

# Capital City Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134226
<b>Local Authority</b>	NA
<b>Inspection number</b>	331641
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda McGill 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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1105
Sixth form	185
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sir Frank Lowe
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Philip O'Hear
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2006
<b>Academy address</b>	Doyle Gardens London NW10 3ST
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8838 8700
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8838 8701

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

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

### Description of the school

Capital City Academy opened in 2003. The number of pupils on roll, including in the sixth form, has increased each year since and it is now larger than the average secondary school. The pupils come from a very wide range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, with a considerable proportion from refugee and asylum-seeking families. Over half of the students speak English as an additional language and about 6% are in the early stages of learning the language. Mobility is high; many students join or leave the academy in all year groups throughout the course of the academic year. The number of students entitled to a free school meal is much higher than average. Similarly, the proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. Their difficulties mainly relate to their learning, speech and language, and behaviour. Attainment on entry to the academy is below average.

The academy's sixth form is part of the South Brent consortium with three other local schools. However, the proportion of students who attend classes in these schools is small, as is the number who attend classes at Capital City from other schools.

The academy's specialisms are in sport and the arts. The academy has gained the Sportsmark and the Artsmark awards. It has also won the annual award from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, which recognises the academy that makes the most significant contribution to its family of schools.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the academy

### Grade: 2

Capital City Academy has successfully built on the strengths noted at its last inspection. Its overall effectiveness is good, and it is making a positive difference to the lives of its students. Across the academy, all students achieve well and, overall, reach standards that are broadly in line with those achieved by students nationally. The academy's standing and reputation in the community are growing. One parent wrote, 'The school has made great progress in terms of inclusion of the community with its flexible approach. One always receives a warm and friendly welcome from dedicated, professional teachers, support staff, administrators and security.' These two important aspects, flexibility and an inclusive, welcoming ethos, encapsulate two of the major reasons for the academy's continuing improvement. The students are firmly at the centre of its work, but the academy also reaches out to its community. Partnership working is a considerable strength. The ways in which the academy strives for equality and promotes community cohesion are exemplary.

Several other aspects of the academy's provision are outstanding. The principal's leadership is excellent. The senior team, and increasingly middle leaders, give a strong lead and clear direction. They have inspired the team of teachers and support staff, who in turn are successfully raising the students' aspirations. Staff do as much as they can to help many students overcome some significant barriers to learning and to enable them to experience success. The excellent care, guidance and support for students and the outstanding curriculum are also important factors in helping to boost achievement and foster personal development. The extensive range of activities before and after school and frequent visits to many places of cultural interest broaden students' horizons and extend their understanding, as one student explained, 'The school has opened doors for me.'

Teaching is good, and results in good progress in lessons. Students want to learn and they respond eagerly to well planned and stimulating lessons. The turnover of teaching staff has been high in the past. Staffing is more settled now, and the academy has robust systems to support and guide new and inexperienced teachers whose work is not yet consistently of the high standard that is expected. Teachers make sure that students know the levels at which they are working and for what they are aiming. However, students do not always know the next steps that they need to take.

The academy's specialisms make a strong contribution to the students' academic progress and their personal development. In particular, participation in sport develops students' leadership skills and confidence, and thus their economic well-being. It also fosters the excellent response that they have to living healthy lifestyles. Work in the arts enables students to express themselves in different ways. For example, students who have experienced trauma in their home countries share their feelings through powerful work in art.

Students' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Behaviour is good and support for those at risk of exclusion is exemplary. The academy's well-targeted efforts have led to a steady rise in attendance rates, which are now just above the national average.

Strategic planning is excellent. The academy is highly self-critical and keeps all aspects of its work under close scrutiny. Trustees share the senior leaders' drive and commitment to further improvement. Given how far the academy has come in a short space of time, the capacity for further improvement is good.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Provision in the sixth form has improved since the last inspection. Results have risen year on year. The quality of leadership and the capacity for further growth and improvement are good.

Students spoke very positively about the quality of teaching that they receive. They particularly value the range of different approaches teachers use and the depth of their subject knowledge. They view the support provided by teachers outside of lessons as equally valuable, saying, for example, that 'they are super people'. Lessons are well planned and structured, and students are motivated and interested in their learning. As a result, they make good progress, and achieve very well in relation to their starting points. Standards at A Level are broadly in line with those achieved nationally, although performance varies from subject to subject. Standards in vocational subjects, for example, health and social care, are above average. The academy is rightly proud of the growing numbers of students who progress to university.

The sixth-form curriculum has developed well and the number of courses has increased significantly. The academy's membership of the consortium has extended the curriculum on offer. Although leadership of the academy's sixth form is good, there are weaknesses in the strategic leadership of the consortium. This has had no adverse impact as yet on the attainment of the small number of students from Capital City who attend lessons in other schools.

Although entry criteria for the sixth form are rigorous, there is some flexibility in order to allow students who have recently arrived in the country and are not fluent in English, for example, to spend longer working towards their qualifications. Students are encouraged to aim high and they respond well to this. They receive regular feedback on how well they are doing and their progress is carefully tracked. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. The students are confident, articulate and mature young people who are a credit to the academy and excellent role models for younger students. The contribution that they make to the academy is excellent. As well as carrying out community service every week, they undertake many activities of their own devising, such as raising funds for projects in the locality and overseas. The students take their roles as senior members of the school very seriously and play a significant part in its day-to-day running. They felt that coming to the academy had been of great benefit to them and one summed up the views of others, saying, 'Capital City is the perfect place for us.'

### What the academy should do to improve further

- Boost students' progress by making sure that they understand exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Take steps to improve the strategic management of the sixth-form consortium, in cooperation with the other local schools that are involved.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards have risen substantially since the last inspection. The gap between the academy's results and the national figure has closed rapidly. This is most noticeable at Key Stage 3, where results in 2008 were in line with last year's national figures in mathematics and science and exceptionally high in English, where 96% of students reached the level expected for their age. As at least half of these students speak English as an additional language, this is a remarkable achievement. The students made very good progress from their below-average starting points.

The results provide the students with a secure platform from which to start their GCSE studies. In 2007, GCSE results rose markedly and the progress that students made between the ages of 11 and 16 was exceptional. This year, the rise was more modest. The unvalidated results show that the proportion of students gaining five good grades at GCSE including both English and mathematics was just below 30%. Nevertheless, the academy's analysis of the results shows that amount of progress made by the students was above average. The academy's data indicate that the upward trend should continue next year. There are no significant differences in achievement for any group of students. The provision the academy makes for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those learning English, is of high quality and ensures that these students do equally well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students make an excellent contribution to both the academy and the wider community. They engage in many activities to help and support others and undertake considerable charitable work. For example, students and staff recently 'walked to Uganda', raising funds for a project overseas by walking over 4,000 miles between them. One of the students devised the event. Rising attendance rates point to students' growing enjoyment of school. Their commitment to healthy lifestyles is excellent and evident in their very high participation in physical activity and their understanding of healthy eating. Students say they feel safe, and their behaviour in lessons and around the building is good. Much of the academy's work helps students acquire the personal qualities they need to help them succeed. Their understanding of the importance of teamwork and their confidence, maturity and leadership qualities develop well. These attributes, together with their good achievement, equip them well for the next step in their education or working life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers have high expectations of their students' work and behaviour. Most teachers plan lessons carefully and use a range of styles and activities that engage and challenge students. The teachers' subject knowledge is strong, which means that they teach confidently and enthusiastically, and manage students' questions effectively. Relationships between teachers and students are mutually respectful and warm. Questions are used well to ensure that all participate and to check that students have learned what was intended. Students respond well to good teaching, concentrating and persevering with their tasks and taking part readily in discussions. These positive features are apparent in most lessons, but not consistently so and there is some variation in practice. In particular, marking is not always diagnostic and in some lessons is of limited use to the students in helping them correct misconceptions. Students do not always take the best possible care in presenting their work, and this sometimes goes unchallenged. While students and teachers know current levels of attainment and the challenging targets they are aiming for, it is not always clear to students exactly what they should do to take the next step towards them. They report that they are advised to read more at home, or concentrate more in lessons, but not what improvement would look like in terms of individual subjects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum effectively combines an emphasis on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy with a flexible, creative approach. This serves the needs of individual students exceptionally well. Innovations such as the 'learning for life' programme for the youngest students and the linking of food technology with physical education lend coherence and enhance enjoyment. Students have access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses. This increases students' motivation and numbers staying in education or training after the age of 16 are high. Programmes for personal, social and health education and citizenship make a strong contribution to the students' personal development. The academy takes every opportunity in lessons, assemblies and during numerous special events to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the local area. Students and their families thoroughly enjoy such events.

The range of activities, clubs, excursions and events before, after and outside of school is impressive and greatly enhances students' experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The academy makes excellent provision to promote the students' welfare and their academic success. Staff know the students very well and work effectively with a wide range of partner agencies to make sure that help for vulnerable students is arranged swiftly and that there is a coordinated approach. Support and interventions are targeted carefully at those who need it most, and are tailored to the needs of individuals. Staff work assiduously to help those who have difficulties in managing their behaviour and who are at risk of exclusion. This has led to a substantial reduction in fixed-term exclusions and there have been no permanent exclusions this year. Support for students learning English is outstanding and contributes effectively to the good progress they make. The academy also encourages students to support and take responsibility for one another. Peer mentoring and 'buddy' programmes, such as for reading, enhance the leadership qualities in older students while helping younger ones make progress in their learning. Systems to keep students safe and to protect them are exemplary.

The students receive good guidance to help them make appropriate choices of courses and subjects. Their progress is regularly checked and support provided quickly for those who need it.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Strong and purposeful leadership from the principal and the senior team has been the driving force behind the academy's improvements. Staff, students and trustees understand and share his clear vision. Middle leaders also play an active and effective part in driving improvements. Their self-evaluation is sharp and honest, which means that resulting actions are accurately targeted at areas of greatest need. The board of trustees plays an equally prominent part in shaping the academy's direction. Its members keep performance under regular and rigorous review, judging progress towards challenging key performance indicators. Strong partnerships with the local authority, sports clubs, local schools, businesses and voluntary and community organisations are mutually beneficial and provide good opportunities for students to develop

both personally and academically. Responses to the questionnaire for parents were very positive, acknowledging the academy's many strengths. However, the response rate was fairly low. The academy is striving to engage parents more fully, with some success. For example, attendance at students' progress reviews is steadily increasing.



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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<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>	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Capital City Academy, London, NW10 3ST

It was a pleasure to meet some of you and to join you and your teachers in lessons when my colleagues and I inspected the academy last week. Thank you very much for talking to us and sharing your views. They were very helpful to us as we came to our conclusions.

We found that Capital City Academy is a good school. It has made many improvements since it was last inspected. This is because of the outstanding leadership of the principal and senior staff and the hard work of teachers and others who work with you. It is also because of the efforts you are putting into your studies and into developing your leadership and team-working skills. Capital City has many strengths, too many to list in a short letter, so here are the headlines:

- standards are rising, and your achievement is good both in the main academy and the sixth form
- your commitment to healthy lifestyles is excellent and your contribution to the community is outstanding
- the curriculum is exciting and stimulating, both in and out of lessons
- the care, guidance and support that you are given to help you manage difficult times and to make the right choices is outstanding.

The principal, senior staff and trustees keep the academy's performance under constant review, so they already know the areas on which they need to concentrate. They are determined to raise your aspirations still further. Nevertheless, we identified one area that we think is of major importance in helping to boost the progress you make. We know that you all understand the levels or grades that you are working at and what you are aiming for. However, we think that teachers need to make absolutely clear to you what you need to do to show you have taken the next step towards your target. You can help by asking your teacher if you do not understand what your next step should be. We have also recommended that the academy helps strengthen the strategic leadership of the sixth-form consortium with the other schools.

Wishing you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Linda McGill

Her Majesty's Inspector