

# The Charter School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131812
<b>Local Authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	341225
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Sage HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,073
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Garvey
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Sheppard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Red Post Hill London SE24 9JH
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They looked at the school's policies, records of meetings, student records, 271 parental questionnaires, 65 staff questionnaires and 123 student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- trends of improvement in students' achievements, particularly for specific groups of students
- evidence for improvements in the proportion of good and better teaching
- the impact of changes to the curriculum
- the school's systems for monitoring students' achievements, attitudes and attendance and linking this to departmental and other reviews.

## Information about the school

The Charter School is slightly larger than average with more boys than girls in all year groups; the school has many more applications than places available. The school was established by parent action in 2000. The vast majority of students live within just over one mile of the school and most walk or cycle to school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average, but the proportion of these students with statements of special educational need is high. The school's intake is from a diverse range of cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds with a significant proportion from disadvantaged circumstances. About half the students are from a wide range of different minority ethnic groups; the proportion with English as an additional language is in line with the national average. The school became a business and enterprise college in September 2005 and was awarded high performing specialist school status in April 2009 with science as a second specialism. The school works with a large number of partners to support the curriculum and other aspects of its work.

**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

The Charter School is an outstanding and extremely harmonious school that cares exceptionally well for its students. There is a powerful culture of continuous improvement in the school, driven by the headteacher, the school's senior leadership team and the governing body; students, parents and carers, and teachers report that the school has improved year on year.

Overall, students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. However, the proportion of students obtaining five top GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has increased steadily each year for four years and is now above the national average. The attainment of particular groups, such as Black Caribbean boys, has also improved. Students make good progress, with no significant differences for specific groups, as a result of mostly good teaching and excellent monitoring. Students' progress in approximately one in five lessons is satisfactory.

The outcomes for students overall are good, but with some aspects that are outstanding. The extent to which students feel safe is very high. Safeguarding procedures are strong and the quality of support for the most vulnerable students is exceptional. The highly inclusive nature of the school owes much to the contributions students make. One example of many is the high quality and extent of peer mentoring. Behaviour is very good and often outstanding. The school has low tolerance of poor behaviour and there are effective systems for dealing with incidents that arise. However, the number of such incidents prevents behaviour from being outstanding. The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being is good. The school has made very good efforts to develop students' key skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT), but the use of these is not fully embedded across the school. Students have not fully developed the skills that enable them to work independently.

An outstanding curriculum ensures that individual needs are met exceptionally well. The impact of this can be seen in the outcomes for students; some aspects need a little longer to become fully embedded and have their full impact on all students' achievements. The care, guidance and support given to all students are exceptional. The school has, and receives, many students who present significant challenges, but they are integrated exceedingly well. There are many examples of how the school has dramatically improved the life chances of some of its most vulnerable students. Diversity is valued highly and the school is extremely successful in ensuring equality

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of opportunity.

The school's exemplary monitoring and analysis of students' achievements, attitudes to learning and attendance are used to target highly effective interventions. Departmental reviews systematically monitor the quality of teaching and assessment and the effectiveness of the curriculum. These reviews are fully integrated with student monitoring to ensure that the leadership and management of teaching and learning are outstanding. The school sets high aspirational targets at the whole-school, department, individual teacher and student levels. These targets are understood well by all concerned and contribute to the improvements that the school has made. As a result of these factors, the school has outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The outcomes for students are good overall and improving, with some outstanding features. Almost all students progress to higher education. All aspects of the quality of the provision are at least good. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and have outstanding capacity to secure and sustain further improvements.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase further the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
  - use students' responses to questions to develop key teaching points and draw other students into discussions
  - recognise the level of students' skills, including key skills and personal learning and thinking skills, in planning lessons.
- To enable students to make the most of lessons, improve further:
  - their skills in working independently and in managing their own learning
  - the development and use of key skills in all aspects of their work.
- Reduce further the number of incidents of poor behaviour.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Overall, students' attainment is average. The school has been successful in securing improvements in attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 over four years, particularly in the proportion of students achieving top grades in GCSE examinations. There have been improvements in English, mathematics and science, and in the attainments of specific groups of students.

All students make at least good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The very large majority of students are keen to do well, respond well to the aspirational targets that are set for them and demonstrate good, and often outstanding, attitudes to learning in lessons. Levels of enjoyment were

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particularly noticeable in mathematics where students’ achievement has risen steadily.

Five of the other outcomes are outstanding and a number of features are particularly noteworthy. The extent to which students feel safe is very high; this is supported by the views of their parents and carers. Students’ contributions to many aspects of the school contribute significantly to its inclusive nature and impressively harmonious environment. Students fully recognise and respect the needs of others and many actively support their peers and younger students through peer mentoring and through their general attitudes and demeanour. In many ways the behaviour of students in lessons and around the school is outstanding. However, the number of incidents that need to be dealt with, for example through internal exclusion, means that overall behaviour is good. The effective handling of these incidents by the school, so that their learning is not disrupted, is very much appreciated by students. Students are generally prepared well for their future economic well-being; attendance is high. This outcome for students is not outstanding because students’ key skills and their skills in working independently and managing their own learning are not fully developed and used across all aspects of their work.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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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## How effective is the provision?

The school has a highly coherent and relevant curriculum that leads to good achievement and some outstanding outcomes. The school has embedded personal learning and thinking skills across the curriculum with particularly strong examples in Year 7 and in diploma work in Year 10. The 'opening minds' curriculum in Year 7 provides students with memorable experiences, not least in speaking Mandarin. The development of key skills is embedded in the Year 9 curriculum and this is beginning to have an impact. The foundation and pathways curriculum in Key Stage 4 is exemplary in meeting the needs of individuals and groups of students. The school offers two diplomas that operate very effectively across the three pathways. Progression routes through 14–19 are clear and meet students' needs extremely well. Innovative approaches, including excellent use of a wide range of partnerships, are used well to enrich the curriculum. One example, from many, is the use of groups of lawyers to work with students on the legal aspects of citizenship. The school has used its specialist status to strengthen the curriculum well; partnerships established through business and enterprise benefit all curriculum areas. The second science specialism supports the school's focus on strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Teaching overall is good with more than three quarters of lessons at least good, with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers have access to a wide range of information about their students and use this well to plan lessons. Students receive useful feedback on their progress. The school is at a transitional stage and good teaching is often prevented from being outstanding because it is not yet fully exploiting the outstanding aspects of the curriculum or there is a delayed impact of embedding key and personal learning and thinking skills. For example, in some lessons potentially highly stimulating activities are not fully effective because the students do not have the independence or collaborative learning skills to participate at the high levels expected. One feature of satisfactory lessons is teachers not fully building on the responses of students to develop key teaching points or to engage other students in discussion.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is outstanding; the attention to the needs of individuals is an absolute strength of the school. All aspects of students' development are carefully monitored to ensure that any required interventions are swift and effective, making very good use of other agencies when required. The school provides exemplary support for its most vulnerable students. Teachers, parents and students all describe examples of how the school has dramatically improved the life chances of many individuals. The school balances extremely well the setting of very high expectations with the provision of high quality support. Examples of the impact of this are in improved behaviour and attendance.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The strength of the leadership provided by the headteacher, supported by the school’s senior leadership team, is a key element in the school’s improvement and its outstanding features. The school continually strives to secure and sustain further improvement in all aspects of its work. Challenging targets are set for the whole school, for each aspect and curriculum area, for teachers and for students. All concerned are clear about these targets and how to achieve them, and about the priorities for further improvement. One excellent example is the combination of exemplary student monitoring with systematic and thorough departmental and other reviews. This leads to complete clarity about where and what interventions are required and highly effective monitoring of the impact of these actions. Self-evaluation is, therefore, comprehensive, accurate and perceptive, and leads directly to improvement. The school is supported extremely well by the governing body that undertakes its critical friend role extremely rigorously; the headteacher and senior staff are challenged, supported and held to account well. The active involvement of parents and carers is a core value of the school. The school and the governing body use a range of often innovative approaches to ensure that all parents and carers are fully informed and are provided with opportunities to become involved in decision making and the further development of the school.

The school responds excellently to the wide diversity of the student body to place the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of everything it does; there is no evidence of any discrimination. The school has clear systems for identifying and remedying any gaps in provision or achievement. Safeguarding procedures, including partnerships with external agencies, are in many ways exemplary. A very small number of staff require a deeper understanding of specific health and safety procedures. The inclusive culture and ethos of the school extend beyond its gates and result in outstanding promotion of community cohesion; in many ways the school is at the heart of the local community. The school also uses its international links well to enrich students’ experiences and understanding of global issues.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

Most students in the sixth form make at least good progress. Examination results are steadily improving, with significant improvements in results at the end of Year 12. Students thrive and are highly supportive of each other. They make outstanding contributions to the life of the school and to the wider community through supporting younger students and actively participating in a wide range of activities. They mature into articulate, thoughtful young adults and provide excellent role models. Almost all progress to higher education.

Teaching in the sixth form is predominantly good and students are provided with rapid and constructive feedback on their work. The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of students extremely well. The high quality of care, guidance and support matches that in the rest of the school. Students are particularly well informed about progression routes and options in the sixth form to enable them to make well-informed decisions. Similarly, they have excellent advice about higher education and career paths.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The director of learning for the sixth form took up post in January 2008 and has already secured improvements in examination results and in the personal education programme for all students.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents responded well to the questionnaire with many replies covering more than one student. The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children’s experiences in the school. Parents feel strongly that their children enjoy school, feel safe, make good progress and are prepared well for their future. They have confidence in teachers and in the leadership and management of the school. They feel that the school sets and maintains high expectations and that incidents are dealt with well. Many comment on the inclusive nature of the school and the way it supports individual students well. The large majority of parents and carers feel that the school takes good account of their views, but some would like better communications with the school. The school accepts that it needs to improve communications with a small number of parents regarding specific issues, although generally communications are good.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Charter 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 271 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1073 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	148	55	105	39	15	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	156	58	100	37	8	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	142	52	100	37	16	4	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	124	46	118	44	14	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	117	43	137	51	7	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	103	38	124	46	27	10	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	78	29	145	54	32	12	4	1
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)	112	41	114	42	17	6	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	111	41	112	42	34	13	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	96	35	138	51	18	7	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	90	33	115	42	36	13	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	140	52	102	38	10	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	160	60	86	32	14	5	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.



6 November 2009

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Charter School, Southwark, London SE24 9JH**

I would like to thank all of you who spoke to us and answered our questions during the recent inspection of your school. Thanks also to those of you who completed the questionnaire; we found this very useful. Inspectors very much appreciated the help you gave us and were impressed by your attitudes and manner. Now that we have finished the inspection I am writing to tell you of our findings.

We judge the school to be outstanding. We are convinced that the school has improved in recent years and continues to improve; examination results are getting better. The following are our views of the strengths of the school and those features that could be further improved:

- We were particularly impressed by how well you all get on together in the school. Most of you enjoy school, show good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons; your behaviour around the school is very good.
- The school looks after you exceptionally well and keeps you safe; you feel confident in reporting any incidents and the school deals with these quickly. You feel that the school really cares for you and wants to see you do well.
- You are fully involved in the school; for example, through the school council, in helping each other and taking part in the various opportunities the school provides.
- The number of good and better lessons in the school has increased and the progress you make in most lessons is at least good.
- The school checks your progress extremely well and sets you clear targets to help you to learn and achieve.
- You have an excellent range of courses to choose from in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The pathways curriculum works particularly well in Years 10 and 11.
- The headteacher and senior leaders lead the school extremely well. They have good plans to make the school even better.

In order to improve further, we have asked the school to do the following:

- Make sure that all lessons meet your needs well so that you can all achieve even more, in particular by making sure that you have the skills to work independently.
- Help some of you to reduce even further the incidents of poor behaviour.

Yours sincerely  
James Sage HMI

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