

High School for History and Communication

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High School 294

**350 Grand Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Alex Shub

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

The school is in its second year and currently provides for students in the 9th and 10th grades. Over the next two years it will expand to include students in the full four grade of high school. Attainment on entry is lower than grade level for a high percentage of students with a significant proportion who arrive at the school with social and economic circumstances which impinge of their readiness to learn.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- This is a very good school in which students, many of whom face significant challenges in their personal lives, learn well and make good progress.
- Students are very proud of their school and it is held in high regard by parents, guardians and by the community.
- The school has high expectations of how well students will behave. They respond well to these expectations.
- Teachers provide students with interesting and challenging lessons. As a result they show enthusiasm for their learning and work hard.
- The support for students' personal, social and emotional development is of very high quality. As an outcome, they feel safe and well-cared for.
- The school's curriculum is innovative and provides students with a very good range of exciting learning opportunities. Teachers also take great care to ensure that the activities they provide are matched well to the needs of each student.
- Procedures to measure students' progress are good. Teachers use the information from assessment to modify their planning and teaching in order to build effectively on students' previous learning.
- The feedback given to students and the grading system is thorough and detailed. It provides students with helpful information about how they can improve.
- The principal provides inspirational leadership. He leads a hard working and dedicated team of staff very effectively. All staff are empowered to lead their own curriculum. They are fully committed to ensuring that students make progress to the best of their ability and become increasingly successful learners.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the existing very good curriculum to ensure that what is taught in lessons provides for the needs of the full range of abilities in each class. This is already a feature of the best teaching and classes.
- Ensure that teaching has a clear objective, which is shared with students so that they can share in the responsibility for their own learning and understand what they need to do to improve further.
- Provide opportunities for students to write for a wider range of purposes and audiences.
- Create formal opportunities for students and for parents, guardians and other stakeholders to express their views about the quality of education provided by the school.
- Establish procedures to evaluate all actions planned in terms of their impact on teaching and student learning.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school with many strengths.

Students achieve well and make good progress, often from very low starting points. These students face considerable challenges in their personal lives. The quality of the care and support offered to students is outstanding and supports their personal, social and emotional development very well indeed. Therefore, students behave well and develop great commitment to their learning. The quality of teaching and learning are good and the curriculum is matched very well to students' needs and abilities. The principal provides inspirational leadership and empowers others to take a lead in the schools work. He has successfully created a hard working and dedicated team of staff. They are fully committed to ensuring that students make progress to the best of their ability and become increasingly successful learners. Students are very proud of their school and it is held in high regard by parents, guardians and by the community.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

The school is successful in meeting all the quality indicators included in the New York City evaluation criteria, all are at least proficient and many are well-developed.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This aspect of the school's work is well-developed.

The knowledge and skills acquired by each student are assessed regularly and accurately. These procedures enable the school to have a clear picture of how well each student is making progress, both on a day-to day-basis and over longer periods of time. The grading of students' work makes a significant contribution to the good progress they make. This feedback is thorough and detailed and provides students with helpful information about how they can improve.

Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

The school's procedures for planning the next steps for the learning of each student are well-developed.

Teachers consider closely the stage reached by each student and they use these well to plan the next stages of learning. The individual goals are realistic and challenging, they are communicated to students so that they are clear about expectations, goals are also shared with parents. Teachers also frequently modify the style and content of their teaching to match the preferred learning style of each student. However, there is a need to ensure that the introduction to each lesson makes clear to students what they are expected to learn. There is also a need towards the end of lessons, to provide opportunities for students to review these expectations, identify what they have learned

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and to know what they need to do to improve further.

All students have access to a significant amount of advisory time. Students also have access to additional classes at the start and end of each school day. Teachers use these times very effectively for students to focus on their particular learning needs.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area is well-developed.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and since the culture of the school is one of continuous improvement, there are still some aspects for refinement and improvement.

Teachers work together very effectively to prepare the school's unique curriculum. The emphasis on an enquiry-based approach successfully encourages students to develop key intellectual skills, which they can apply in all areas of learning. Consequently, students are provided with a very good range of exciting learning opportunities. However, there is a need to build on this very good curriculum by ensuring that what is taught in all lessons consistently provides for the needs of the full range of abilities in each class. There is also a need to provide opportunities for students to write for a wider range of purposes and audiences. For example, some of these opportunities need to focus on the types of writing that students will use in their adult life, such as writing reports and letter writing.

Students behave well and are very committed to their learning; this creates a positive learning environment and helps them to succeed. Staff have high expectations of students' behavior and apply these expectations with total consistency. Teachers, under the very effective leadership of the principal, model expectations and this contributes to the progress made in their personal, social and emotional development. It is this aspect, more than anything else that underpins students' very good attitudes to their learning and is a significant factor in helping them to make good progress.

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This aspect of the school's work is well-developed.

Staff work hard as a team to ensure develop a culture, which upholds the school's aims, and mission statement. The principal provides inspirational leadership. The school has exciting plans designed to bring about continued improvement. However, there are no formal procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of what has been planned and implemented and it impacts on student achievement and learning. There are no formal procedures for gathering and responding to the views of all stakeholders; this may be a valuable way of gathering data, useful for school improvement.

Students enjoy being at the school and express their appreciation for the hard work of the staff. During the review, discussions with parents and guardians revealed their absolute support for the school's work.

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Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This aspect of the school's work is proficient, with many well-developed features.

The school has established good procedures for evaluating the progress of each student over time. The procedures enable any weaknesses to be promptly identified and arrangements are quickly put in place to bring about improvements, although there is more to be done to ensure that all teachers use this information to meet the needs of all students in class.

Modifications have been identified to portfolio procedures to ensure weaknesses both within and across classes will be identified, shared and addressed quickly. This has the potential to be a valuable tool to aid the continual drive to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.

Other key observations

The school works closely and very effectively with local partnership organisations. For example, the Greenwich Village Youth Council provides high quality individual support and guidance for students and the 'Facing History' organisation gives significant enrichment to the curriculum.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 			X
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>		X	
<p>1.1 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>		X	
Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	o	✓	+
<p>2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>			X
<p>2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as warranting attention.</p>			X
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			X
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>			X
<p>2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.</p>			X

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer- evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.	0	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			X