

Salford City Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135071
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	360685
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	627
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Roger Glew
Principal	Mr Mike Cording
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 lessons taught by different teachers and met groups of students and staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the academy's sponsors. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at the academy's self-evaluation form, development plan and analysis of students' achievement data. Inspectors also looked at the 57 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers plus questionnaire responses from staff and students.

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

- Whether the considerable rise in the 2010 Year 11 results reflects improving achievement across Key Stages 3 and 4 and if the apparent slower rate of improvement in English has accelerated during this academic year.
- The quality of teaching and whether it has improved sufficiently to be judged good and whether assessment is used well enough to enable students to improve the quality of their work and make better progress.
- Whether strategies to improve attendance have been successful especially in reducing the number of persistent absentees.
- Whether the considerable changes in leadership over the last year have impacted on the capacity for sustained improvement.
- The quality of provision in the sixth form and if it is having sufficient impact on outcomes for students and if the use of performance data is effectively driving improvement

Information about the school

Salford City Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. A third of students are known to be eligible for free school meals; more than double the national average. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and English is the first language of most students. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is around average but the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. The academy is sponsored by the United Learning Trust (ULT) and the Diocese of Manchester. The academy has sport and applied learning specialisms. The academy also has Healthy School status, Sports Mark Award and the International Schools Award.

In April 2010 an interim principal was appointed and two of the three existing vice-principals moved to other academies. A number of leadership appointments have since been made from existing staff.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Salford City Academy provides a good and improving standard of education. It has been through a period of rapid change and development following the appointment of the interim principal in April 2010. The pace of change accelerated further at the start of this academic year with the introduction of many new systems. Leaders, staff and the governing body have worked very successfully to improve outcomes for students and to maintain stability through the changes.

Examination results improved considerably in 2009/10 partly as a result of intense and well targeted interventions. The proportion of students achieving five or more high grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, increased by 15 percent. Current Year 11 students did very well in GCSE English and mathematics examinations taken in autumn 2010 and are on track to improve on last year's performance.

Many aspects of students' personal development and well-being are good. A new system that encourages students to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour is having a very positive impact. Internal exclusion is also proving very effective and the academy has fewer than average permanent and fixed-term exclusions. New procedures to improve attendance, including more rapid communication with parents and carers using text messaging, closer involvement of education welfare officers and fixed penalty notices have improved attendance overall, but the high rate of persistent absence, particularly among students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, remains a concern. Intensive action is planned to address this issue.

Robust systems to monitor and support improvements in teaching were put in place in September 2010. The quality has improved at a rapid rate and teaching was good or better in over three quarters of lessons seen by inspectors. Students are making increasingly good progress as a consequence. Most teachers plan lessons thoroughly and their classroom management is good enabling students to learn well. However, students are not always given tasks which provide enough opportunity for them to think for themselves. They are not developing the confidence to work independently, which is a concern when they progress to the sixth form. The curriculum is very flexible and tailored closely to students' needs across all key stages. Students are guided and supported very well at each transition stage. Care, guidance and support are strong.

The interim principal has brought fresh ideas, enthusiasm and a wealth of experience to the academy. With support from the governing body and the United Learning Trust, he has built up a growing momentum and capacity for improvement. Leadership is more dispersed and new leaders and managers have risen well to the challenge. Leaders have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and have clear priorities for development. Outcomes for students and many other aspects of provision have improved quickly demonstrating that the academy has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the independent learning skills of students across the academy but especially in the sixth form by:
 - making better use of discussions and group activities
 - devising tasks that require students to work independently and think for themselves
 - building students' confidence so that they are able to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve attendance by:
 - introducing effective strategies to reduce the number of persistent absentees ensuring that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities attend regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the academy with attainment that is slightly below average. Examination results at the end of Year 11 deteriorated after the last inspection but improved considerably in 2010 to around average. The proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was higher than average. English attainment has improved more slowly than that of other subjects but the results of GCSE examinations taken in the autumn 2010 show a considerable improvement.

Students are making increasingly good progress in lessons in response to more robust monitoring and setting of targets and to improvements in teaching. Colourful, easy to read graphs track progress and students, parents and carers can see at a glance if they are on track for the target grade. Teachers regularly point out what is needed to reach a higher grade and students are motivated to try harder. Students work very well in a large majority of lessons and improvements in behaviour mean that very few lessons are disrupted. Effective additional support to help students improve their literacy skills or catch up on work they have missed is also accelerating progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress despite the irregular attendance of a significant number.

Students say that they feel safe and they are well aware of potential dangers. Most students demonstrate the self-discipline to manage their own behaviour. Participation in sports is good and almost all students are involved in inter-house competitions. Many students walk or cycle to the academy and the take-up of academy meals is high with many choosing healthy options. Students are consulted on many issues and about a third take on positions of responsibility, such as sports captains. Students readily support charity and community events. They develop work-related and financial skills, such as teamwork, through a range of business projects and links. The number of students not progressing into education, employment or training (NEET) is low. Punctuality is satisfactory and attendance is improving overall. Students have a sense of right and wrong and are developing the skills of conciliation as part of the behaviour system. The Faith Centre is well attended and students show appreciation of the shared beliefs embedded in the ethos of the academy. They develop good cultural awareness through a rich and vibrant enrichment programme.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is improving quickly and is good. Teachers are confident and secure in their subject knowledge and have a good rapport with students. Teachers use questioning effectively to check learning and to involve all students in discussions. In the better lessons, teachers' enthusiasm is contagious and students are keen to learn and ask questions. In the weaker lessons, the pace is slow, there is a lack of challenge and low level disruption is allowed to bubble up. Discussions and group activities are not used effectively enough to develop independent skills. Assessment is used well to enhance learning. Students are very clear about the level at which they are working and know their targets. In all but the weakest lessons, students are given lots of advice about how to reach higher levels and encouraged to aim high. Marking is done regularly and although there are examples of excellent practice, the quality of written feedback is variable. Teachers have good quality data which they use to monitor progress and cater for special learning needs.

The curriculum is dynamic and evolving well following a recent review. It is managed effectively and there is good evaluation and monitoring of its impact with further plans to be implemented. The curriculum is carefully matched to the needs and aspirations of students with well-planned progression routes through to the sixth form and beyond. Students at risk of becoming disaffected are catered for effectively through individualised

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vocational programmes and additional support packages. The enrichment programme is very good and adds significantly to students' experience. There is a good range of extracurricular activities and students participate well.

Transition arrangements from primary schools and between key stages are very good. Care, guidance and support for the most vulnerable students are very well organised and personalised, drawing on the good links with specialist external agencies where necessary. Provision for young people cared for by the local authority is very strong. The academy has a new and more individualised approach to literacy and numeracy support that is helping students to catch-up more effectively. Support for students with dyslexia and autism has also been strengthened. There are effective arrangements to help students catch up with homework, or work they have missed, at lunchtime and the end of the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are strong and this interim phase in the academy's development has been led very well. New leaders work extremely hard and have made rapid progress on many fronts, including data management, the monitoring of teaching and quality assurance. Staff have responded to changes very positively and are working effectively towards agreed priorities. The governing body has a clear appreciation of its role and a good awareness of what needs to be done. The academy knows its strengths and weaknesses and self-evaluation is largely accurate. Government requirements for safeguarding are met very well. The site is very secure and safeguarding is given a very high priority. Procedures are very clear, training is regularly updated and the academy works very effectively with relevant external agencies.

The academy has strengthened links with parents and carers through newsletters and half-termly reports. They are consulted regularly and their views informed the new behaviour system among other things. The Family Support Worker has strengthened communication especially with harder to reach parents and carers. Strong partnerships, developed through the specialisms, are used well in enrichment and the development of enterprise skills. The promotion of equal opportunities is sound and the academy has worked well to remove barriers to success through its curriculum review, improvements to teaching and more effective learning support. The academy's promotion of community cohesion is good. It has strong and effective local, national and international links. The academy provides good value for money as it is well-resourced and outcomes for students are good.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	2

Sixth form

Sixth formers make the progress their entry qualifications would suggest and attainment is average. Teaching is good, with pockets of outstanding practice, but too many students lack the confidence and skills to take full advantage of the learning opportunities created. Students are set challenging targets that are monitored very closely. Although the sixth form is small, the curriculum is very responsive to students' needs. Support for sixth formers is very strong and they receive high quality advice and guidance about higher education and employment. Links with universities are used very well. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall because initiatives to improve outcomes for students have yet to have sufficient impact.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from just over 9% of parents and carers and they were extremely positive. Most feel that the academy keeps their child safe which

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reflects the highly effective safeguarding procedures. A very large majority of parents and carers are particularly happy with the leadership of the academy, the information they receive about their child's progress and the way that the academy prepares their child for the future. Behaviour is their biggest concern. However, inspectors found that the new behaviour system has had a very positive impact and behaviour both in and out of lessons is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Salford City 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 627 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	25	38	67	4	7	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	18	32	38	67	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	33	34	60	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	32	32	56	3	5	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	12	21	39	68	3	5	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	19	37	65	5	9	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	18	38	67	6	11	1	2
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)	15	26	35	61	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	26	37	65	0	0	4	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	18	37	65	8	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	12	41	72	4	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	23	40	70	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	44	26	46	4	7	2	4

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.



Dear Students

Inspection of Salford City Academy, Manchester, M30 7PQ

Thank you for welcoming us to the academy. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. We are pleased to tell you that Salford City Academy provides a good education.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Year 11 examination results are improving rapidly and students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are making good progress.
- Attendance is improving overall but too many students still have very high absence rates, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Behaviour is good in and out of lessons.
- Teaching is good and improving quickly but we would like to see you take a more active part in lessons and have more opportunities to work in small groups.
- The curriculum is good and is tailored very well to meet your needs. The range of extra-curricular activities is especially good and you participate well.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are good.
- Many aspects of the academy have improved this year and the leadership team are working very well.
- Provision in the sixth form is good but, as yet, students are only making satisfactory progress.

In order to improve further we have asked the academy to:

- improve attendance
- give you more opportunities to take responsibility for your own learning, especially in the sixth form.

The Interim Principal and his team know exactly what to do to make the academy better and along with the rest of the staff they are working very hard to improve every aspect of provision. We hope that you give them your full support and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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