

John Cabot Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135295
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	343136
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda McGill HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1071
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Rhymes
Headteacher	Adam Williams
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Woodside Road Kingswood Bristol
Telephone number	0117 9763000
Fax number	0117 9760630
Email address	info@johncabot.ac.uk

Age group	11–19
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Inspection number	343136

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons, 19 of them jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They held meetings with the principal, senior staff and other staff members, the Executive Principal of the Cabot Learning Federation, members of the Academy Council (governing body) and groups of students. They observed the academy's work, and looked at documents including the academy's plan for development. The questionnaires returned by 114 parents, 150 students and 37 members of staff were scrutinised and the outcomes analysed.

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

- how well students make progress in the sixth form and how effectively the curriculum in the sixth form meets students' needs and aspirations
- how effectively teachers make use of information about students' attainment, progress and targets both when planning their lessons and during the course of lessons.

Information about the school

John Cabot Academy opened in September 2007, replacing John Cabot City Technology College. It is part of the Cabot Learning Federation, whose sponsors are Rolls Royce and the University of the West of England. The federation currently comprises three academies serving Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

John Cabot Academy draws its students from more than 65 primary schools. It is heavily oversubscribed. About four fifths of the students are of White British origin; the remainder come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Many students stay on into the sixth form, and about one third of the sixth-form students attend other schools before joining John Cabot. The academy has specialisms in technology and science, and in June 2008 inclusion was added as a further specialism.

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

John Cabot Academy is an exceptional school. Its excellent performance stems from strong and purposeful leadership, both from the principal and senior team, and from the Cabot Learning Federation. The vision and ambition for the academy are crystal clear and extremely well articulated. They underpin all that is done, and everyone, staff, students and academy council members alike, strives for excellence. The senior leaders are rightly proud that the academy's results are outstanding. However, they analyse performance scrupulously and look for ways to bring about even further improvements to make sure that every student, whatever their capability, is helped to do as well as possible. Teachers too strive for excellence in their performance in the classroom and are supported exceptionally well in developing their skills and talents. This results in teaching that has an outstanding impact on students' progress. The use of assessment information to support learning is a particular strength. Most teachers confidently use a wide variety of ways to gauge students' understanding through the course of a lesson. One student, chatting by chance to an inspector in the lunch queue, remarked that one thing she really loved about lessons was the way teachers amended and adapted their lesson plans as they went along, in response to feedback from the students. The students' books show that they know their individual targets, and assess their own learning and progress on a regular basis.

The staff know the students very well indeed, both in terms of their academic progress and aspirations, and at a personal level. The care and guidance offered to students are excellent; the curriculum is tailored to meet individual needs as much as possible and students are given swift and effective support to help them manage any difficulties they may encounter in their personal lives. After Year 7, tutor groups include students of all ages and this is effective in meeting the academy's aim of encouraging social interaction between younger and older students. A few students pointed out that they would welcome a more structured approach to tutor times and academy staff agree that this would be a good move.

The students respond very positively to the interest that is shown in them. They are refreshingly open, friendly and keen to learn. This means that the atmosphere in lessons is not only purposeful but also warm; teachers and students have excellent relationships with one another. The students' personal development is outstanding. The 'Cabot Competency Curriculum', followed by students in Year 7, and developed as students progress through the year groups, results in striking levels of confidence and maturity. Its impact also shows in the ways students readily cooperate and support one another and in their willingness to learn independently. Students enjoy their learning a good deal. 'Our school is pretty cool, to be blunt' wrote one.

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

The quality of provision and the outcomes for the students in the sixth form are good. Students generally do well in the sixth form, making good progress, apart from at AS level where progress is satisfactory. The academy is determined to improve the sixth form so that its effectiveness also becomes outstanding. Improvements have been made, but at a slower rate than in the main academy. The curriculum has developed well, but is not yet as broad or diverse as the academy would like it to be. The creation of federation-wide sixth-form provision is an exciting development which, when implemented, will strengthen and enrich the curriculum for students in all three academies.

The strength of the academy's leadership and its track record over the two years since it opened confirm that the academy has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision and outcomes for the students in the sixth form so that they become outstanding by:
 - raising the quality of teaching and learning so that they are more consistently in line with what is found in Key Stages 3 and 4
 - strengthening the sixth form's leadership and management by working closely with the academy's senior leadership team
 - implementing plans to broaden the curriculum through close collaboration with other academies in the federation.
- Enhance the effectiveness of tutor periods by implementing a more structured pastoral programme suitable for the mixed-age groups.

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

On all measures, the students attain highly. In 2009, two thirds of students gained five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The proportion gaining five good passes in all subjects was very high indeed, at 94%. Finally, every single student completed Year 11 with at least five passes. Attainment in the academy's specialist areas was high, especially in design and technology. Given that the students' attainment on entry to the academy is broadly average, this shows that they made excellent progress. Students of all backgrounds, boys, girls and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities all do equally well. Indeed, students who have special educational needs made progress at a faster rate than their classmates, making up a good deal of ground during their time at the academy. In 2008, the most recent year for which comparative figures are available, students who had special educational needs attained significantly more highly than their counterparts across the country. This demonstrates very clearly the positive impact of the academy's second specialism in inclusion. Continuing high attainment was evident in lessons in a broad range of subjects that included mathematics, Spanish, dance, physical education, drama and business studies.

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

Other outcomes for the students are equally high. Behaviour is outstanding, especially in lessons. Students' understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe are excellent. During this inspection, members of the federation's student parliament worked with the City of Bristol's Director of Children's Services to devise a strategy to support children and young people from across the city in keeping themselves safe. This is also an example of the outstanding contribution that students make to the community. The students' high levels of attainment, together with their wide repertoire of interpersonal and workplace skills and their above average attendance, mean that they are exceptionally well prepared for further study and the world of work.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Overall, lessons are stimulating and interesting experiences. Teachers are highly skilled at creating an appropriate context for learning, making what is to be studied relevant and engaging. Lessons often combine several elements very successfully so that students have, for example, the opportunity to work in groups, carry out research, organise their findings and then present them to others who offer constructive criticism

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

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

to help them improve. Students then make progress not only in their academic learning but also in their personal skills and competencies. Enabling this to happen requires a good deal of skill in planning and organising lessons, and a good knowledge of students' particular needs. Information and communication technology is often used to very good effect both by teachers and students, but there are some occasions in lessons when technology such as interactive white boards are underused.

The Cabot Competency Curriculum is an example of an innovation that has had an excellent impact on students' attainment and progress. The curriculum overall is very responsive to students' aspirations, enabling them to follow courses and vocational options that suit their needs, make progress at their own pace and gain qualifications when ready. Students participate in an extensive range of activities outside of the classroom, and lead some after-school clubs themselves.

Meticulous care is taken to ensure that transition into the academy is smooth and trouble free. Every student who is admitted to the academy is visited in their primary school. The students appreciate this greatly, as do their parents. One parent, whose child had recently joined the academy wrote, 'My son is flying. He feels accepted, his self-esteem has returned and he is happy and confident'. This degree of care and attention to detail typifies what happens for all students, including the most vulnerable, throughout the course of the year and at times of transition.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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?

The academy is exceptionally well led and managed. The emphasis is on 'getting every day right' and 'getting the future right'. This sounds very simple, but it is very effective in keeping a focus on the things that matter. To this end, senior leaders work in pairs to lead areas called 'the Four Outstandings' that comprise student care, curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment. The principal and senior leaders work extremely well together and across the teams. Their enthusiasm for their roles is infectious and has a positive impact on other members of staff; morale is high and teachers and support staff enjoy their work. There is no sense of complacency at any level. Any potential weaknesses are quickly identified because systems for self-evaluation are robust and effective. Challenging targets are set for further improvement to students' attainment, progress and attendance and expectations are exceptionally high.

The executive principal adds another tier of leadership. However, because of the clarity

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

of vision and the wholehearted embracing of common aims, this has the effect of strengthening and enhancing leadership. A good example of this can be seen in the way that the creation of the Federation Board has freed the academy's council members to focus more closely on important areas such as teaching and learning. It also enables the academy to have access to the very wide range of skills and expertise that exists across all three academy councils.

Community cohesion and equality of opportunity are fundamental to the vision of the academy and to the federation as a whole as they strive to make a positive difference to the life chances of young people across Bristol and South Gloucestershire. The academy has many productive links with an impressive range of partners in business and education in local, national and international contexts. It also works exceptionally closely with parents and is close to achieving its goal of enabling every parent to have online access to information about their child 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The academy's systems and procedures for protecting and safeguarding students are exemplary.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The academy has an inclusive approach to admissions to the sixth form. Many of the students completed their GCSE courses at John Cabot, while others have joined from elsewhere. This means that attainment on entry to the sixth form is somewhat lower than might be expected, given the academy's excellent results at the end of Key Stage 4. That notwithstanding, students make good progress overall during their time in the sixth form and do well, especially at A Level and in BTEC examinations. Progress is

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

satisfactory at AS level and the academy is taking steps to improve this. Sixth formers are mature, confident and sensible individuals who contribute a good deal to the academy's life. As part of their community service, many work as mentors or teaching assistants to younger students.

The sixth-form curriculum meets the students' needs well. Vocational provision is increasing. As part of the federation's sixth form, students from John Cabot will have access to a very wide range of courses. Teaching is good and subject knowledge is strong, but lessons occasionally lack the sparkle and energy that is found more frequently in the main school. Students enjoy their sixth-form studies and appreciate the support and mentoring that they receive. One wrote, 'I like the independence and personalised learning that the sixth form offers. Teachers are really helpful in helping me reach my personal goals.' Good leadership and management of the senior leadership team, in support of the sixth-form leaders, ensure that improvements continue to be made, albeit at a slower pace than in the academy as a whole.

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

Questionnaires were returned by 114 parents and two responses were received by email. Overall, parents are very happy with their child's experiences at John Cabot, and every parent felt that the academy keeps their child safe. Appreciation of the academy's leadership and management also came through strongly. A few parents were concerned about the management of behaviour and the information that they have about their child's learning. During the inspection, students were very well behaved but inspectors saw that there were clear procedures to deal with unacceptable behaviour should it occur. The academy is currently finalising arrangements to make sure that parents can have unlimited access to information about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Cabot 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 114 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1071 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	55	48	42	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	64	41	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	49	49	43	4	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	50	47	41	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	48	51	45	4	4	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	39	53	46	8	7	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	34	68	60	6	5	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)	48	42	57	50	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	64	56	41	36	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	39	53	46	10	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	32	60	53	7	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	69	61	39	34	4	4	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	74	65	37	32	3	2	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.



20 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of John Cabot Academy, Kingswood BS15 8BD

It was a real pleasure for me and the other inspectors to meet many of you and to see you in lessons and around the academy when we inspected it recently. The views that you contributed through the questionnaires and in discussions and informal chats helped us greatly in coming to our decision about the academy's overall effectiveness.

We judged that John Cabot is an outstanding academy. This is because it knows that its prime purpose is to make sure that you all achieve as well as you can. It has a strong focus on equipping you with the personal qualities and skills that will serve you very well in later life. It is successful in doing this by making sure that teaching is of high quality, the curriculum suits your needs and you are carefully guided and supported when you need it. As a result, you make excellent progress and examination results are high. We were very impressed by your confidence, maturity and willingness to learn. We noted, though, that progress is not consistently good in the sixth form. We also listened to what a few of you said about how tutor periods could be made even better. We agreed with you, and so do the senior leaders.

It might seem a bit harsh to ask for improvements when we have found so much that is outstanding. However, there are always some things that can be improved, as your principal and the senior staff already know - they are always looking for ways to make a difference. Therefore we have asked the academy to devise a pastoral programme that can be implemented during tutor periods. We have also asked the academy to continue with its plans to strengthen and further improve the effectiveness of the sixth form.

That is a very quick summary of our findings. I suggest that you read the full report to gain more insight into the reasons behind our judgements.

I wish you every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.