

King Solomon Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135242
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	343133
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Carmen Rodney HMI

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Beller
Headteacher	Ms Venessa Wilms (Primary) and Mr Max Haimendorf (Secondary)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Penfold Street London NW1 6RX
Telephone number	0207 563 6900
Fax number	0207 563 6900
Email address	office@kingsolomonacademy.org

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 17 lessons, visited an assembly and carried out a learning walk. They held meetings with the director of ARK, staff and pupils and held telephone interviews with several partners working with the academy. In addition to analysing the parental questionnaires, a meeting was conducted with over 40 parents, and consideration was given to the views of a small sample of staff and pupils who completed separate questionnaires. The inspection team observed the academy's work, scrutinised pupils' work and looked at a range of policies, including community cohesion, the single equality plan and the teaching and learning policy.

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

- achievement of all pupils to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- the effectiveness of the strategies to accelerate pupils' progress, in particular, those considered vulnerable
- how well assessment is used to improve provision and drive improvement
- the suitability of the curriculum in meeting needs and challenging pupils
- the extent to which the provision for care, guidance and support lead to improved outcomes for all pupils
- the impact of the leaders and managers including governors on establishing a new school and on continued improvement.

Information about the school

King Solomon Academy is a new, two form entry, non-selective and non-denominational all-through school for three to 18 year olds with specialisms in mathematics and music. The primary section opened in September 2007 with two Reception classes and the secondary in September 2009 with 60 Year 7 pupils. The academy is based on the small school model and will expand each year, until there are 870 pupils in four small schools: infants, juniors, middle and upper. The academy serves the immediate ethnically diverse local community. Most of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups with a high proportion speaking English as an additional language but only a small minority are at the early stage of learning English. An above average proportion of pupils have a special educational need and/or a disability. There are more boys than girls and almost three times as many boys than girls have a learning need, in particular moderate learning difficulty and social and emotional difficulties. Almost half of the pupils are entitled to a free school meal which is higher than the national average. The primary section was initially housed in temporary accommodation but moved into a permanent building in September 2009. The original school site is being built to accommodate the full academy. The secondary pupils are housed in the former primary building until January 2010, when the new building will be completed. The academy runs an extended school and has the Department for Children, Schools and Families Intermediate International Award; it also gained Healthy School Status in 2009.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

King Solomon Academy is an outstanding and unique 21st century school that rightly judges its provision to be so. Its primary aim is to, 'Provide a rigorous and transformational education that prepares our pupils for success at university and beyond.' As such, the academy breeds success and consistently practises its chant, 'Whatever it takes We work We learn We all succeed'. This axiom means that no child is left behind and because nothing is left to chance, all staff, including the governors, pupils and parents, give '100% every day to ensure success all the way'.

The academy's transformational mission makes it distinctive in many ways. First, it has successfully created and inspired a community of enthusiastic learners, who are passionate about achieving academic excellence. Second, visionary goals are at the heart of its work. Aspirations are high and the academy is making a difference to pupils' lives irrespective of their starting point. Teachers and parents recognise that despite facing challenging circumstances, pupils can succeed against all odds because the provision is outstanding. For example, the academy is intent on all pupils attending and succeeding at university and beyond, and so drives them to reach and exceed goals that may initially appear too ambitious and unattainable. Attainment is well above average in Reception and Key Stage 1 and the rate of pupils' progress and achievement is outstanding in all year groups. The unrelenting focus on pupils having 'Big Hairy Audacious Goals' (BHAG) from age 3 upwards has a strong impact on their personal goals to pursue academic excellence. Third, exemplary care, guidance and support and consistently good teaching when combined with the outstanding curriculum generate a very strong culture of learning, which serves pupils' individual needs very well.

The curriculum has many distinguishing features: there is 'depth before breadth' and the very sharp focus on literacy and numeracy means that pupils are given a firm foundation in basic skills. The school days are longer than average. In the secondary section, learning extends to Saturday and summer schools; also, the enrichment activities are outstanding. The specialisms in music and mathematics ensure that pupils are given a well thought out blend of academic and creative subjects. The academy recognises that there is more work to be done in mathematics. Also, the lack of cover to the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage restricts its use to fine days.

The success of the academy is linked to the outstanding leadership and management of the headteachers and the clarity with which they have communicated their incisive vision and rigorous self-evaluation. They are very well supported by outstanding governors and highly effective young leaders and staff who believe in the principle of education transforming pupils' lives. Together, they form a formidable and cohesive team, focused on helping pupils to be: 'mindful, achieving, professional and prepared'

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(MAPP) as leaders and innovators in their communities and tomorrow's world. Pupils' dreams are therefore aspirational and as one parent, looking at the chant said, "Whatever it takes", the teachers really stand behind the motto and it is for this reason that our children are in safe hands'. The unrelenting drive for outstanding achievement has been sustained since the monitoring visit and the capacity to improve further remains outstanding among a flexible and adaptable team that goes beyond call the call of duty.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the outside space for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by building a suitable canopy to facilitate all-weather learning.
- In the main academy, ensure that mathematics, one of the specialisms, has the same priority as music by:
 - building on and embedding current initiatives to develop teaching activities
 - identifying more cross-curricular and enrichment opportunities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils make exceptionally rapid progress and their achievement is outstanding. On entry to the academy, attainment is below average in mathematics and significantly below in English. In addition, a small but increasing number of pupils are at the early stage of learning English but no barrier is too high or difficult to conquer. This is because learning is personalised; there is a heavy emphasis on furnishing pupils with a strong foundation in the basic skills so they can access and tackle all areas of the curriculum as they progress through the academy. As a result, by the end of Year 1, attainment is above average. Moderated test results indicate that pupils outstrip those of similar age groups nationally and locally. For example, in English, Year 1 and 2 pupils complete work that is normally reserved for those in Years 2 and 3. Pupils have a wide vocabulary and extended writing and handwriting are developed beyond their years. Similarly, in Year 7, pupils grapple with and succeed in explaining difficult concepts when considering a writer's use of language to convey symbolic meaning. The unrelenting drive to stretch pupils leads to them making first class progress. Consequently, all pupils, including the most vulnerable such as those in care, those with a learning need, and those learning English make rapid progress. Boys, girls and different ethnic groups achieve equally well.

The academy has created a highly disciplined environment which stimulates and creates mature children and young people. Behaviour is exemplary in and around the academy and contributes strongly to the harmonious relationships between pupils from diverse backgrounds. From a young age, pupils embrace the six core values: 'courage, respect, integrity, perseverance, teamwork and belonging', and quickly learn to follow orderly classroom routines. As a result, concentration is very good; there is a strong social and moral code of conduct reflected in the exemplary promotion of and respect for different cultures and religions; in this, the music specialism is used very well to develop positive

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relationships.

Pupils say they feel very safe because they know that any problems are dealt with quickly. There have been no exclusions since the academy opened and incidents, if any, are dealt with effectively. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, and join in physical activities enthusiastically. Although they like 'cake and custard', they will critically claim that 'fruit is better because it is full of vitamins'. Pupils are involved in a wide range of community events, internally and wider afield, but there has not been sufficient time to involve older pupils in decision making. Attendance is average and has improved sharply because of the very good systems to promote it.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Over time, consistently good teaching with some that is outstanding contributes strongly to pupils making outstanding progress. The consistent emphasis on learning and exemplary use of assessment information ensure that pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their work and tasks and resources are tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. Cleverly devised visual assessment tables enable pupils in all

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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year groups to self-assess their work and track their progress.

Lessons are very well planned and fun; the pace is very brisk as teachers build on pupils' skills to stretch them. For example, in the outstanding Year 7 French and English lessons observed, high expectations and the demands placed on pupils meant that nothing but the best was expected. In lessons, pupils rise to the set challenges, teachers use very good subject knowledge to drive improvement and make excellent use of resources including information and communication technology. They ask different and in-depth questions to increase thinking, reviews are timely and linked to previous learning, they deal effectively with misconceptions, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary and using basic skills across the curriculum, participation is high and success criteria and summaries are clear.

The curriculum is a striking feature of the academy's provision. Arranged over a very full and demanding school day, it requires commitment from pupils and their parents as well as from the staff. It provides opportunities for all pupils to receive extra support in literacy and numeracy; in particular, gifted and talented pupils are given opportunities for extension activities and those with specific needs receive intensive support. Coupled with this curriculum, the academy succeeds in instilling an ambition for success into all pupils, so that even those in Key Stage 1 talk about their ambitions and expectations that they will go on to university. Enrichment activities are used very well to widen pupils' experience of art and culture and develop partnership work.

Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that pupils' academic and pastoral needs are very well met. Excellent transition arrangements include, for example, well considered initiatives such as visits to homes and schools to brief parents and begin identifying learning needs. Consequently, pupils adjust to the demands of the structured and supportive environment quickly when they join the academy.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Determination, great foresight and creativity combined explain why the headteachers are outstanding. The support of the bright young leaders and an energetic workforce have enabled the academy to get off to a flying start through establishing and sustaining a culture of high aspirations. Together, the headteachers have defined and clearly communicated their vision for the academy and fostered innovation and creativity through researching good practice thoroughly before making well informed choices

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about the provision needed to make it successful. With the staff, they have dismissed the notion that 'these pupils' in challenging circumstances might never succeed in a competitive system. Teamwork, including excellent partnership work within and beyond the academy, has resulted in adults working together to share and develop the vision of success for all pupils. Ownership of the vision is therefore strong; in the face of challenges and difficulties linked to safeguarding, the senior leaders have demonstrated the ability to act decisively without flinching when securing pupils' safety.

Actions for improvement are prioritised and linked to performance management and training. Assessment data are used rigorously to track pupils' progress, to ensure that all have equal access to the provision and statutory requirements are fully met. Similarly, outstanding attention is paid to ensuring that pupils develop the skills necessary to understand and interact with people from a range of cultures. Excellent links have therefore been established with groups locally, nationally and globally. The dedication to excellence in relation to practices means that plans and policies are evaluated regularly, though the academy recognises that its evaluation of community cohesion needs slightly more work. Governors provide outstanding support and fulfil all statutory duties very well. They are very well informed and challenge the school's drive for improvement in the quest to achieve the best outcomes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

From a below average start, the vast majority of children make exceptional progress, achieving skills that are securely within or beyond the levels expected for their age. In

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the Nursery and Reception, learning is stimulating and exciting with a good balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by the children. Staff provide very good support in all areas of learning and this provides an excellent foundation for children to become independent and confident learners. At this stage of the academy's development, the outdoor space is undeveloped and although plans have been made to develop the area, the lack of covering restricts activities in inclement weather. Staff know the children very well. The excellent relationships, work and communication with parents ensure that they have a very good understanding of the skills their children are learning and how they can best support them.

The strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics leads to children making outstanding progress in recognising words and the sounds they make. Consequently, language skills are very good. The leadership and management are outstanding and ensure that activities and learning relate exceptionally well to children's needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents who spoke to the inspection team and the vast majority who returned the questionnaires are very happy with the quality of the academy's provision for their children. They feel that the academy is an 'inspirational place' with 'committed and friendly teachers' who help their children to 'make remarkable progress'. A few parents expressed concerns about safety because of an unpredicted incident outside the academy. The leaders' swift and decisive actions were recognised by the necessary authorities. Senior leaders kept parents well informed about the actions taken and safeguarding policy and procedures are constantly under review.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at King Solomon Academy 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 162 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 262 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	106	66	51	32	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	105	65	54	33	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	109	67	49	30	3	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	112	69	49	30	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	120	74	40	25	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	104	64	53	33	3	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	88	54	68	42	6	4	0	0
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)	83	51	62	38	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	52	67	41	7	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	110	68	48	30	3	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	83	51	66	41	9	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	113	70	45	28	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	110	49	47	29	3	1	0	0

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.



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of King Solomon Academy, London NW1 6RX

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you throughout the two days when we saw you in lessons, talked to you in groups and shared lunch. A very big thank you to the class ambassadors who welcomed us and talked to us about the work you were doing in lessons.

Your academy bears the name of one of the wisest men who lived a long, long time ago. He was a very clever and famous king, known for making wise decisions. Many people came to visit him to test his knowledge and to see his splendid palaces. Why have I told you about him? Well, King Solomon Academy has some of the same characteristics as your namesake! You attend an outstanding academy that is giving you a first class education. The academy is led by two excellent headteachers who work very well with staff and your parents to inspire you to learn. Although the academy is quite new, it is well known because all of you are making outstanding progress and the standard of your work is very good.

The academy is helping you to do very well because all staff provide very good support, lessons are fun and they make sure that you give 100% at all times. They believe that 'knowledge is power, power is freedom' and you and your parents also share this view. Your behaviour is outstanding and this helps you to learn very well. The academy takes excellent care of your needs and makes sure that you know what to expect before you arrive there. Every day is demanding and although a few of you complain about the long day, you and your parents know that by 2016 and beyond, 100% of you should make it to university. This is a goal that you are all aspiring to because the academy has very high aspirations for your future. Already, all of you identify with the crest of arms and are linked to the university your class teacher attended.

As you work towards achieving the set goals, the academy is determined that none of you will fail. You can work with the staff to help you reach your goals by attending regularly and never giving up. Within this excellent place of learning, the headteachers know exactly how to help you achieve your goals. So, they agreed that there are two minor changes to add to the list of things to do. These include improving the play area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and giving more attention to developing

mathematics beyond the classroom as it is an important subject in the academy.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney

Her Majesty's Inspector

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