

Islington Arts and Media School

Turle Road, London, N4 3LS

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Most students make good progress from starting points that are generally below average. GCSE results improved significantly in 2013, with students achieving examination results in English and mathematics that are now above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good in most lessons. Some teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and build positive relationships. As a result, students engage in their learning and begin to make accelerated rates of progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in most lessons. Many students who speak English as an additional language make outstanding progress due to the effective support they receive.
- Behaviour is good. Students feel safe and value the support they are given by adults. They are respectful of cultural, social and individual differences. Opportunities for student leadership and community roles are readily taken up.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, have worked successfully to improve teaching and raise achievement. Performance management is robust and targeted professional development and support has helped teaching standards to rise.
- The headteacher has been relentless in addressing underperformance and in raising standards across the school. She inspires the respect of others, who are empowered to make a strong contribution to the shared vision for the school. She is ably supported by a committed and informed governing body.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance is broadly average, although improving.
- Teachers do not always take account of students' different starting points or offer regular helpful feedback in all lessons.
- There is variability in how well students achieve across different subjects.
- Students are not always encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 27 lessons taught by 27 teachers. Six observations were conducted jointly with members of the school’s leadership team. A book scrutiny was also carried out.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors and with three representatives from the local authority. Inspectors also met with three groups of students and spoke to students informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 24 parental views expressed through the online Parent View survey and letters received from parents. They also considered the school’s parental survey responses and reviewed how the school communicated with parents.
- Inspectors reviewed the 41 staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work, scrutinised information about students’ achievement, checked work in students’ books, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school’s work.

Inspection team

Lesley Cox	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Mason	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average secondary school serving an ethnically and culturally diverse city area.
- There are more boys than girls in all year groups.
- High numbers of students arrive and leave the school at different times throughout the year. Some students are seeking asylum in this country or have refugee status.
- Students come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The biggest groups of students are from African, Caribbean, Other White and White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high compared with other schools.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is slightly higher than average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- More than two thirds of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is the additional government funding provided for students eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children from service families. This is a higher than average proportion.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Thirteen students currently attend off-site alternative educational courses at a range of providers, including Southgate College.
- Most students were entered early for GCSE examinations in information technology, mathematics and science in 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching so that students make good or better progress in all subjects by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan activities that take account of students' different starting points so that all students, including the more able, are challenged to make as much progress as they can
 - give high quality feedback to students so that they can identify the next steps to take to achieve their targets
 - provide more opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons so that they become increasingly confident about learning independently.
- Continue to improve attendance by embedding systems for addressing non-attendance so that all students attend regularly and persistent absence is quickly addressed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students start at the school with levels of attainment that are below average. They make good progress across Years 7 to 11. The number of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics, rose significantly in 2013 and is now above average. Girls generally perform as well as boys despite being in the minority.
- Standards in English have improved rapidly since 2011. Students achieved much better GCSE results in English in 2013 than in previous years and results were significantly higher than the national average. Students make good rates of progress which helps them to catch up quickly.
- Students also make good progress in mathematics and leave with GCSE results that are now slightly above the national average. Standards in mathematics have improved steadily over the last three years, with more students achieving A* and A grade passes in 2013 than in previous years.
- Achievement is not outstanding because there is too much variation in how well students achieve in different subjects. In some subjects, such as art and languages, students make good or better progress and achieve A* to C passes at GCSE that compare favourably with other schools. However in science, humanities and some creative arts subjects, students achieve less well and standards are still below average.
- A strong focus on raising literacy and numeracy standards has led to activities to reinforce these skills being provided in most lessons. As a result, students make good rates of progress. They read with increasing confidence and can apply mathematical concepts across subjects. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to support students to make rapid improvements in their literacy and numeracy skills during their first year at the school.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well compared to their peers nationally.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress and achieve significantly better than similar students in other schools. There is little difference in the performance of ethnic groups.
- There are no gaps between the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium and others at the school. In 2012, they achieved GCSE results in English and mathematics that were above those of other students at the school and significantly above similar students nationally. In 2013, they achieved GCSE results in line with other students at the school.
- Students are entered early for examinations in mathematics and science to build confidence and identify where further support is needed. They achieved final grades in line with their capabilities in 2013. The school is currently reviewing this strategy.
- Students studying vocational courses using off-site providers make good progress, including in English and mathematics. Regular assessments ensure that they are on track to obtain entry to higher level courses whenever possible.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good throughout the school, with some that is outstanding. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and quickly engage the interest of students. As a result, relationships are positive and students make good progress.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers use effective questioning to establish understanding and address any misconceptions. They provide high quality feedback to help students identify and carry out the next steps in order to improve. This ensures students make good progress.
- Many teachers make effective use of regularly updated assessment information. This helps them to target teaching interventions and additional support from teaching assistants. As a result, disabled students, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding, make at least good progress from their starting points. Students who speak

English as an additional language benefit from intensive teaching interventions on their arrival at the school. As a result, some make accelerated rates of progress very quickly.

- Teaching is not outstanding overall because there is still some that is less than good. Not all teachers take account of students' different starting points when they plan activities. This means that the more able students sometimes find that the work is too easy. Opportunities for independent learning are missed when students are required to complete the same work in the same way or are over reliant on the teacher directing them to the next task. Not all teachers mark work consistently or identify areas for further improvement. Consequently, some students fail to make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers have high expectations and are committed to helping students achieve their full potential. The new AIM (Achievement, Inspiration, Mentoring) programme offers additional support to older students to help them achieve aspirational targets.
- Opportunities for developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes are planned for, both in and outside of lessons. Students are therefore encouraged to develop a better awareness of the world and have high aspirations. Many make a strong contribution to community projects and school leadership roles.
- Students consider that they are taught well and appreciate how teachers support them to reach their individual targets. Parents and inspectors agree with their views.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is typically good. Students have positive attitudes towards learning, and movement around the school site is mostly well mannered. Individual differences in culture, lifestyles and backgrounds are respected. Diversity and equality values are rigorously upheld by the school's value statements. As a consequence, all students feel safe and valued.
- Teachers use effective strategies for managing behaviour when it is less than good. However, this occasionally means that students are not empowered to take full responsibility for their behaviour in lessons. Some students are overly passive or are reliant on teachers telling them what to do. The school is actively addressing this to ensure students develop greater independence in their learning behaviours.
- Students recognise that standards of behaviour have improved due to the consistent application of the behaviour policy, increasingly effective systems for following up behaviour concerns and new reward schemes. Permanent and temporary exclusions rose last year as a result of better monitoring and a zero-tolerance approach to some types of behaviour. However, exclusions this year are lower than at the same point in the previous year and are below average compared to other schools.
- Attendance is now broadly average, as systems for monitoring and addressing persistent absence and poor attendance by a small number of students have been improved. All absenteeism is challenged, and support from other professionals is arranged where necessary. As a result, attendance levels have started to rise, but leaders recognise the importance of building on the current systems to improve attendance even further.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. Students and parents say that when it happens, it is followed up and dealt with appropriately by staff. Records support this view, although recording systems for defining the different types of bullying have still to be refined. Students are knowledgeable about bullying as a result of information provided in assemblies and lessons. They know where to go for support if they need help or advice.
- Effective support provided to students who attend off-site courses ensures that they attend regularly and behave well.
- Staff and parental responses to surveys indicate that they have few concerns about behaviour. Evidence gathered by inspectors agreed with this view.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has worked relentlessly since her appointment to bring about sustainable improvements across the school. She has successfully embedded a culture of high aspirations, underpinned by high levels of respect, equality of opportunity and good team work. She is ably supported by other senior leaders and the governing body who share her ambitious plans for the future of the school.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas still requiring improvement. They have correctly identified that they need to work more closely with parents and the local community to ensure that the school can increase in size. They are closely monitoring new systems for improving behaviour and raising attendance to ensure that recent improvements are maintained. They are aware that new middle leaders will require support to start to raise achievement levels in some subjects.
- Systems for monitoring teaching standards are rigorously applied. Professional training opportunities link closely to teachers' development needs and teachers value the high quality professional development and support they receive. However, the headteacher and governors take decisive action when standards fail to improve. This has resulted in recent changes to some middle leadership roles.
- Student achievement and the progress of individuals and groups are effectively tracked using detailed assessment information. Senior and middle leaders use this to hold all teachers to account for the progress students make in their lessons. Teaching interventions are then adjusted to meet the different needs of individuals. The impact of this can be seen in students' improving results.
- The curriculum is good. It provides an appropriate balance of academic and arts subjects. Students are given high quality information, advice and guidance to help them choose appropriate courses to enable them to study higher level courses at college when they leave. Where students study vocational courses at alternative providers, managers ensure that these also lead to post-16 opportunities and meet the individual needs of students successfully. As a result, the number of students who are not in education, employment or training when they leave the school is very low.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. This includes appropriate training for designated staff and keeping students safe when at school or attending off-site activities.
- Staff and parents consider that the school is well led. Inspectors agree.
- Leaders, including governors, consider that the local authority provides them with strong support to make improvements. This has included helping the school to review the standard of teaching within specific departments in order to agree any further actions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are passionate about making rapid improvements and are determined that the school's successes are increasingly valued by the local community. As standards rise and the extensive building programme ends, they are optimistic that the number of students selecting the school will increase. They have ensured that the school's financial position is now secure and have established a trust to support any further growth. The governing body is well informed and holds school leaders strongly to account for raising standards. Detailed reports from the headteacher and presentations from faculty leaders ensure that they know how much progress individuals, groups and classes are making. They make regular visits and use assessment information to measure how students achieve compared to their peers in other schools. Governors are robust in applying performance management systems to ensure that any inadequate teaching is quickly addressed. They ensure that any salary progression reflects how successful teachers have been in meeting their performance targets. They effectively monitor the pupil premium and catch-up funding to make sure it is raising achievement for eligible students.

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 pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils 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 pupils' needs. Pupils 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 pupils 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	131690
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	433132

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	567
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Flora Goldhill
Headteacher	Diana Osagie
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 June 2011
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