

Central Foundation Boys' School

Cowper Street, City Road, London, EC2A 4SH

Inspection dates

3–4 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, together with governors, and leaders at all levels, has brought about rapid improvements in the school's performance since the last inspection.
- The headteacher's inspired leadership has been vital in raising the expectations of both staff and students.
- Students reach well-above-average standards and achieve outstandingly well overall.
- The students' achievement in English, mathematics and science is particularly strong.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. They enable all students to do as well as they can, and to make excellent progress.
- There is a wide range of courses, both academic and work-related. These meet the needs of students exceptionally well.
- The many activities outside the classroom are much appreciated by students. Music and sport are particularly strong.
- The large majority of students, including those who are disadvantaged, make rapid progress by comparison with the national picture.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are polite and respectful and wear their smart uniform with pride.
- Students feel extremely safe. They are confident that the adults in the school will support them very well.
- Middle leaders make a strong contribution to ensuring students make rapid progress.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Leaders are very diligent in ensuring that extremism has no place within the school. Students are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The sixth form is outstanding, largely because of the excellent leadership. As a result, students achieve highly and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training and employment.
- Governance is excellent. Members use their professional skills to the best advantage of the school. All statutory duties, including those for safeguarding, are met.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 40 lessons or parts of lessons. The large majority were observed jointly with a school leader.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, three governors, two representatives from the local authority and members of the school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's information on students' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, and the school's self-evaluation summary. Inspectors also scrutinised safeguarding policies, records of checks on the suitability of staff and other adults to carry out their roles in the school, and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). An inspector also held a telephone conversation with a parent.
- In addition, inspectors took account of the 31 responses to a questionnaire for members of staff.
- Inspectors talked to students about the school's work and listened to some students reading in class.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Valerie Houldey	Additional Inspector
Sonette Schwartz	Additional Inspector
Meena Wood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized secondary school. Girls are admitted to the sixth form and account for just under one in five of its population. The sixth form is part of the Islington Sixth Form Consortium which comprises this school and three other secondary schools.
- Eighty per cent of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is well above the national average, with the largest groups being of Bangladeshi and Black African heritages. One in seven students are of White British heritage. Just under two thirds of students speak English as an additional language and this proportion is also well above the national average.
- Almost three quarters of students are eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, which is well above average. In this school, the funding is used to support students who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- One in five students are disabled or have special educational needs, which is above average.
- The school does not use alternative training providers.
- The school was founded in 1866 and is currently located in a Grade 2 listed building, which presents a number of challenges in terms of maintenance and repair.
- In 2014 the school met the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers consistently provide students with:
 - more detailed, clear and precise written feedback on how to improve their work
 - work that deepens the knowledge and understanding of the most able students so that they achieve the very highest grades at GCSE and A level.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior staff and governors have a passion and determination to help every student excel in their academic studies and personal development. They have established an ethos where high-quality teaching and care have enabled students' behaviour and learning to flourish.
- Since his appointment, the headteacher has been relentless in his drive for the highest standards in all aspects of the school's work. There has been clear improvement since the last inspection. He has extremely high expectations, and challenges students and staff equally in the pursuit of the highest standards. Staff morale is high, as seen in the very positive responses to staff questionnaires. As one member of staff commented, 'There's great energy among the students, who are motivated to aim high'.
- Staff spoke very highly of the quality of training they had received, which is tailored to their individual needs and career development. Leaders and governors ensure that systems for managing staff performance and setting targets are thorough, and that any salary increases are linked directly to students' achievement.
- The broad range of courses, both academic and work-related, meets students' needs exceptionally well. The many extra activities, trips and residential visits, both overseas and in the United Kingdom, ensure students are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, the huge number of sporting fixtures, concerts and musical productions promotes students' health and mental well-being. Currently many students volunteer to prepare for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Over a quarter of all students take part in musical activities each week.
- The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. The well-planned assembly and tutorial programme covers a wide range of topics such as e-safety and homophobic bullying. It gives students a mature appreciation of people who have different beliefs or who have different lifestyles from their own.
- Middle leaders make a strong contribution in ensuring students make rapid progress. Well-considered training has improved their skills in making regular checks on the quality of teaching and reviewing of students' progress.
- There is excellent leadership of the provision both for disadvantaged students and for those with difficulties in learning. For example, literacy and numeracy development is closely tracked and supported so all students have equal access to the curriculum.
- Leaders have ensured that every student can access all the school's activities. They rigorously tackle any discrimination and remove barriers to achievement. Students have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills through taking on responsibilities. For example, they act effectively as members of the school council and as sports and choir captains. There is also a buddying system, in which older students provide help and support for younger ones.
- Students receive excellent advice about their career options, training and employment opportunities from Year 7 onwards. Visits to leading universities further broaden their outlook and heighten their ambitions.
- Leaders have ensured that there are highly effective safeguarding and child protection procedures in place to help all students and staff to be safe. Leaders are very active in ensuring that extremism has no place in the school.
- The local authority provides light touch, but effective, support and advice which have had a very positive impact on students' achievement. The school is highly regarded by local authority officers. For example, the headteacher's expertise and advice are often called upon to support new headteachers in the borough.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is excellent. Governors are passionate about providing an education that ensures every student achieves their best.
 - The membership of the governing body is drawn from a wide field of professional expertise and experience, which includes art and design, architecture, education, finance, human resource management and local government. This expertise gives governors great confidence in challenging senior leaders and holding them to account. Their understanding and interpretation of statistics are particularly impressive and they are very aware of how the school is performing by comparison with the national picture.
 - Governors receive regular reports from senior leaders about the quality of teaching. They visit lessons and, while they do not make judgements about the quality of teaching, they are fully involved in discussions about the lessons they see. As a result, they have a well-informed and up-to-date picture of the quality of teaching. Governors take part in all interviews when subject and senior leaders are recruited, and they observe candidates teaching.

- Procedures for managing performance and setting targets for staff are thorough. Governors are actively involved in ensuring that decisions about salary increases for staff are firmly linked to students' progress, and in ensuring that effective teaching is rewarded.
- Governors are shrewd in managing the school's finances. They examine particularly well the use and impact of additional government funding for disadvantaged students.
- Governors are well trained and regularly attend the local authority's programme of governor training. This enables them to ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding and child protection. Governors have been particularly active in productive discussions surrounding the future of the school buildings.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding in lessons and around the school site. They are courteous and respectful. They take care of their appearance and wear their smart uniform with pride.
- Students enjoy very supportive relationships with each other and work well with teachers and teaching assistants. Staff and students develop positive working relationships based on respect and trust. This makes a firm platform for students to go on to make outstanding progress.
- Attendance is above national figures for secondary schools. Leaders have been particularly successful in ensuring that students who find coming to school difficult, attend well. Fixed-term exclusions have fallen markedly over the past two years and the school's information indicates that these are now below national averages. There has been one permanent exclusion in the last academic year.
- Under the leadership of the headteacher, the close links between pastoral care and academic studies support students in fulfilling their potential. In the case of any serious misbehaviour, senior leaders jointly consider how severe the sanctions should be, and that they are in the best academic interests of the student.
- The school council actively supports democracy and is a force for change. For example, following the suggestion of council members, the gym is now open at lunchtimes so that Year 7 and Year 11 students can take part in sporting activities.
- Of those parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, almost all believe the school manages behaviour well.
- Students have a mature appreciation of the views of different people and the school encourages respect for differing faiths and cultures. For example, there is a prayer room and changes are made to the timetable for Muslim students during Ramadan. The headteacher regularly attends these prayer sessions. Students are very proud of their school and, as one enthusiastically told inspectors, 'Teachers are top-notch.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- The school has robust systems to ensure all students and staff are safe, and the students who spoke to inspectors reported that they feel extremely safe in school.
- Awareness of safety issues is promoted extremely well in lessons, assemblies and tutor group times. Here such topics as homophobia, sex and relationships are openly discussed. As a result, students have a good awareness and understanding that homophobic and insulting remarks will not be tolerated.
- Students have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe whilst online, particularly when using social network sites.
- Students who spoke to inspectors reported that bullying is rare. When incidents occur they are dealt with appropriately through effective sanctions. Students said they have confidence in adults to deal with such situations.
- Checks on the suitability of staff to work with students are thorough, and records are routinely kept to ensure systems meet current requirements.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding. Over time, teachers' high expectations, excellent subject knowledge and their sheer drive to enable all students to do as well as they can have ensured that students' progress is excellent.

- Strong classroom routines, together with well-structured lessons, enable learning to go smoothly across all subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a highly effective programme for improving students' literacy, numeracy and reading skills. This has been as the direct result of leaders' skilful use of the additional government funding streams. Work to raise attainment in basic skills is a strong thread across all subject areas.
- Teachers' use of questioning and the development of students' communication skills are impressive, particularly for students with special educational needs, and for those developing their English language skills. Through highly effective questioning, teachers carefully tease out what students securely know and what aspects of their learning require further practice.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve extremely well, as a result of the excellent support they receive. Teaching assistants work closely with class teachers to plan activities and agree what support is needed, so that the needs of these students are met.
- Students who speak English as an additional language are extremely well taught by staff specially trained to teach English as a foreign language. They plan and use resources that really capture students' enthusiasm, and provide support to help the students acquire the necessary language skills in the classroom.
- The school has very effective systems in place for marking and assessing students' work. However, while books are regularly marked, and there is excellent practice in some departments, not all feedback in books is consistently excellent in all subjects. Also, in a small minority of lessons, activities do not always deepen students' knowledge and understanding to achieve the very highest grades at GCSE and A level.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Over the last three years, students' attainment has risen dramatically, particularly between 2012 and 2013. In 2014, 84% of all students achieved five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. The proportion was 29 percentage points above the national average.
- Students make exceptional progress in English and mathematics from when they enter the school in Year 7 until they take GCSE in Year 11. This is a result of a strong focus on promoting students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. As a result, in 2014 55% of students made good or better progress in English compared with 32% nationally. In mathematics, 55% of students made good or better progress compared with 29% nationally. Students performed particularly well in science.
- Over the past three years the performance of disadvantaged students and other students in the school has risen markedly, and is faster than that of students nationally. Over time, disadvantaged students from their different starting points have made similar progress to others in the school, and faster progress by comparison with other students nationally. At the end of Year 11 in 2014, they were half a GCSE grade below their peers in school in English. In comparison to other students nationally, they were almost half a grade above. In mathematics, the GCSE attainment of disadvantaged students in 2014 was two thirds of a grade behind that of others in the school and two thirds of a grade above that of other students nationally. The school's current progress information indicates that the gap in their performance has narrowed still further, with their rate of progress continuing to accelerate.
- Although the most able students make exceptional progress in the large majority of subjects, a few do not reach the very highest GCSE grades of which they are capable. In 2014, in English language, mathematics and science, a third of all students gained A and A* GCSE grades. Performance in the arts is a real strength. For example, almost two thirds of students in drama and almost half of all music students achieved A and A* grades. However, the proportions of A and A* grades were slightly below the national figures in English literature, geography and some of the subjects with smaller numbers of students. Leaders recognise this and have acted promptly to remedy the situation. The school's own information indicates that the achievement of the most able students is improving rapidly.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make excellent progress. This is due to the outstanding teaching and support they receive. Students who need additional help or who face challenging circumstances receive exceptional care to meet their needs. As a result of this support, they are able to overcome their barriers to learning and make outstanding progress also.
- School leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching, students' achievement, behaviour and safety. This ensures students are on the right courses, attend regularly and are well motivated, so that they make excellent progress.
- One in five students undertakes work-related courses in hospitality, media studies and information and communication technology. As a result of teachers' high expectations, students on these courses are well

motivated, enjoy their learning, make rapid progress and reach well-above-average standards.

- The use of additional government funding for Year 7 students who entered the school with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy is highly effective. In 2014, students' skills in these areas improved markedly, particularly for students who speak English as an additional language and White British students. As a result of specialist help with reading for three periods a week, and weekly booster lessons in mathematics, the progress of this group of students is speeding up. Almost two thirds of Year 7 students supported by this funding, were reading at the level expected of students two or more years below their age when they entered the school in 2013. At the end of Year 7 only a third was below the level expected at their age. On average, students make over two years' progress in their reading in the first year at the school.
- Students from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, make exceptional progress, which is similar to that of their classmates.
- In 2014, students were entered early for GCSE in core science, religious education and some community languages. This was a valuable experience for the most able students, most of whom attained high grades. Overall, the students achieved their challenging target grades.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- This outstanding sixth form is very well led. The leadership of the sixth form has very high expectations of what students can achieve. Leaders ensure that staff check that no student is left behind.
- Just under two thirds of Year 11 students proceed into the sixth form, with over a third going to other post-16 provision across London. The school recruits well over a third of its sixth form students from a range of different schools.
- Well-planned and tightly focused teaching activities stimulate students to achieve extremely well. Entry requirements are rigorous. Students are not admitted into the sixth form unless they have achieved five higher GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, and at least a grade B in subjects they wish to study at advanced level. This policy has been highly successful in ensuring students are on the right courses and make rapid progress.
- As a result of outstanding teaching, students achieve exceptionally well. In Year 13 there has been an upward trend of continuous improvement. In 2014, 87% of students gained A* to C grades. Almost half of them gained A* to B grades at A level, with just under one in five achieving a grade A. However, leaders recognise they need to support more students to gain the necessary grades required to go to the most selective universities. Nevertheless, the school's current information shows that over a third of current Year 13 students have been offered places at such universities.
- Attendance is good. Attitudes to learning are excellent. Students have responded well to the school's high expectations about individual study and use their time wisely to complete their work.
- There is a broad range of both academic and work-related courses in the sixth form. These are highly effective in enabling students to prepare well for the next stage of training, education or employment. In 2014, eight out of every ten students went to university. The most popular courses were information technology, science and business studies. All students proceeded to education, training or employment.
- The performance of Year 12 students has improved year on year. In 2014, Year 12 students achieved above the national average on the A to C measure for advanced subsidiary (AS) courses, with one in four students gaining A and B grades. However, not enough students achieved the highest grades, and the gap between disadvantaged students and others widened. As a result of decisive action, involving a renewed focus on completing homework and with clear expectations, the school's information indicates that progress in Year 12 is now much stronger, and gaps are narrowing.
- In 2014, there was strong performance in the work-related courses, particularly in art and design and computer science. Here students made rapid progress and achieved above-average examination results.
- In 2014, the proportion of students staying in school to move up from Year 12 to Year 13 was above average, and has improved still further this year.
- The carefully planned personal development programme gives students an excellent understanding of how to stay safe in a variety of situations. For example, topics covering 'sexting' and 'grooming' help students to keep safe whilst online and using social media. The school is very diligent in ensuring that no extremist views are promoted among the students.
- The school's extensive programme of enrichment activities plays a significant part in developing students' confidence, leadership and employability skills. Sixth form students make a strong contribution to supporting the well-being of younger students.
- The school works in partnership with a national law firm and educational charity to provide subject

tutoring for over a half of the Year 12 and 13 students. This partnership has had a significant impact on student outcomes.

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	100458
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	453316
Type of school	Secondary
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	912
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Gurney
Headteacher	Jamie Brownhill
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 November 2010
Telephone number	020 7253 3741
Fax number	020 7336 7295
Email address	info@cfbs.islington.sch.uk

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