

Westminster City School

55 Palace Street, London, SW1E 5HJ

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Leadership and management	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The progress of students in the school has improved rapidly since it gained academy status and students' overall achievement is good. Students are making good progress and some make outstanding progress.
- Governance is outstanding. Governors give clear, decisive support and guidance to the school. The headteacher and senior team have raised academic standards by setting ambitious and rigorously checked targets for students and teachers.
- An innovative Years 9 to 11 curriculum matches the academic needs of each student so they can achieve their GCSE and A-level results as early as possible. The school also offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities including an army cadet corps that provides a valuable additional experience for many students.
- Highly effective methods for monitoring the quality of teaching have been introduced and middle leaders are playing an increasingly effective role in raising standards in their subjects.
- The school's Christian ethos and its promotion of cultural, social and moral diversity permeate all aspects of the school community. Students' behaviour is good in and out of lessons and they feel safe.
- Teaching is good. Teachers monitor students' progress well in lessons and are skilful in using probing questions to reveal students' understanding. Detailed marking, additional revision, booster lessons and individual support programmes help students achieve well.
- The sixth form is good because the achievement of students is good and improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Teachers do not always plan lesson activities tailored to challenge and meet the learning needs of all students.
- Students' academic progress is not consistently good or outstanding in all subjects.
- The development of students' extended writing skills is not always given enough attention in lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 23 teachers in 24 lessons, including some joint observation with senior staff. Observations were also made of disabled students and those with special educational needs, both those withdrawn from lessons and those in classrooms, tutor periods and a year assembly.
- Inspectors examined students' books and discussed work with students in each year group and across a range of subjects. They looked at students' examination results and evaluated the school's records of student progress. They also examined the school's analysis of students' behaviour and attendance and safeguarding records.
- Meetings took place with groups of students, with the Chair and Co-Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and with school staff, including senior and middle leaders. The discussions considered the school's professional development programme, support for disabled students and the achievement and support of students eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Informal discussions took place with staff and students, and questionnaire returns from 45 staff were analysed. Inspectors also took account of 32 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, performance management systems and the minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Pamela Fearnley, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Ramesh Kapadia	Additional inspector
Brian Lester	Additional inspector
Teresa Tunnadine	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Westminster City School converted to become an academy school on 1 July 2012. When its predecessor school, Westminster City School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The school is a smaller-than-average, non-denominational, Christian secondary boys' school which is part of a Christian foundation (The United Westminster Schools). It allocates 25 places a year to boys of other faiths. The number on roll decreased by approximately 40 students in September 2012 following a decision to raise the entry criteria for admission to the sixth form.
- Sixth-form provision is delivered through a consortium of providers in Westminster, and girls are admitted.
- Most students are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being Black African and Bangladeshi. Over three quarters of students speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of students are supported through school action. Similarly, the proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Over half the students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This is significantly higher than average.
- Nine Key Stage 4 students attend off-site provision full time to study GCSE and BTEC courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - strengthening students' writing skills
 - ensuring students' progress in all subjects matches that in the best-performing courses.
- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring a higher proportion of teaching results in students making outstanding progress
 - preparing activities that are tailored to meet the learning needs of all students
 - ensuring all students, especially the most able, are challenged to work at progressively more demanding levels in lessons
 - challenging all students to think more imaginatively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with average levels of attainment and make at least expected progress between Years 7 and 8. However, the impact of the newly introduced three-year curriculum, combined with effective teaching and targeted intervention, accelerates their progress rapidly between Years 9 and 11 so that their progress is good overall.
- A combination of the school's own assessment data and early GCSE results indicates that there will be a significant increase in students' levels of attainment by the end of the academic year 2012/13. The school operates an effective early entry policy for GCSE examinations.
- Learning in lessons in most subjects and the work in students' books are good. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, average-ability students were able to create their own algebraic numerical fractions and work as peer coaches to explain how to solve numerical fractions to others.
- Provisional data indicate that students who speak English as a second language, disabled students and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers. The school has targeted the progress of Black African students and current school data indicate that this group will also make good progress in 2013.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make similar good progress, although GCSE average points scores are not yet available.
- Students' attainment is strongest in mathematics, English, science, humanities, religious education and information and communication technology. Their attainment is weaker in design and technology, art and design, music, French and physical education, where improvements are required.
- Attainment in the sixth form is good and the school expects all AS and A-level candidates to attain A* to E grades in 2013, mainly because the entry requirement to study A-level courses has been raised.
- Weakness in students' writing skills, especially their extended writing, is rightly a priority for the school. Their numeracy skills are good.
- Staff make weekly monitoring visits to the students studying at off-site provision and evidence available at the time of the inspection indicates that students make good progress and are on track to achieve their target grades.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good but there is not yet enough outstanding teaching.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use probing questions to check students' understanding and reveal misconceptions which are then addressed during lessons. Teachers mark classwork and homework frequently with encouraging and supportive comments which show students how to improve.
- The support given to disabled students and those with special educational needs is very effective, whether students are withdrawn from lessons or supported in lessons. Students who speak English as an additional language have intensive support to improve their English as quickly as possible.
- Teaching for students supported through pupil premium is good because it meets their academic needs well and enables them to make similar progress to other students in the school.
- Teachers carefully observe students' developing understanding during lessons so, if necessary, tasks and explanations can be reshaped immediately. In some lessons, however, the activities are not adapted to suit the varying abilities of students, especially more-able students because assessment data are not always used to plan lessons to meet the academic needs of all students. Students are also not always encouraged to be more independent, enterprising and imaginative in their learning. This limits the progress of some students.

- Speaking, listening and reading skills are well developed and active discussion is encouraged in lessons. There are respectful relationships between teachers and students and students work well collaboratively.
- Teachers support students' social, moral spiritual and cultural development well. In a Year 9 business studies lesson, students were able to discuss clearly the ethical, social and political pressures on retail businesses that commission work from sweatshops in India. They could evaluate the impact of these issues on the success or failure of a company, showing good global awareness.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are polite and helpful to visitors and support each other in lessons. Students were keen to reassure inspectors that behaviour is usually good in most lessons and that it had improved since the introduction of the school's points system for rewards and sanctions.
- Further evidence of the school's improving behaviour is the dramatic reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions since September 2012. However, exclusion levels are still above the national average and students' attitudes are not always exemplary which is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- Students' behaviour in corridors and around the school is usually harmonious. Year 8 students listened to each other in assembly and were eager to share ideas about their own identity in groups without needing to be prompted by staff. The behaviour and safety of students attending off-site provision are good.
- A number of sixth-form students are prefects assigned to tutor groups to support younger students and are involved in the day-to-day running of the school by completing lunchtime duties and other supportive tasks. The student voice is actively embedded into every aspect of school life and a criterion for entry to the sixth form is to be a volunteer in the local community.
- Differences of culture, lifestyle and ethnic background are accepted as natural in this diverse and cohesive community and students feel safe in and around the school. Students are aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying, and are clear about how to respond. Parents and staff believe that students' behaviour is managed well and is good.
- Attendance is high and persistent absence is very low compared to the national average, which supports the view of parents that students are happy at school.

The leadership and management are good

- Governors and senior leaders aim to raise educational standards and increase opportunities for all students, but particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The rapid improvements in students' achievement and behaviour and in the quality of teaching, over a relatively short period of time, show that this aim is beginning to be realised. Leadership and management are not outstanding because not enough teaching is yet outstanding and students' academic progress is not outstanding.
- A good system for tracking the progress of individual and groups of students enables leaders and managers to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve well.
- The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, shows great determination and is focused on improving the key aspects of the school's performance outlined in the school's development plan. Leaders are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and know what is needed to make the school outstanding.
- Faculty leaders have become increasingly effective in the process of monitoring and developing

teaching. They work alongside senior leaders to complete annual subject reviews which are used to identify any shortcomings in their subject areas. External consultants have been judiciously employed to monitor the school's progress and to verify the accuracy of subject reviews. In addition, the quality of teaching is systematically monitored through learning walk reviews and scrutiny of students' books. The school benefits from support provided by the Christian foundation of which the school is a member.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly supported by the school chaplaincy and activities in lessons. Good procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of students and they are free from harm while at school. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated,
- Staff have a range of annual performance management targets linked to the quality of their teaching. These are monitored and reviewed by the headteacher who advises the governing body and are then used to support pay-progression decisions. The performance of middle leaders is linked to the impact of their leadership on raising students' achievement.
- Funding for students eligible for the pupil premium is used to help ensure that the achievement of these students is at least comparable to that of others in the school. This demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring that all students have equal opportunity to succeed.
- The newly introduced Years 9 to 11 curriculum is outstanding because it is well tailored to students' capabilities and has had a dramatic impact on raising their achievement. It allows lower-attaining students identified as requiring a three-year Key Stage 4 study programme to be taught in very small class sizes so they virtually have one-to-one tuition. Students who achieve their highest expected target grades early begin advanced level courses with sixth-form students when they start Year 11. This gives them a huge sense of achievement.
- The impact of the school's science specialism is evident in many aspects of the school and is reflected in the improved science results. An extensive extra-curricular programme is in place offering numerous additional classes to support students' academic achievement as well as clubs to develop other interests. Year 9 to 13 students may join the school's successful cadet corps. The school believes that this experience helps students to gain greater personal dignity, self-discipline, improved team-building skills and a sense of pride in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is outstanding. Governors have engaged external education professionals to review the school's improvement plan, have created a committee, attended by the headteacher, to steer the strategic direction of the school and have set up meetings with middle leaders to review the performance of students against performance data. Governors are actively and rigorously involved in holding leaders at all levels to account. They question the school's performance objectively and compare it to other schools nationally so they can reward good performance, tackle poor performance and hold the headteacher to account for the way in which increases in pay are used to reward teachers. Governors take part in relevant training opportunities and this ensures they are fully versed in all aspects of the school's provision. The school's financial management is monitored closely and governors have a clear understanding of how resources, including the pupil premium, are used. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are fully met and have created opportunities to consult with parents and students so they feel their voices are heard and considered.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its students' needs. This ensures that students are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its students' needs. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138312
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	406874

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	739
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Rider
Headteacher	David Maloney
Telephone number	020 7963 6300
Email address	enquiries@wcsch.com

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