



# Westminster City School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 101153  
**Local Authority** Westminster  
**Inspection number** 285986  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Kekshan Salaria HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	55 Palace Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19		SW1E 5HJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	02076418760
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	785	<b>Fax number</b>	02076418761
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	163		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Helen Brooks
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Maloney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–19	11–12 January 2007	285986

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Westminster City is a smaller than average voluntary-aided, non-denominational Christian comprehensive school for boys. Girls are also admitted to the sixth form. When students are admitted to Year 7, their attainment is above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than usual. The school has identified a higher than average proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Westminster City sees itself as an improving school and inspectors agree. The school has emerged from a turbulent period. The leadership group has been stable for two years and staff morale has improved in that time. It is now meeting the needs of its diverse community satisfactorily and has a coherent plan to raise standards further. The school has a clear picture of most of its strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher has established a sound agenda for improvement within the school, supported by governors who effectively hold the school to account for its performance. Systems for monitoring and evaluation have recently been put in place to ensure middle managers are accountable, but practice remains variable across the school. A true strength is the work undertaken within the school and with external partners to support students' personal development. The great majority of students enjoy coming to school and feel it provides a safe environment in which to learn. They participate in a wide range of stimulating extra-curricular activities.

Students generally make satisfactory progress during their time at school to achieve standards in line with national averages at GCSE. Standards have risen since the last inspection, although the trend of improvement has not been consistent across all subjects and over time. The school has responded to this by introducing measures that are leading to improvements; for example better tracking of pupils' progress and analysis of test papers.

Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. There has been considerable improvement in the quality of teaching over the past year but good practice is not yet consistent across the school. Teachers and students have productive relationships and lessons are structured to enable them to make adequate progress. The school recognises that it does not use data effectively to accelerate all students' performance. Overall, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

The cramped conditions in some classrooms, combined with narrow corridors, insufficient playground space and sports facilities may impact negatively on the aspirations and achievement of students. There have been a number of improvements since the previous inspection. For example, a new science block has been built, major refurbishment to some classrooms and the toilet facilities have been upgraded. However, much remains to be done.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory overall. Standards are below average, but as most students commence their A-level studies with lower than average levels of prior attainment, they make satisfactory progress. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good practice, but time is not always fully utilised during some lessons. The quality of guidance offered to students is also variable. The students commented that they are well informed about opportunities beyond school, but they feel less well informed about their choices when entering the sixth form. Some advertised courses do not

always run and, on some occasions, subjects are taught outside the formal school timetable with little success. Such factors result in too many students making inappropriate choices, dropping courses during Year 12, or changing their option. By Year 13, however, this uncertainty has largely been eliminated and retention rates are very good. The curriculum is satisfactory. The range of A-level and equivalent courses is satisfactory and is enhanced by consortium arrangements, although, the provision of enrichment activities is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory. Though the students are appreciative of the encouragement and personal support offered, planning, monitoring and evaluation are inadequate.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the students' achievement by using established systems of monitoring and training to bring the overall quality of teaching up to the standard of the best.
- Improve the use of assessment to set all students, including those in the sixth form, challenging targets and ensure that their progress is thoroughly monitored.
- Ensure all middle managers contribute effectively to school improvement.
- As matter of urgency, ensure strategic leadership is provided for the sixth form.
- Continue to improve the school building to provide a learning environment fit for 21st century education.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved and are now above average. In recent years, standards at the end of Year 11 have been below average, but are improving and are now broadly average. Progress across all years is satisfactory, although it is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The school recognises that previously students were not making as much progress as expected; this has now improved because of the school's better monitoring and evaluation procedures. However, the school acknowledges there is a need for further improvement. Higher attaining students make less progress than they should, particularly where teaching is unimaginative and does not cater fully for their needs. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

In the sixth form, standards are below average, but as most students commence their A level studies with lower than average levels of prior attainment they make satisfactory progress. The school has recently become acutely aware of variations in the performance of subjects and that a significant minority of students fail to complete their A level courses. Systems are now being established to remedy these weaknesses but these are not embedded and have not yet had a clear impact on raising standards.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' personal development is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Their spiritual and moral development is set within the school's Christian ethos and is good. The appointment of the chaplain by the United Westminster Schools Foundation, to the school, has contributed significantly to this. Other religions are well supported. For example, a prayer room is provided for Muslim students. Students develop a clear understanding about right and wrong and show respect for each other whatever their cultural or religious background. A variety of in-school activities enhances their understanding of wider cultural issues; 'International Week' is a school highlight. Relationships are good and the school deals effectively with any bullying. Student peer mentors receive external training and provide helpful additional support. Students generally, behave well in lessons and around the school and there is an effective system of rewards and sanctions. Students enjoy coming to school and attendance is in line with the national average. The students feel safe and are confident that there is someone they can approach and that problems they raise will be dealt with effectively. Three school councils exist but members feel that the school could take more account of their views. Students know about adopting safe practices and develop satisfactory workplace skills with particular emphasis on the use of information technology.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school judges teaching to be satisfactory and inspection evidence supports this. Monitoring carried out by the school shows significant improvement in teaching over the last year because departments have been made more accountable. The best teaching is underpinned by clear learning objectives that build on students' previous learning, tasks which are well matched to students' needs, a brisk pace, and a clear focus so that students know what they have to learn. Teachers manage students' behaviour skilfully and relationships between students and staff are good. Teaching assistants provide the students with good support. Teachers use interactive white boards very confidently to motivate and engage students. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, the teacher carefully modelled how shapes were rotated on a grid resulting in students making excellent progress. However, in some lessons, teaching is dull because of the narrow range of strategies used. This coupled with work which is not well matched to the needs of all students, results in disinterest, lack of written work and insufficient progress. Much of the marking is superficial and does not identify precisely what students need to do next in order to improve their work. Although many students were aware of their targets, some did not know what to do to reach them.

In the sixth form, teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good practice. The quality and frequency of marking is too variable and the use of assessment data to guide and inform students is inadequate.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is good overall in meeting the needs of the range of students at the school. In Years 7 to 9, students follow a broad and balanced curriculum which includes citizenship, and in Year 8, more able students are given the opportunity to study two foreign languages. Students are supported well when they move from their primary school to Westminster City. Lower ability students are invited to a summer school enabling them to make a good start to their secondary education.

The range of vocational options is well geared to students' learning needs and interests and this is contributing to improvements in performance. The school realises that it needs to continue to develop this approach. All students are offered careers guidance and a period of work experience.

There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities including sport, visual and performing arts, Information and Communication Technology, environment and enterprise. Students are offered the chance to visit places of interest and visitors are welcomed to the school. Well-attended holiday revision classes are offered in preparation for examinations.

In the sixth form, the curriculum is satisfactory. The range of A-level and equivalent courses is satisfactory and is enhanced by consortium arrangements, but the provision of enrichment activities is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities for the students to develop responsibility and contribute to school and community life. Opportunities to pursue sporting and cultural interests are also limited.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

The care, guidance and support provided to students in the main school is satisfactory and in the sixth form inadequate. Child protection procedures are in place. Students' safety is enhanced by a comprehensive system for risk assessments of all aspects of the school operation, particularly visits. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are quickly identified and well supported and as a result make satisfactory progress. Those whose first language is not English are securely assessed, given appropriate support and their progress monitored. There is good and developing support for those experiencing other difficulties which affect their learning. This ensures that they stay engaged and make progress. The student support team, learning mentors and a full-time counsellor work with individual students to help them overcome any barriers to learning. As a result a number of students have been helped to undertake

vocational studies more suited to their ambitions and aptitudes. However, the systems to record students' academic achievement are inconsistent, as is marking, and this limits the coherence of the guidance given to students.

In the sixth form, arrangements to inform sixth form students of courses available to them are not secure. Students are not actively involved in self-evaluation and target setting.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The determined leadership of the headteacher and his commitment to improving learning and raising attainment is having an impact. He, supported by the leadership team has ensured staff are held to account and has challenged inadequate practice. The headteacher is very well supported by governors who provide a very strong steer for the future development of the school. The senior leadership team is cohesive and increasingly effective with a clear agenda for improvement. They have appropriately focussed on improving teaching and learning. This is beginning to have an impact although the school recognises that practice is still inconsistent.

Recent restructuring has led to clearly defined roles and responsibilities for middle managers. This includes their involvement in departmental reviews and the monitoring of teaching and learning around the school. However, there is currently a lack of rigour in teachers using data to inform planning and in monitoring the achievement of different groups of students.

Systems for checking the quality of the schools' work, whilst satisfactory and improving, currently lack consistency. Data analysis does not sharply inform strategic improvement planning. For instance, the performance indicators in the current school development plan are not sufficiently focused on measurable outcomes such as the students' results in tests and examinations.

In the sixth form, leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Though the students are appreciative of the encouragement and personal support offered, planning, monitoring and evaluation are inadequate.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	4

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

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the help you gave the inspection team when we visited your school.

We enjoyed meeting some of you in discussion groups and also learned a great deal from talking to you, both in lessons and around the school. It was clear to us that you enjoy being at this school which provides a satisfactory quality of education overall.

These are the best features about your school:

- We were impressed by your personal development and well-being. Many of you enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities, including sport, after-school clubs, and educational visits.
- You are provided with a wide range of educational experiences in the courses offered, and in the extra-curricular provision.
- You are confident, have good attitudes to work, behave well and show respect to each other, staff and visitors.
- Some lessons are good. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory.
- Governors and senior staff lead and manage the school well. They are very clear about what the school does well and how it can improve.

The inspection team feel the following are the most important areas for improvement. The school now needs to:

- Ensure that more teaching and learning are of the high quality seen in some lessons.
- Improve the use of assessment to set all of you challenging targets and ensure that your progress is thoroughly monitored.
- Continue to raise standards by ensuring all middle managers contribute effectively to school improvement and ensure strategic leadership is provided for the sixth form.
- Continue to improve the school building to provide a learning environment fit for 21st century education.

I wish you the best for the future.

Kekshan Salaria

HMI