School report

Inspection of City of London Academy Highbury Grove

8 Highbury Grove, Islington, London N5 2EQ

Inspection dates:	26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Sixth-form provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy and safe. They said that this was because behaviour in class and around the school has improved. Pupils look out for each other. They enjoy being part of a school community that is so diverse. Pupils appreciate the work the school does to support the local community, for example through the food bank. Pupils collaborate in year groups to raise money for a charity of their choice.

Pupils said that teachers plan and deliver lessons that engage and challenge them. Sixth-form students said that teachers listen to their views. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' uniform, attitudes and work. Typically, the school is a calm environment in which pupils can learn without disruption. On occasions, pupils feel that teachers give out detentions for relatively minor issues. The school has clamped down on bullying. Pupils said that when they report incidents, these are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. This makes pupils more confident to raise any concerns.

Leaders have developed a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities. These happen before and after school. These include sports as well as robotics and electronics.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Subject leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum that is broad and balanced. They expect all pupils to access this. This extends into the inclusive sixth-form provision. Pupils can choose A-level or vocational courses. They are well guided in making their choices.

The quality of curricular thinking is consistent across the school. Subject leaders have thought carefully about what they teach and when they teach it. They ensure that this content becomes more challenging over time. For example, in modern foreign languages, pupils learn vocabulary about themselves in Year 7. Year 9 pupils learn more complex language about the environment. Their use of grammar also becomes more sophisticated over time.

Leaders design the curriculum so that key knowledge and skills are revisited. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned. Teachers regularly employ activities that test pupils' memory. In the sixth form, teachers set homework based on learning from the previous year. Students find this approach helpful. Teachers expect them to read widely outside lessons.

Teachers constantly assess pupils' understanding of the curriculum. They provide written feedback and then pupils redraft their work to make improvements. Extra support is provided to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that they can complete the same work as their peers. Teachers break down the learning into smaller steps. While the help from most teachers for pupils with SEND is effective, some is not. This affects these pupils' access to the

curriculum and the progress they make. In the sixth form, students practise past questions. Teachers advise them on the best revision strategies to use. Teachers have flexibility to adapt the curriculum to revisit content that pupils have not grasped.

The school assesses pupils' reading attainment on entry. Large numbers of pupils join the school during the year. Many need extra help with reading. Leaders recognise that face-to-face phonics teaching would be a helpful addition to the support they already provide. Recently, they have developed new strategies to promote reading for pleasure with younger pupils.

Pupils understand the school's behaviour system. Teachers apply it consistently. Typically, pupils engage well with their learning. On rare occasions, low-level disruption occurs in class. Pupils said that teachers deal with it swiftly.

The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils can attend clubs before or after school. They can access leadership opportunities through the student union. Students in Year 12 act as reading mentors for pupils who need extra help. They support staff who are on duty in the playground. In July, pupils in the lower school will take part in 'activities week'. This includes overseas trips, as well as London-based cultural opportunities.

The personal, social and health education programme is well planned and sequenced. Pupils learn to respect people of other faiths and backgrounds. Older pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They receive impartial careers advice and take part in work experience placements.

Leaders have worked hard to improve the school. Typically, parents and carers said that this is a school that is 'on the up.' Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders support them in their career development. They take account of staff workload and well-being. Governors have a strong understanding of their roles. Leaders know the school well and understand what they need to do to make further improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn how to be safe in and out of school as well as online. Teaching about sensitive topics such as consent is age appropriate. Leaders of safeguarding work closely with social services as well as child and adolescent mental health services.

Leaders have provided training for staff on topical safeguarding issues such as peer-on-peer sexual abuse and harassment. They create a culture of vigilance around safeguarding and a belief that, 'it could happen here'. All staff understand the local contextual safeguarding risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders plan the curriculum with high ambition for pupils with SEND. This ambition is not met in all lessons because some teachers do not make appropriate adaptations. This affects the progress of a small number of pupils with SEND. Leaders must ensure that their monitoring of classroom provision for pupils with SEND is more robust.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, significant numbers of pupils have found reading more challenging. While leaders provide additional help, this does not include face-to-face phonics instruction. Leaders must ensure that staff are trained to deliver phonics where needed. This will increase reading attainment and enable pupils to access the curriculum more readily.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144962
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10227601
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,178
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tijs Broek
Principal	Aimee Lyall
Website	www.highburygrove.cola.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status on 1 December 2017. It is part of the City of London Academies Trust.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider and an on-site alternative provision run by the trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with several senior staff, including the principal, the leader with responsibility for behaviour and safeguarding, the special educational needs coordinator and other members of the senior team. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body and the trust's chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to the leaders of computer science, geography, science and social sciences. They visited other lessons in personal, social and health education, and physics and psychology.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about reading.
- Inspectors observed behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and throughout the school day. Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their views of pupils' behaviour, and their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with members of the student union group who hold leadership positions in the school.
- Through conversations with leaders, pupils and staff, inspectors examined the effectiveness of safeguarding. Inspectors looked at records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks and records of work with external agencies.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, staff and pupils through Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Goddard	Ofsted Inspector
Ruth Dollner	Her Majesty's Inspector

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