

# The Academy School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI

Age group: 6–13

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002<sup>1</sup>, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and, the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## Information about the school

The Academy School is a co-educational preparatory school for pupils aged six to thirteen years. It is situated in the centre of Hampstead and was established in 1997 by the current proprietors. Children are accepted at any point in the academic year and at any point in their academic career. There are 80 pupils on roll. The school aims to '...give pupils the confidence and grounding they require in order to meet their objectives and achieve entrance into their next schools.... Within a culture of mutual respect and equality, the school also aims for the children to value themselves as the individuals they are'. The last inspection was carried out in January 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality education and is successful in meeting its aims. Pupils achieve well in their examinations and most move on to secondary schools of their choice. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and for ensuring their welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Apart from pupils' good achievements in their academic studies, the school is very successful in helping pupils to become confident young people. The following quote represented the views of many pupils. 'My school is different because they give us quite a lot of freedom but they work us really hard.' Since the last inspection the school has improved its schemes of work and has put in place a more comprehensive procedure to measure pupils' progress. The school meets all the regulations.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good overall and suitably broad. Pupils are well prepared to take their Common Entrance examinations. There is a clear focus on the key subjects of English and mathematics and the great majority of pupils make good progress. In

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

particular pupils' skills in reading and writing develop well, especially in the older age groups where the pupils learn effectively about a wide range of literature and are able to write explanatory and critical pieces independently. Writing skills are also used effectively in other subjects, for example in history where older pupils write essays on a range of topics. The school lacks a clear strategy for developing the skills of spelling and presentation and this can detract from pupils' overall achievements. The school is aware of this and already has plans to make improvements. Many pupils enjoy mathematics and science and develop good skills and understanding. Despite rather limited facilities, pupils undertake some practical activities in science and other subjects such as art, including ceramics. There is regular physical education. The school uses local sports facilities to extend the range of more energetic sports available including swimming. The planned personal, social and health education programme is not taught in discrete lessons although a range of topics are taught in history, geography and science. Some aspects are covered in assemblies. The school does not have a clear procedure for checking if and when all aspects of the personal, social and health education scheme are taught. The curriculum is enriched by visits to London's galleries and museums, some sporting links with other schools, and annual visits. Recently, parents have visited the school to talk to pupils about different types of careers.

The quality of teaching and assessment is mostly good, although variable across the school. Consequently most pupils make good progress and achieve well. At the time of the inspection the school did not have its full complement of permanent teachers and a small amount of teaching was inadequate. Pupils say they like their teachers and that they receive the help they need to learn effectively. This means that the vast majority of pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. In the best lessons teachers use their strong subject knowledge to ask challenging questions. Where this is most effective pupils are given good opportunities to respond and develop their answers. Most teachers are good at involving all pupils in discussions. This was particularly evident in an English lesson where pupils discussed how Agatha Christie used different techniques in her writing. This is a small school and teachers know their pupils well. They often provide good individual support to help pupils overcome difficulties, but there are some missed opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of all pupils by ensuring a better match of task or teaching method to the range of ability in the class.

There is some good marking of work, for example in English, which makes it clear what pupils need to do next to improve. There is however no formal whole-school process for setting individual learning targets. Pupils are assessed regularly through specific subject tests. This develops into a more formal process as pupils get near to sitting their external examinations. The school has developed its own system to measure achievement based on progress towards the needs of the Common Entrance examination, but this is at an early stage of development.

A small minority of pupils feel that the school does not provide enough books and equipment. Overall resources for learning are adequate and the school has recently purchased a number of laptop computers which gives the information and communication technology aspect of the curriculum a much needed higher profile. The younger pupils' skills in this area are underdeveloped.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral and social development is outstanding and reflects the aims of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the way in which it has helped their children not only to become more independent but also confident in their learning. Pupils behave well and attend regularly. As one parent commented about their son, 'The academy gives him a winning combination of space, boundaries and a real love of learning.' From the returned questionnaires, the vast majority of pupils enjoy school. A few pupils felt their views were not listened to. The school has recently formed a school council which has the potential to help address this issue.

Pupils contribute effectively to the school by behaving well, engaging in class discussions, willingly asking and answering questions, taking part in drama productions, supervising younger pupils, their membership of the school council and, occasionally, by representing the school on sports teams. Contributions to the wider community are more limited but pupils raise money for national charities and take part in local events such as a young writer competition.

By the time they leave, pupils are confident in their own abilities, can hold a mature conversation, have good attitudes to learning and work independently. These attributes and their progress in English, mathematics and science support their future economic well-being.

Pupils learn about other faiths in religious education, history and geography. The personal, social and health education programme and talks in assembly provide opportunities for learning about public institutions. Pupils also learn about their own and other cultures in art, drama, geography, history and outside visits. Despite the strongly inclusive nature of the school, the pupils' knowledge of the range of cultures and backgrounds in their own school is not well developed.

## Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Arrangements for appointing staff and undertaking the appropriate checks on their suitability meet requirements. The school has compiled the required single register which shows what checks have been made. Staff have been trained in matters of child protection and updated training for all staff and the designated person responsible have been arranged for the near future.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They get on well with each other and are not concerned about bullying. They say there is no racism. The school acted appropriately when an issue of bullying occurred. One pupil commented, 'The school is very small but it takes care of everybody in the same way....' Staff know the pupils well and are alert to any concerns that they may have. Pupils know there is always someone they can talk to. A counsellor provides effective additional support for individuals as required. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are well supervised before and after school and at break times. First aid and fire safety procedures are satisfactory. The school promotes healthy lifestyles through its personal, social and health education programme and there are regular opportunities for exercise in physical education activities. Pupils are aware of some basic principles of healthy eating. Appropriate risk assessments for the schools' activities are completed.

While procedures are satisfactory, the school has not been rigorous in reviewing and updating all its paperwork, which sometimes lacks detail and dates. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Develop whole-school strategies for improving phonic knowledge to aid pupils' spelling.
- Take steps to help pupils improve the overall presentation of their work.
- Ensure that all required paperwork is updated and reviewed appropriately.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## School details

Name of school	The Academy School
DCSF number	202/6396
Unique reference number	131291
Type of school	Preparatory day school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	April 1997
Age range of pupils	6–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 57      Girls: 23      Total: 80
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,055
Address of school	The Academy School 2 Pilgrims Place Rosslyn Hill Hampstead London NW3 1NG
Telephone number	020 7435 6621
Fax number	020 7433 3267
Email address	academyschool@hotmail.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Garth Evans
Proprietor	Mrs C Sandars and Mr Garth Evans
Reporting inspector	Mr Daniel Towl HMI
Dates of inspection	4 November 2009