

Islington Arts and Media School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131690
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	364028
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	755
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Victoria Phillips
Headteacher	Diana Osagie
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 27 teachers and 28 lessons, and visited briefly other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body and students. Inspectors looked at documentation, including students' books, the school development plan, records of assessment and tracking of students' progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, records of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of students, and policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination. In addition, inspectors considered 113 parents' and carers' questionnaire responses, and those from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent of the school's success in raising attainment across all subjects and reducing the variation in attainment between subjects.
- The extent of improvement against the key issues of the last inspection, which were: improving the teaching of literacy and language in lessons and ensuring that marking and assessment is of a consistently high quality.
- The factors that underpin significant improvements in attendance since the last inspection.
- How well the school is managing its fall in roll to sustain high quality provision for its pupils.

Information about the school

This below-average sized secondary school serves the socially, ethnically and culturally diverse communities of Islington and its neighbouring boroughs. The very large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with students of Black African, Black Caribbean, and Turkish heritage constituting the largest groups. About half of the students speak English as an additional language. Boys outnumber girls by about two to one in most year groups. Over a half of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Mobility into and out of the school at other than the usual time of admission and departure is very high. Over a fifth of students are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The most prevalent types of special educational needs are moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school became a specialist media arts school in 2004, and in 2009 it acquired Trust status. It has received many awards for its work, including Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, Healthy School status, School of Creativity, Lead Aspect awards for inclusion and staff development, Investors in People, and the Diamond Cultural Diversity Quality Standard. The school's standard admissions number has been reduced as a result of local demographic factors and the opening of new academies across its catchment area. This has led to a marked fall in the number of students on roll since the last inspection. At the time of the inspection, an extensive rebuilding and staff restructuring programme was underway.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has many outstanding features. Staff have an exceptionally clear understanding of the individual needs and aspirations of its students. They tailor the excellent curriculum and support programmes with great flexibility and care to help students of all backgrounds succeed. As a result, more-able students enter for GCSE and even A- or AS-level examinations in mathematics and other subjects as early as Year 9, supported by before- and after-school classes. Students who arrive in the school speaking little or no English settle in quickly and are skilfully enabled to achieve success in a range of valuable qualifications. In the words of one student: 'What makes this school stand out is so many opportunities for all.'

Students achieve well. They attain strong results in a range of subjects, particularly in vocational and applied courses, including in many of the specialist subjects in creative and media arts. Such results represent outstanding progress for many individuals and groups. Attainment in the core subjects of English and mathematics has steadily closed the gap on the national averages since the last inspection but remains low overall. Students nonetheless make good progress in these core subjects, especially given the very low starting points of many and the considerable barriers to learning that many have to surmount, especially in English.

Teaching is good. There are plenty of examples of outstanding teaching, but also some that is no better than satisfactory, largely because students' pace of learning is not consistently sustained through each lesson. The quality of teaching and learning varies between and within subjects, as does the quality of teachers' marking and feedback to students. Some marking offers students very precise guidance on how to improve their work, while some gives just an indication about how well they have done. Students behave well in lessons, and most engage quickly and purposefully in their learning.

Students take great pride in representing their school in arts, cultural and other events in the school and local community. They show great maturity in exercising the many opportunities to take responsibility and show leadership, for example as prefects and monitors. The 'student voice' directly influences a wide range of school policies through broad consultation exercises. The many excellent partnerships the school enjoys with businesses, other schools and community groups ensure that students have a good understanding of the skills they will need for the next stage of their education or employment. Students acknowledge the outstanding care provided for them in helping them feel safe. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, because students show strong respect for and interest in each other's cultures and beliefs, and the system of restorative justice practised by the school supports a clear understanding of right and wrong behaviour. The excellent promotion of racial harmony and community cohesion is at the heart of the school's work.

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The headteacher has a very clear strategic vision for the future of the school as it adapts to smaller student numbers and moves into its new buildings. She is supported in this vision by a dynamic and exceptionally well informed governing body who involve themselves very closely in the workings of the school. Safeguarding of the well-being of students and staff is accorded a very high priority, and clear and comprehensive structures and training programmes are in place at all levels, including for members of the governing body. Leaders and managers have a well-developed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders at all levels have driven very considerable improvements in students' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour since the last inspection and have demonstrated a good capacity to improve further. The monitoring of teaching and learning has not ensured a consistently high quality of teaching and learning in all areas. However, careful monitoring of the progress and welfare of each student has ensured that all groups of students have shared in the school's successful improvement, including those deemed to be the most vulnerable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics.
- Make sure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment consistently match that of the best, by strengthening the monitoring and development of teaching across all subjects so that:
 - the pace of learning is maintained throughout lessons
 - activities are always purposefully linked to the main lesson objectives
 - students are always clear about their learning objectives
 - work is consistently marked with clear comments about how well students have done and what they need to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment has risen very strongly overall since the last inspection. High attainment in a wide range of vocational and applied qualifications means that most students achieve notable successes. For example, 94% of students gained the equivalent of five or more GCSEs at grade C or above in 2010, which is well above the national average, and includes high and substantially improved results in science. These results represented exceptional progress for nearly all groups of students. However, attainment in the core subjects of English and mathematics, while improving year on year, remains below average, so attainment is judged low overall. Many students, especially the significant numbers newly arrived in the country speaking little or no English, face considerable barriers to their attainment in English and mathematics, but nonetheless achieve well. Since the last inspection, students' progress in the core subjects has strengthened significantly. Students of all ethnicities make at least good progress overall, including those who speak English as an additional language. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress, especially those with a statement of special educational needs. Boys and girls do equally well.

Most students behave well in lessons. Their rapid engagement in class activities and their focused application on their tasks makes a substantial contribution to their good learning

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and progress. In a number of lessons during the inspection, students showed outstanding capacity to work independently or collaboratively, making very effective use of assessment criteria to guide and improve their work. There is, however, some variation in the quality of learning and progress between and within subjects, which is most often linked to variations in the pace of students' learning and the clarity and challenge of the learning objectives. Behaviour can be boisterous around the school site, especially where space is limited or corridors narrow, but students are generally polite and courteous to visitors. A celebration of cultural diversity permeates every aspect of the school's work, and the students show real interest in exploring aspects of their own and each other's cultural heritages. Students have a well-developed understanding of how to live healthily, and they participate in a wide range of activities which promote healthy living. Students are consistently punctual. Attendance has improved markedly since the last inspection, with a considerable reduction in rates of persistent absence, and is now securely within the average range.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	1
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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' planning of lessons is often a key strength. Teachers generally use the comprehensive assessment information at their disposal to identify individual students' needs and capabilities, and to plan tasks and activities that are well matched to those needs. Classroom management is a further strength, as teachers successfully use a variety

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of techniques to ensure that students behave well and pay attention at key points in lessons. Resources, including information and communication technology, are very well used to make activities enjoyable and to improve the quality of students' work. Lessons often feature activities or resources which directly support the development of students' key literacy and numeracy skills. Clear learning objectives and a very well-developed use of assessment criteria to show students how to improve their work underpins much of the strongest teaching. Teaching is less than good in the minority of lessons, where the pace of learning is too slow, for example where students do not have sufficiently clear or challenging objectives, or because time is wasted, for example on over-long starter activities unrelated to the main task. Teachers' marking of students' work varies widely in quality from the exemplary to the cursory.

The curriculum is exceptionally well tailored to meet students' diverse needs and interests. Literacy and language support programmes are highly effective, and include strategies such as intensive tuition for students with English as an additional language, together with engaging programmes such as the 'Arsenal Double', which enables students to read, write, speak and listen with reference to resources from the local football club. The school draws extensively on partnerships with local businesses, schools and training providers to offer flexible and innovative provision, especially at Key Stage 4. This includes well-managed vocational and skills provision off-site, and an 'internship' programme of business placements for those following business and sport courses. A strong vein of creativity runs through the school's provision as the arts and media specialism occupies a very prominent role in the curriculum and extra-curricular life of the school. This helps to drive effective cross-curricular working between subjects to develop students' creative skills in a range of contexts.

By adopting a 'team around the child' approach, the school offers very comprehensive care, guidance and support for its students. A wide range of professionals within school and from external agencies collaborate very effectively to support students and their families, especially those in the most vulnerable circumstances. Innovative methods have been used to engage with parents and carers who might be hard to reach because of language or social barriers. For example, learning mentors and key staff establish minority ethnic support groups and networks for parents and carers. Text messaging to parents and carers is widely and effectively used for instant communication, for example over attendance and punctuality. Pupils receive a very well-rounded induction programme before joining in Year 7, which currently involves a residential trip. Careers advice and guidance is highly effective, and few students leave school without going on to further education, employment or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

This has been a challenging year in the school's development as it has set about addressing a sizeable budget deficit in the face of a substantial reduction in the number on roll. The headteacher and governing body have led a detailed staff restructuring process. This has been unsettling and uncomfortable for staff, but it shows clear strategic thinking about the shape of the school's provision in the context of students' improving attainment, behaviour and aspirations. With a new building under construction, the school has begun to market itself more assertively, and the Year 7 intake is on course to be markedly higher in September 2011 than in the previous year. The governing body play a particularly active role in monitoring the school's development. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior and middle leaders has, however, not yet ensured that all teaching matches the quality of the best.

The school has been highly effective in promoting equality of opportunity by helping students across the ability range and from all ethnic backgrounds, including boys and girls, those newly arrived and speaking little English, those eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good and often outstanding progress. It has exceptionally well developed pastoral and academic systems to inform intervention where students show signs of underachievement or vulnerability. The promotion of community cohesion is of central importance to the school, and it makes excellent provision to help students understand and value diversity. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, and staff and governors have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in this respect.

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	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	2

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Views of parents and carers

Parents have a generally positive view of the school's provision. There were very few comments on parents' questionnaire responses, and these were mostly positive. Comments such as: 'The school seems to have strong leadership and very supportive staff', and 'IAMS (Islington Arts and Media School) is giving my son a well-rounded education and lots of opportunities to get involved in extra activities', 'staff are particularly supportive of my children's specific needs', and 'the school gave (my son) an excellent foundation for further study' sum up the tone of many of the comments and reflect inspectors' findings. The very few negative comments centred mainly on the school's management of homework, particularly in the regularity of setting of homework and the clarity of students' understanding of expectations of homework assignments, and the effectiveness of communication with parents. Inspectors found that many opportunities were offered outside of the school day to support students' learning and progress and methods of setting homework varied between classes. They found that the school had innovative means of engaging with a wide range of parents' groups, although the experience of individual parents may vary. There were a very few individual concerns about aspects of students' behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour was generally well managed and that the school had very effective systems to safeguard students' well-being.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Islington Arts and Media 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 113 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 755 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	39	59	52	7	6	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	50	44	49	43	8	7	3	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	42	54	48	9	8	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	35	57	50	10	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	37	33	62	55	9	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	27	58	51	19	17	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	21	65	58	15	13	4	4
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)	36	32	64	57	6	5	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	25	59	52	16	14	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	35	57	50	8	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	23	61	54	10	9	4	4
The school is led and managed effectively	27	24	69	61	9	8	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	36	58	51	4	4	6	5

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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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24 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Islington Arts and Media School, London N4 3LS

Thank you for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We very much appreciated the mature and efficient way in which many of you helped to guide us around the school and to engage with us in discussions. This reflects the excellent contribution many of you make to the school and wider community. You left us in no doubt that this was a school which valued and celebrated the diversity of its students' backgrounds and contributed much to promoting good relationships across the community.

You attend a good school, which has many outstanding features. In particular, its excellent curriculum and the outstanding care it offers are flexibly adapted to meet the needs of each student. As a result, you achieve well. The high quality of the curriculum and care provision is underpinned by highly effective partnerships with businesses, local agencies and other schools, and these ensure that you are well prepared for the next stage of your education and training. You are well taught, although there is some variation in the quality of teaching, leading to some variation in your learning and attainment across the school.

The school's leaders have ensured that the school has improved well since the last inspection, with significant improvement in your attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour all in evidence. Our report suggests two further main areas in which the school can go further ahead by:

- improving attainment in English and mathematics
- improving aspects of teaching and assessment and the way in which leaders and managers check on the quality of teaching and learning across the school, to raise quality to that of the best.

I am sure that you will continue to play a full part in helping to improve the school. I wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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