil mobility is very high, reflecting the transience of the local population. The academy is an increasingly popular school and is significantly over-subscribed. There are 969 pupils on roll, including 146 in the sixth form. The academy selects up to 10% of pupils on the basis of their sporting aptitude. It is considering the introduction of a fair-banding system to ensure a comprehensive intake. Almost all Year 7 pupils come from within a one mile radius of the school. There has been a very high turnover of staff in the last two years, with 43 leaving and 58 joining the academy. This reflects problems with recruitment and retention and, to some extent, the challenges faced during the academy's first year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the academy's own evaluation that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. However, this judgement obscures the fact that it has many strengths and that it has improved significantly since it opened. After a turbulent first year, the academy has strengthened its ethos and improved its provision. Staff at all levels provide good role models and have worked hard to lift the aspirations of the pupils and to raise standards. The academy is rapidly developing its strengths. It is an increasingly successful and popular school, but its realistic self-evaluation also recognises that there are many areas for further development. The academy has achieved considerable success in establishing a settled and positive climate where pupils are given good opportunities to succeed. The academy places high emphasis on developing the personal qualities of the pupils. Its specialisms in sports and arts are a notable strength because they impact so positively on the pupils' learning, achievement and personal development. The academy is an orderly and well managed school, but the behaviour of the pupils is only satisfactory overall, because the challenging behaviour of a small number presents an ongoing challenge. Standards of attainment are below national figures. Results in GCSE examinations in 2005 were particularly low. However, overall standards are rising and, given their starting points, the students' achievement is satisfactory. Nonetheless, there remain a number of impediments to their good progress. Although the academy has successfully improved behaviour and attendance, the unsatisfactory behaviour and/or the poor attendance and punctuality of a small proportion of pupils are barriers to their achievement. In addition, weaknesses in literacy slow the learning of many students. The academy is very well led and managed by the principal. There is a clear vision for the academy's future development, based on high quality planning. Senior leaders correctly judge the quality of teaching as satisfactory overall. The pupils are well cared for and supported. They make satisfactory progress in lessons, and the academy is confident that they are on course to meet the challenging targets set for them. However, teachers do not make best use of assessment to guide the students' progress with targets and feedback. The academy makes good use of its excellent facilities and, given the increasing achievement and overall improvement, it provides satisfactory value for money. The changes and improvements made since the academy opened demonstrate that it has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The academy provides a satisfactory quality of education for its sixth-form students. Standards are lower than found nationally, but represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the students' starting points. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall and has some good features which are contributing to the progress that students make. Students have good opportunities to contribute to the academy and the wider community, and are good role models for younger students. The care and guidance that students receive is a strength of the sixth form and is enabling them to become

mature and confident young adults. Plans are underway to improve the current limited sixth-form facilities. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

What the school should do to improve further

The academy needs to continue to raise standards by implementing and embedding the strategies already initiated. Specifically it needs to: * make better use of assessment processes and information, alongside sharper target setting, to raise the pupils' expectations and guide their progress more effectively* systematically address weaknesses in literacy * improve the poor attendance and punctuality, and unsatisfactory behaviour, of the small but resilient minority of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When pupils enter the academy their standards are generally below or well below those expected for their ages. Overall standards are consequently below average, but most pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2005 was very low in comparison with national averages, but was above expectations based on pupils' prior attainment, except in science where it was in line with expectation. Many pupils made particularly good progress in English. There has been a clear upward trend in the results for English and mathematics over the last two years. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is very low in comparison with other schools. Although GCSE results in 2004 and 2005 showed improvement compared with results in the predecessor school, standards remain below the expectation for 16 year olds. There was significant variation in the pupils' attainment in different subjects. Results in the sixth form are improving, but are low in comparison with national standards. However, the students make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The academy has achieved considerable success in establishing a settled and positive ethos. The personal development of pupils is good overall. Many pupils seize every opportunity to be independent, work collaboratively and take on roles of responsibility in the academy and in the wider community. There are exemplary programmes, notably the sports leadership initiative and peer mentoring. Pupils acknowledge that there are many openings which contribute to developing their leadership skills. They know that they have a voice through the school council. The pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in the high level participation in the extended activities. The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. However, a small core of pupils does not behave well even when they receive intensive support and know they cannot get away with poor behaviour. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and are dealt with decisively. Most pupils enjoy learning and are keen to achieve well. Levels of permanent and fixed term exclusion remain

high. Punctuality remains an issue. At 90.5%, attendance, though improving, is below the average for secondary schools. The academy realises that there is a culture of non-attendance among a hard core of pupils. These individuals are responding to the many initiatives to promote good attendance, albeit slowly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and spiritual development is good. The high profile given to exploring their own culture and other cultural heritages provides them with insight into living in an ethnically diverse community. There is good regard to pupils pursuing a healthy lifestyle and conducting themselves safely. Personal development is good in the sixth form. Some Year 12 students have been trained as peer mentors and many sixth form students help to supervise lunch time and after-school activities. There is a good range of extra curricular activities in which sixth form students participate. There is also an established sixth form council which represents the views and opinions of the students. These opportunities enable students to become mature and confident individuals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The amount of good teaching has increased to almost two in every three lessons. The academy is confidently using its own skilled teachers to train and support their colleagues. This is helping teachers, many of whom are new to the profession, to develop useful teaching skills, and has ensured that teaching in nearly all lessons is at least satisfactory. In the most effective practice, topics are challenging, activities are well-paced and pupils clearly know what they have to do to achieve well. These lessons are thoughtfully planned, based on a sound knowledge of what the pupils should be learning and a keen awareness of the pupils' current skills and knowledge. In less effective lessons, expectations are lower. In these lessons, most emphasis was placed on completing tasks and questioning was generally weaker. As a result, those capable of higher attainment could only demonstrate this mainly through completing more tasks. These lessons did too little to enhance the pupils' thinking skills or accelerate their progress. Some exercise books are marked regularly and teachers' comments usefully guide pupils in ways to improve the standards that they can achieve. Appropriately, the academy's marking policy points out the importance of giving pupils regular feedback and guidance. Senior managers have rightly identified some concerns about the quality of marking and the setting of homework, and are taking steps to improve the situation. Teaching assistants encouraged and prompted pupils helpfully. They were familiar with the pupils' needs and helpfully noted how well they did in lessons. Overall, pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language were included well in the lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum has been developing really well. The taught curriculum is broad and balanced at Key Stages 3 and 4. The out-of-hours curriculum is excellent. The development of work-related and vocational opportunities has improved significantly at Key Stage 4. The staff are working hard to make suitable alternative provision for a small number of youngsters who are not suited to more traditional subjects, for example through arranging apprenticeship schemes in the academy. The academy is also developing a more flexible curriculum, for example by focusing on sustained support for pupils with learning difficulties and by allowing higher attaining pupils to take examinations early. There is a good induction programme for pupils joining the academy with little English. The out-of-hours programme is extensive, and very well supported by staff and pupils. Some excellent sessions are really enabling pupils to pursue interests and develop new skills. The pupils enjoy the wide range of additional clubs and classes. The influence of the specialist subjects of sports and the arts is extremely positive not only in nurturing talent in these areas but in promoting pupils' self-esteem and aspirations. There is a strong focus on community sport through links with local clubs and with local primary schools. The arts also have growing links with prestigious art projects, including the Royal Opera House, the BBC, Asia House and local artists. The academy is pulling together useful strategies to improve the pupils' literacy skills, particularly in developing a love of books and reading. The 'world book day' activities observed were a good example of an effective whole-school initiative. Rightly, the academy recognises that improving literacy standards must remain a key, whole-academy focus. The sixth-form curriculum provides a satisfactory range of academic options, some with local consortium links. However, the choices for students who wish to follow vocational courses, although improving, are more restricted, particularly for those students who had limited GCSE success.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The academy provides good quality care for its students. It has established a sound foundation on which pupils feel safe and secure to learn effectively. This is clearly enshrined in its motto 'everyone feels valued and known'. The very good links with a wide range of partners and external agencies ensure that there is a cohesive approach to planning so that every pupil can reach their academic and personal target. Pupils feel that they can confide in adults if they have a problem. Excellent child protection procedures are in place and staff are fully trained and conversant with the legal requirements. Teachers know their pupils very well and anticipate their needs. Transitional work is well planned at each key stage and there is effective use of a wide range of motivational initiatives to meet the needs of individuals and specific groups of pupils. Assessment information is used to track pupils' progress but data is not used rigorously enough to analyse performance and ensure that pupils know the next steps they need to take to improve their work. The views of sixth form students are sought

and action is taken in response to their concerns. They are well supported by their learning advisors and other adults, and are given good guidance about how they can meet their targets and their options for continuing education and training after leaving the academy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The academy's leadership and management are good. After a very challenging first year, the senior leadership team, led by the principal, has successfully steered the academy's development and improvement. Systems for self evaluation give senior and middle managers an accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and the priorities for improvement. Development planning is very good. The principal provides very strong, strategic and effective leadership for the academy and is very well supported by a good senior leadership team. He has communicated a clear vision and high aspirations to the staff and students, based simply on improving the quality of learning. He has been decisive and robust in tackling difficult issues and has empowered senior managers to lead the academy's development. Effective systems for performance management and line management have been established so that staff at all levels understand their responsibilities and accountability. All staff have good opportunities for training and professional development. The restructured leadership team is cohesive and effective. The evolving middle management is sound and is developing well. Appropriate recent emphasis has been given to developing the strategic role of middle managers. The governing body is strong. The trustees are supportive and are well informed about the academy's progress. They have played a key role in the development of the academy. Changes to the governing body have strengthened governance; particularly in recruiting individuals with specific areas of experience or expertise. The academy makes effective use of external evaluations to corroborate its judgements and to help guide its improvement. In addition it values the many partnerships that it has forged in order to accelerate its development, particularly those with the local authority (LA) and Youth Sport Trust. The academy has strong and mutually beneficial links with the LA. Very productive links have been developed with the local community and with local schools, particularly through the outreach work in sports and the arts. The academy's facilities have wide use outside school hours. Sound financial management procedures are in place, but the academy's difficult first year has placed constraints on spending, particularly in regard to rectifying a number of accommodation problems in the otherwise-impressive building. Although parental perceptions are generally positive, communicating with parents, many of whom do not attend subject evenings or review days, is an ongoing challenge for the academy. This problem is made more difficult by predominantly negative coverage given to the academy in the media. Despite the many challenges, the positive staff morale is a tribute to the academy's effective leadership.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

Thank you for welcoming us when we came to inspect your academy recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work. It was interesting and very helpful because your opinions were honest and enabled us to confirm what the teachers and staff told us.

Like other visitors, we were impressed by the building and the sensible way that you treat your surroundings. We were also impressed with the wide range of clubs and classes available to you after school, and were pleased to see that so many of you make the most of the opportunities provided. It is clear that many of you make good use of initiatives such as the sports leader awards to develop skills and self confidence. This prepares you very well for adult life, and many of you were rightly proud of what you contribute to the academy and the wider community, such as your mentoring work and fund raising activities.

It is clear that the academy has made real progress since it opened in 2003. The exam results have improved and many of you do very well. The academy has many strengths. It is very well led by the principal, and you are well cared for and are given good support and guidance. This means that the academy is an orderly and well managed school. However, there are always areas for improvement. In each case the academy is well aware of the issues and has plans to address them. For a few students poor attendance and punctuality, and some unsatisfactory behaviour prevent them from achieving well. However, we have also asked teachers to continue to work on improving your reading and writing skills, and have emphasised the need to make better use of assessment information to guide your work. You can all play your role in this improvement, particularly as so many of you have leadership roles within the academy. We wish you all every success in the future.

Paul Brooker

Paul Brooker

HM Inspector