

Wren Academy

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 135507 |
| Local Authority | N/A |
| Inspection number | 363003 |
| Inspection dates | 1–2 February 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Emma Ing HMI |

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

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Academy |
| School category | Non-maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11–15 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 510 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Dr Priscilla Chadwick |
| Principal | Michael Whitworth |
| Date of previous school inspection | N/A |
| School address | Hilton Avenue North Finchley London N12 9HB |
| Telephone number | 020 8492 6000 |
| Fax number | 020 8492 6010 |
| Email address | firstcontact@wrenacademy.org |

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. A total of 23 teachers were seen teaching 24 lessons and many others observed at work during the academy day. Inspectors further observed learning in two assemblies, three tutorial sessions and many enrichment activities. A very wide range of students' work was taken into consideration.

Meetings were held with different staff and groups of staff and with different groups of students and with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of the academy's documentation including:

- self-evaluation documents, including their analyses of their internal data
- planning documents
- policies
- risk assessments
- record keeping
- data tracking students' progress.

Inspectors considered carefully the responses made to our questionnaire by 261 parents and carers, and by staff and students.

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

- How effective has the academy leadership been in delivering improvements whilst managing the growth in student numbers and staff?
- How well does the academy meet the needs of individual students and those of particular groups, with especial reference to those of Black British heritage and those with medical needs?
- How well has the specialism and partnerships beyond the school benefited students and local community?

In addition, in response to concerns raised by a few of the parents and carers who responded to our questionnaire, the team considered the discipline in the academy and the way in which the academy communicates with parents and carers.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2008 with 165 Year 7 students and has admitted a further cohort each September since. There are now 510 pupils on roll in Years 7, 8 and 9. The main sponsor is the London Diocesan Board for Schools and the co-sponsor is Berkhamsted School, a co-educational independent school. The academy's specialism is in design and the built environment. It is a Church of England school.

Over 30 ethnic groups are represented at the academy, the most numerous being White British who comprise 25% of the pupil population. All other ethnic groups are all significantly smaller in number. Four learners are at an early stage of acquiring English.

A higher than average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, but many others come from relatively affluent backgrounds. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average. The needs of these students vary, but include a significant number with autistic spectrum disorder and others with behavioural and social difficulties and/or medical needs.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Wren Academy provides an outstanding and broad education for all its students. The expectations that the academy has of its students are consistently high. Excellent support, excellent teaching and a carefully tailored curriculum enable students to meet and exceed these.

The wonderful buildings at Wren have an important impact on the academy's identity, the students' sense of security and on their appreciation of design and the built environment. Design and communication through design, together with spirituality and Christian values, permeate the life of the academy.

At Wren, everyone is a leader and everyone is a learner. The extent to which students and staff all contribute to the leadership of the academy and take their responsibilities to others seriously is very impressive. Students themselves play a very important part in determining the course of their academy. Some sit on the academy leadership team or act as advisers on teaching or green issues; others lead on research projects on aspects of school life, such as hygiene, or lead parts of lessons, enrichment periods or sports teams. Year 9 students are very conscious of the importance of their role in inducting new students and acting as role models.

In lessons, students demonstrate exceptional skills of leadership, teamwork, and reflection on their own and others' learning. Their class work is supplemented by very high-quality homework, known at Wren as home learning. An unusually high proportion of lessons are outstanding and most other lessons are good. Students are very active participants in lessons. They enjoy their work and the fun activities through which they learn. As a consequence, they make outstanding progress and reach high standards in their academic work.

Students' behaviour is impeccable both in lessons where they work with vigour and more generally around the school. The atmosphere in the restaurant, where staff and students congregate for refreshments, and in the play areas is relaxed and friendly. The high standards of behaviour demanded by the academy strongly contribute to the success and well-being of students.

Although it appears effortless and calm, the achievements of the academy, like the high quality of the learning in individual lessons, are underpinned by thorough planning, strong analysis of performance data, collaboration and vision. The Principal, the governors and their leadership teams are quietly determined that every

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student at Wren will fulfil their potential. They have developed systems, processes and the capacity of staff to ensure success and pay close attention to detail. They evaluate their progress against targets effectively.

In addition to planning for a sixth form and new buildings to host it, introducing Key Stage 4, and increasing student and staff numbers by a third, the academy has significantly improved the quality of teaching, introduced excellent new systems for gathering and analysing data, and developed leadership. These improvements demonstrate that the academy has exceptional capacity for further development.

Parents and carers are, in general, very pleased with the education offered by the academy. Their views can be summed up by the comments of one who wrote: 'My daughter feels very proud to be at Wren. She has blossomed academically, socially and in confidence since joining Wren...I love the way Wren has recognised her strengths and is opening new horizons for her.' A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree with the statement in our questionnaire that the school takes account of their suggestions or concerns. While there is evidence that the academy does work very well with a number of parents and carers, and that there is good practice in relation to this, it is clear from this response that there is work to be done to ensure that there is excellent two way communication between parents and carers and the academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen relationships with parents and carers by providing more opportunities for them to share in, celebrate and contribute to their children's and the school's successes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons students talk about their own and other's learning very constructively. They excel at sharing ideas and listening to and building on the ideas of others. They are supportive of each other and readily engage in developing hypotheses and thinking things through. They respond well to teachers' probing questions. They enjoy their learning and participate with enthusiasm. As a consequence, they make outstanding progress and the standards that they reach are high across the whole curriculum.

An important feature of Wren Academy is that no student is allowed to fail. Measures are put in place to ensure that every student is given the individual support that they need to participate fully in the life of the academy: the lessons, the learning, the trips and the enrichment programme. Those students whose medical needs mean that adjustments have to be made to enable them to participate in activities or particular lessons have these needs extremely well met. Black British students are well supported and in several curriculum areas specific thought has been given on how to

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ensure that they and other groups, such as boys, can be encouraged to achieve even more. Because teachers plan very well for individual learning and because they use open-ended tasks and well-thought-out questions, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress, particularly in Year 9 where their progress outstrips that of their peers. Support staff contribute strongly to the excellent progress made by this group and those with additional learning needs through their work in lessons and with individual students.

The academy is careful to ensure that all students benefit from its resources. Through the enrichment activities which take place for an hour three days a week, individual students are able to pursue interests, develop new skills, undertake different learning and participate in catch-up sessions. The range of opportunities is impressive, as is the care with which staff ensure that some students are nudged into undertaking new things or courses which will specifically benefit them, such as sport, courses about healthy lifestyles or catch-up sessions. As a result, all students undertake exercise regularly; they have a great understanding of how to live healthily and a mature attitude to taking decisions about lifestyle issues.

Students very much value the fact that that they feel safe and well cared for at the academy. The range of skills that they learn in lessons and during enrichment periods, such as investigation, collaboration, analysis, presentation skills, reflection, leadership, and their exceptional ability to comport themselves well mean that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives and for entering the world of work.

Students at Wren are very reflective and engage with compassion and insight in discussion about moral issues and current affairs. They have an excellent grounding in Christianity and a strong respect of other religious traditions. They are very open to and aware of different cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 1 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 1 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |

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

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| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

How effective is the provision?

The teaching at Wren is stunning. Lessons are devised to encourage students to hypothesise, make connections, develop ideas and present their thinking in original ways. In geography, for example, students were asked to deduce from pictorial evidence why some people live near volcanoes and then pool their thinking to build a fuller understanding. Teachers use detailed assessment information extremely cleverly to ensure that the individual learning needs of every student are met, either by specific questions or by tailored support. They also demand that students assess their own and other's work in order to help them appreciate how to improve it. As a consequence of these approaches, students spend a lot of time thinking deeply and inspectors overheard powerful learning conversations as students tried to work out for themselves the answers to questions or, as in a French lesson, the meaning of a phrase. The tasks that students are set are generally imaginative and often involve a wide range of incidental learning. For example, in creating books for younger children the key skills group developed a wide range of skills, developed their ability to analyse design and learned about child development. Within this broad picture of excellence, the very best lessons are planned to enable students to direct much of their own learning.

The curriculum is very well designed to promote outstanding outcomes for all students, who have been heavily involved in its design. Strong partnerships with primary schools ensure effective progression in learning and there are appropriately tailored programmes to meet different needs and aspirations. The school's specialism in design and the built environment imaginatively provides memorable learning experiences for wider personal development and understanding of issues facing the local and international community. It is well embedded in lessons across the curriculum and links subjects. As a result, students demonstrate exceptional awareness of design and construction. Focus days and other events provide opportunities for students to learn from people working in industry and the public sector to enhance their aspirations and understanding of the world of work. Enrichment activities ensure that students have lots of additional opportunities to have fun and develop skills.

The care for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable is excellent. The individual needs department provides thorough and proactive support to students with special educational needs, medical needs and whose personal circumstances are complex. Their record keeping is very thorough and persistent contact is made with other agencies in order to secure necessary provision and support. Decisions about when to support an individual and when to 'step back' are

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sound and helpful. Several parents expressed great satisfaction at the way their child's special needs are met by the academy; one, for example, pointed out that the structure of the day is very supportive to her child who has autistic spectrum disorder.

The impact of strategies to address lapses in the behaviour of some individuals, which have been wide ranging and have included finding mentors from the local community, is seen very clearly in the low rates of recurrence. Students are known and cared for very vigorously. The care and willingness of staff to support them and not to allow them to fail is well understood by students. Student services staff, the body of teaching assistants and others that deliver much of the support given to individual students, feel very well supported by senior leaders. The systems put in place to secure their professional development are exemplary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

In the eleven months since the last Ofsted monitoring visit, senior leaders led by the Principal, have:

- radically transformed teaching such that it is now outstanding
- significantly developed the use of assessment to ensure that the individual needs of all students are well met in the classroom
- driven huge improvements in the quality of support offered by teaching assistants
- developed sophisticated systems for analysing data to ensure excellent progress and participation of all students
- enabled students, staff in student services, teachers and middle leaders to join them in maintaining leadership roles and driving the academy in the delivery of its aims
- ensured that students are thoroughly safe, that they enjoy their education and that no individual student is left behind.

They have also maintained the growth of the academy, welcoming a new year group, introducing Key Stage 4 and planning for the new sixth form. There are excellent systems in place that are well understood by the whole community to ensure that everyone is safe. Everyone's wellbeing is considered and protected and no one suffers discrimination. Risk assessment procedures are thorough and regularly reviewed by the link governor. Where the data present possible anomalies, for

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example, that one group is appearing to fall behind in a subject, prompt action is taken to rectify the concern.

These achievements have been possible because there is a shared vision and excellent team work. Wren Academy has a strong sense of its own identity. Staff comment that they feel part of a team, valued and respected. They feel that the Principal is approachable and that their ideas can be used to benefit the school. They understand their roles and lead well, demonstrating commitment to their personal development and to the support of colleagues.

The governing body has taken an important strategic role in determining what the academy should be like. Governors are appropriately involved in supporting decision-making about the development of the curriculum and the sixth form, and have been able to hold school leaders to account against the academy's targets. Governors take an active interest in the school and visit regularly. Recently they conducted a self-assessment of their work and correctly identified the need for them to develop their outreach to parents.

The academy has considered its role in developing community cohesion and has put in place a plan focusing on priority areas. The academy has a very wide range of partnerships and links with other organisations, such as with a schools and teachers in a range of different countries including China and South Korea, links with construction companies and with the wider Christian community. It has further links with its co-sponsor, a local independent school. These all enrich the lives of students and the partner organisations. The academy has not, however, systematically evaluated the impact of these links on community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

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Views of parents and carers

Although most parents and carers were very positive about all aspects of the academy's provision, parents' and carers' views about discipline were more mixed. Comments from a very few parents and carers indicated that they are concerned that the discipline within the school is heavy handed. As a result of these comments, the inspection team looked carefully at discipline policy and practice in the school. They found that the academy has firm rules and that staff have high expectations of students' behaviour and will pick up on any student who fails to meet these. Behaviour at the academy is excellent and very few students find themselves on the wrong side of the rules; those that do are well supported to enable them to conform in future. Students themselves say that they really appreciate the clear rules and boundaries. They told inspectors that these rules enable them to feel safe and to make excellent progress in their learning. The team therefore shared the view, expressed by many parents and carers that, to quote a parent, the academy is 'strict in order to ensure that all students can fulfil their potential'.

A very small minority of parents and carers expressed the view that the school is not good at taking into account their suggestions and concerns. This was explored with the academy. The team found many examples of good practice in relation to the way the academy has worked with individual parents and carers to secure good outcomes for their children and has responded to suggestions with parents and carers. There is growing use of academy's website, called 'Fronter', to communicate with parents and carers and this is being further developed. Nevertheless, it is clear from parental responses that there is more work to be done to ensure that all parents and carers feel confident that their views are heard and that they and the school are able to work in partnership to support their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wren Academy 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 261 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 510 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 108 | 41 | 136 | 52 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 161 | 62 | 97 | 37 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 111 | 43 | 117 | 45 | 27 | 10 | 3 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 115 | 45 | 119 | 46 | 13 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 125 | 48 | 120 | 46 | 10 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 94 | 36 | 121 | 47 | 35 | 13 | 5 | 2 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 81 | 31 | 158 | 61 | 19 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| 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) | 89 | 35 | 127 | 50 | 15 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 87 | 33 | 143 | 55 | 13 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 153 | 59 | 92 | 35 | 12 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 58 | 23 | 130 | 51 | 39 | 15 | 11 | 4 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 124 | 48 | 116 | 44 | 11 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 139 | 53 | 108 | 41 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

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 | 59 | 35 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary schools | 9 | 44 | 39 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 13 | 36 | 41 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Special schools | 35 | 43 | 17 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 21 | 42 | 29 | 9 |
| All schools | 13 | 43 | 37 | 8 |

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 2009 to 31 August 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 2009/10 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.

3 February 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Wren Academy, North Finchley, N12 9HB

Thank you for welcoming us and being so open in sharing your views when we inspected Wren Academy earlier this month. We were thrilled to see what wonderful progress you are making both in your studies and as resourceful, resilient and independent thinkers. Clearly, you attend an outstanding school! There is a great deal that I could write about the excellence that is achieved by Wren but I will confine myself to those things that I found most exciting and most impressive.

- Your fantastic learning and the conversations that you had with each other constructing hypotheses, thinking things through and offering carefully considered feedback on performance.
- Your leadership skills and the high level of participation that you have in the leadership of the academy.
- Your ability to reflect and your engagement with moral, social and spiritual issues. We were most impressed by the crosses that you had designed and made and by the murals around the building.
- The fact that no one is allowed to fail, everyone gets a chance to join in, and that, when things go wrong or get difficult for you, teachers and support staff are quick to help and find solutions.
- The friendly and supportive atmosphere in the restaurant, the play areas and in lessons.
- The outstanding teaching that takes place in so many lessons and the commitment shown by all staff to their own learning.
- The difference that the academy's specialism makes to you all in your appreciation of design, your ability to analyse and your preparedness for the world of work.

We were also very impressed by your teachers and the senior leaders of the academy, including, of course, the Principal and governors. We were a little concerned that a few parents and carers felt that the academy is not good at taking account of their suggestions and concerns. For this reason we have asked the academy to strengthen relationships with parents and carers by providing more opportunities for them to share in, celebrate and contribute to your success and that of the school. I hope that many of you will take the time to read my full report not least because you will find much there that sings your praises and celebrates the work of your teachers and support teams. You will find it on our website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing
Her Majesty's Inspector

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