

Westminster City School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101153
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	335666
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	778
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Brooks
Headteacher	Mr David Maloney
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at learning. They observed 24 teachers, visited 37 lessons or activities and had discussions with groups of students, staff and the chair of governors. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's analysis of students' attainment and the progress they make, data on attendance and behaviour, evidence of leaders' monitoring and evaluation and plans for improvement, and reports by the local authority following their visits. Inspectors analysed 52 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as 121 questionnaires from students and 43 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively the school cultivates positive attitudes to learning
- how well teaching and the curriculum are tailored to students' different abilities and aspirations
- teaching and learning in English
- how effectively middle managers promote better outcomes for students
- the impact of the major rebuilding programme on the school's work.

Information about the school

Westminster City is a smaller than average, non-denominational Christian school, which allocates 25 places each year to boys of other world faiths. Post-16 provision is delivered through a consortium of providers in Westminster, and girls are admitted to the sixth form. The majority of boys travel to school from outside the borough. Most are from minority ethnic groups. About a third are of Black African heritage; the other main groups are Black Caribbean, Bengladeshi and those from a White background other than British. The large majority of students speak English as an additional language. Usually their first language is Yoruba or Arabic, although in total 57 different languages are represented. Few are at an early stage of learning English.

Around a quarter of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is just above the proportion found nationally. Most commonly these students have behavioural, emotional and social needs or moderate learning difficulties.

Major building work began in January 2008 as part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. The school took over the new buildings in September 2009, and remodelled sections of the original building were handed over in January 2010. Completion is scheduled for summer 2010. In September 2009, the school was awarded specialist status for science.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Westminster City is a satisfactory and improving school. The sixth form is good and the sixth form students in particular are very good ambassadors for the school. They epitomise the ambitions the school has for its students and testify to the transformations they have seen since they were in Year 7.

The school successfully cultivates positive attitudes to learning, reinforcing the message that it is 'cool to achieve.' Students of all ages talk of the importance of education and their aspirations for the future. Most staff employ a positive approach to managing behaviour, and systems are in place to track and reward all students' behaviour on a daily basis. Combined with the enhanced space available in the new building, this ensures that good behaviour in lessons and around school is the norm. Exclusions have been high in the past, but effective in reinforcing the school's expectations of behaviour, and are significantly lower this year. Attendance is good. It fell last year, but the introduction of more rigorous monitoring systems and a combination of rewards and sanctions for students have already had a positive impact. Currently attendance is high and the proportion of poor attenders is less than half that found nationally.

Attainment at the end of Year 11 is average overall. In most subjects, the proportion of students gaining good passes is higher than at the last inspection, with results in the specialist subjects of biology, chemistry and physics improving year on year. However, there have been some variations between subjects and in 2009 the proportion of students getting a good grade in English was below average, reversing the previously improving trend. Senior staff have analysed the reasons for this drop very carefully and have put appropriate plans in place, primarily strengthening teaching, to ensure this does not happen again.

Senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and determined that students will reach their potential. Currently, considering students' starting points, their academic achievement is satisfactory. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities to meet the different needs and aspirations of the students and plans are well advanced for future developments. There is evidence that actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and improvements to the systems used to track how well students are doing are having a positive impact on the progress they make. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently strong enough, nor are the revised tracking systems sufficiently embedded to ensure that learning and progress are consistently good. On the whole, middle managers are effective in monitoring provision and outcomes for students and planning for improvement, but in a small minority of subjects, there is too much reliance on senior leaders.

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The school demonstrates that it is in a strong position to continue to improve through:

- its track record of improvements in provision since the last inspection, particularly in the sixth form
- accurate monitoring and evaluation systems which lead to a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and appropriate plans for improvement
- the acquisition and plans for the development of specialist status
- the improved learning environment provided by the new building.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good teaching so that most students make good progress by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - use the information available on their prior attainment and individual needs to match activities and support closely to the learning needs of students of all abilities
 - assess students' learning through questioning and dialogue during lessons, using the information to refocus teaching and to help students understand what they are doing well and how they can improve.
- Reduce the variation in standards between subjects by:
 - embedding the use of the revised tracking systems to identify and provide appropriate intervention for students at risk of underachievement at an earlier stage
 - sharing best practice so that all subject leaders are leading the monitoring of the quality of provision and outcomes for students in their subject area and taking effective action to tackle underperformance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students' attainment over time is broadly average. Year on year, almost all students gain five or more passes at GCSE, but the proportion achieving five or more A* to C grades has fluctuated and there have been variations between subjects. Results have been low in design and technology, history, geography and religious education. In 2009, standards were broadly average, but the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics was just below average because English results fell. The standards of work seen in lessons and students' books are broadly average and sometimes above. This includes English and the low- performing subjects where the actions taken are having a positive impact.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress from their starting points when they join the school. The lessons seen confirm that progress is improving. There is no significant difference between the achievements of different minority ethnic groups. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the progress they are capable of because their needs are identified early, so that they get the additional support they need.

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The vast majority of students value learning and the importance of a good education. They concentrate during whole-class sessions and apply themselves to the tasks set for them. The cultivation of this work ethic, combined with students' aspirations for themselves and the harmonious way they live and work alongside those from different backgrounds, gives them a good range of skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. Most students say they feel safe in school and this was echoed by most parents responding to the inspection questionnaire. Students say that any bullying is swiftly dealt with by staff.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A combination of monitoring and support, training for staff and good recruitment has improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Observations during the inspection confirmed that an increasing proportion of lessons are good. Good teaching is characterised by dialogue about learning and uses a range of activities to engage students throughout the lesson. However, this is not yet the norm and the very aspects that are strengths in good lessons are sometimes missing from others. Comprehensive

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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prior attainment data for all students and profiles for those with particular needs are provided by senior and middle leaders, but are not routinely used to inform planning. As a rule, questioning is not probing enough to check students' learning thoroughly in lessons. There is insufficient discussion as to why work meets the criteria for one level and how students can move to the next to help them understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The range of vocational options on offer ensures that all students leave school with at least one qualification. It is also effective in keeping a very small minority of students in education. The recently acquired specialist status is broadening the opportunities available to students; for example, able scientists are studying astronomy at Greenwich Observatory at weekends. There is a good range of out-of-school activities; the high uptake of sporting activities has a positive impact on pupils' healthy lifestyles.

Students are well cared for and supported from the start. Good induction systems, including the recently introduced nurture group, ease the transition from primary school, particularly for lower ability students and those that find it difficult to adjust to secondary school. Strong pastoral support is effective in removing the barriers to learning that some pupils face and ensuring that they stay in school and progress to college or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior staff and governors share a clear vision for the school and have ensured that most staff are clear about what the school is trying to achieve and how it needs to improve.

The system of annual subject reviews gives senior and middle leaders a clear picture of what the school does well and what still needs to improve. Detailed analysis of students' performance unpicks the reasons for any underperformance and informs plans for improvement. Systems to track students' progress have recently been improved to ensure that as well as focusing on students gaining a good pass, they take account of the progress they should be making from Year 7 onwards. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and provide a good level of support and challenge.

The school effectively meets its duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination. It monitors the achievement of different groups carefully to ensure that all groups make

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similar progress and successfully challenges stereotypes of boys' attitudes to learning. Events such as international evenings celebrate the rich diversity within the school and global community and ensure the school itself is a cohesive community. Activities such as the visit of the Pearly King and Queen develop students' appreciation of some of the history and traditions of the local area. However, the location of the school and the fact that the majority of students do not live in the local area makes it difficult to define its wider community. Currently, this limits the opportunities students have to make a contribution in the community and, in some respects, the school's engagement with parents.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. There are clear procedures for ensuring the safety of students, backed up by regular training for staff.

The school has only recently acquired specialist status for science. Ambitious plans are in place to ensure this is exploited to improve provision, raise achievement and develop community links.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Sixth form leaders have successfully tackled underperformance since the last inspection. Students now make good progress and retention rates are high. There is a strong focus on continuing to improve outcomes through regular evaluation and curriculum reviews. The number of students choosing to stay on at the end of Year 11 or joining from other schools is increasing.

The curriculum is well structured to meet the needs and interests of all students, with

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good provision and uptake of enrichment activities. There is a wide choice of traditional A and AS courses available through the consortium arrangements with local schools and an increasing number of vocational courses such as sport. Opportunities for students to study or retake GCSEs increase the choice available. Students make a strong contribution to the school community through activities such as peer mentoring. A significant minority have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the local community through their voluntary work.

The large majority of teaching is good, with a strong focus on developing independent learning and research skills. Students' academic progress and attendance are monitored well through regular reviews and effective support and challenge provided to those who are making less than expected progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents returned the questionnaire to the inspection team. Of these, most were happy overall with their child's experience at the school. Taken separately, the numbers agreeing that the school kept their child safe, helped their child to have a healthy lifestyle, dealt effectively with unacceptable behaviour and took account of their suggestions and concerns were lower than for other statements. The inspection team found that there are some issues regarding communication with parents, but judged the other aspects raised as good. Most parents ticked that they agreed that teaching is good and that their child is making sufficient progress. The inspection found that these aspects are improving but are not yet consistently good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westminster City School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 778 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	46	23	44	3	6	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	17	33	28	54	6	12	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	67	13	25	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	48	21	40	4	8	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	23	44	25	48	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	35	27	52	4	8	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	25	29	56	7	13	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	33	27	52	0	0	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	29	31	60	4	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	42	19	37	6	12	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	17	34	65	5	10	3	6
The school is led and managed effectively	14	27	33	63	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	40	25	48	3	6	2	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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15 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Westminster City School, London SW1E 5HJ

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and learnt a lot about Westminster City from the discussions we had with you in meetings, lessons and around school.

We found that the school gives you a satisfactory standard of education, that some aspects of its work are already good and that the right things are in place to make it a really good school. These are some of the things we think it does well.

- You develop positive attitudes to learning, know how important education is, and have high aspirations for the future.
- The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities to meet your different needs and aspirations.
- Sixth form provision is good and students achieve well
- You are well cared for and supported.

Of course, there are things that can improve and we discussed these with your headteacher before we left. To help the school become even better, we have said that headteacher and other staff should:

- improve the proportion of good teaching so that most of you make good progress in your learning by making better use of the information about your attainment and abilities to plan lessons, regularly assessing how well you are doing and helping you to understand how you can improve
- reduce the variation in standards between subjects through better tracking of your progress and ensuring that all subject leaders are leading the monitoring of their subject area and taking effective action to tackle underperformance.

I am going to ask you to help in making these improvements. We have judged your behaviour and attendance to be good, but we know the school has to work hard to achieve this. They are important prerequisites for learning so please make sure you continue to live up to their expectations of you.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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