

# Essa Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135770
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	361305
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22 – 23 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Cathryn Kirby HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 – 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	811
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anwar Patel
<b>Headteacher</b>	Showkat Badat
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	NA
<b>School address</b>	Lever Edge Lane Bolton Greater Manchester BL3 3HH
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<b>Email address</b>	info@essaacademy.org

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<b>Age group</b>	11 – 16
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 41 lessons taught by 41 teachers; one assembly and a formal meeting of the academy senate. In addition, inspectors held meetings with the principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, groups of students and members of the governing body, and spoke informally with parents and carers. Inspectors scrutinised students' work and looked at assessment records, plans and policies, documents relating to safeguarding and minutes of meetings. They also analysed questionnaires received from students and staff, and 34 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

Essa Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It opened in January 2009 in the buildings of its predecessor school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, most frequently Indian or Pakistani heritage, with a broad range of other backgrounds represented. Around a quarter of students has special educational needs and/or disabilities. A similar proportion of students has joined the academy over the last two years, many of these being international new arrivals. The academy has specialist status in modern foreign languages and science. Examination results in 2009 and 2010 were above the government's floor target for secondary schools. A move to new purpose-built premises adjacent to the current site is on schedule for October 2011. The academy has achieved both the Sportsmark award and Healthy Schools status.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

## Key findings

- This is a good school where all students achieve well as a result of good teaching, a curriculum that offers a high level of personalisation to accommodate different needs and interests, and well-targeted examination preparation.
- Outstanding leadership has rapidly moved forward a school that was in challenging circumstances. Actions arising from the principal's pursuit of excellence have had considerable impact on improving academic outcomes and students' personal development and well-being.
- The academy has high expectations of its students and places a strong emphasis on their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Students are encouraged to work and socialise together and this fosters good relationships and tolerance. This is a calm, orderly community with evident mutual respect between its members.
- An inclusive ethos underpins this highly cohesive community. Students enjoy school and attendance is above average. They feel very safe and well cared for. Adults are used effectively to support and nurture those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The low response rate to the questionnaire by parents and carers belies the importance senior leaders and the governing body attach to engaging parents and carers and the well-considered strategies that inform and include them. Parents who spoke with inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences.
- Greater consistency in the practice of individual teachers and a stronger overall quality are needed to move good teaching and learning towards outstanding.

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

- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching and at individual teacher level achieve greater consistency of practice by.
  - moving more of the strongly good teaching to outstanding and eradicating the small amount of weaker teaching
  - sharing the inspirational teaching of the best practitioners to help others understand how to improve their own practice
  - maximising the development of individual teacher's skills through the academy's comprehensive programme of training and development
  - ensuring that individual elements of each teacher's practice are consistently strong and secure, so that when combined, they enable all students to make rapid gains in learning. In particular, sharpening the planning of activities to ensure consistently good or better progress from different starting points for students in mixed-age classes.

## Main report

### Achievement

Good teaching and careful choice of courses results in good achievement which is quickly closing gaps in students' learning. All students including those who speak English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals make better progress than that of their peers nationally. The academy has raised attainment rapidly from below average to broadly average for the key indicator of five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics. In a number of other GCSE level courses attainment is above average. For students who entered secondary education with below-average attainment this represents good progress. Students also achieve well in science and modern foreign languages.

In the majority of lessons students make good progress. They generally apply skills well to a range of activities. A strong emphasis is given to developing communication skills; for example, inspectors observed students using dictionaries alongside iPods to define the meaning of new words and include them in a written sentence shared with the class. A consistent approach to behaviour management and frequently good attitudes to learning contribute to students' good achievements. Students and parents and carers who spoke with inspectors value the additional support sessions for examination groups; these have contributed to the positive picture of examination performance. The academy's data show that this improving trend is set to continue, including further good gains in English and mathematics.

### Teaching

The strengths of teaching outweigh any relative weaknesses. Good relationships and

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behaviour in classrooms add to an atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently to enhance the quality of students' learning experience. Students use their iPods sensibly to search for information or to store notes and ideas. Inspectors observed inspirational team teaching of the New Basics curriculum to a large group of Year 7 students in their designated 'pod'. In this lesson about rainforests, excellent planning and classroom management injected pace to promote rapid gains in knowledge and understanding with strong emphasis on literacy development, through imaginative activities. Throughout students' and teachers' enjoyment was palpable. Elsewhere good practice prevails, although inspectors observed satisfactory learning more frequently than that which was outstanding.

All inspectors observed occasions where planning in mixed-age classes promoted satisfactory rather than good progress because it lacked the detail to challenge all students consistently to make rapid gains from different starting points. Otherwise there is no commonly occurring weakness in teaching, only variation in the skill levels with which teachers apply particular elements of their overall practice.

### **Leadership and management**

The inspirational leadership of the principal has been pivotal in transforming provision and outcomes in the time leading to the academy's first inspection. His direction and influence have had a significant impact on building the skills and confidence of the wider leadership team and of teachers. Ambition is articulated through high expectations and a mission to enable every student to succeed. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the academy's work and manifests itself in the good achievement of all groups of students. The well-trained and active governing body meets regularly, taking lunch with students beforehand, to seek their views on academy life. The actions of the governing body make a worthy contribution to continuing improvement and add to the strong capacity to improve further. As established members of the local community, governors are well-attuned to parents' views. The small number of concerns expressed by parents in relation to e-safety, learning support and behaviour were carefully followed up by inspectors to a satisfactory conclusion.

Safeguarding is afforded high priority. Inspectors observed numerous examples of how the academy has linked with other agencies and families to improve the life chances of students in difficult circumstances. The academy is outward-looking. Links with other agencies, secondary schools nationally and primary schools locally add value to the academy's practices as they evolve. All members of the academy's community are eagerly anticipating the move in October to state-of-the-art new premises. Senior leaders recognise the need to continue the process of strengthening teaching quality as the next significant step on the journey to excellence.

### **Behaviour and safety**

Good teaching fosters good behaviour and attitudes in lessons. Teachers capitalise

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on this by encouraging students to collaborate and take responsibility for their learning. Good behaviour spills over to larger gatherings; in assembly inspectors observed students listen attentively to the moving account of a successful Year 11 student's experience of life as a refugee. Students socialise well at breaks and lunchtime and speak confidently and politely to adults who intervene appropriately to manage occasional over-boisterous play. Students wear their prefect badges with pride and represent the views of their classmates on subject councils. Inspectors observed a meeting of the academy senate, a forum through which the student voice is clearly articulated by confident young people. The E5 enrichment activities allow students to learn new skills with peers and adults who share a mutual interest in, for example, street dance and Thai boxing. Less active pursuits are offered through the library club, beauty therapy and cookery classes.

Students new to the academy are sensitively integrated into the community which respects and values cultural diversity both within its boundaries and further afield. Students feel very safe. They say bullying is infrequent and is not tolerated. Well-trained staff and governors give safeguarding policy and practice a high priority.

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

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

The inspection team received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 811 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	20	59	12	35	1	3	1	3
Q2 My child feels safe at school	20	59	13	38	1	3	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	19	56	15	44	0	0	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	19	56	14	41	0	0	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	20	59	14	41	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	19	56	15	44	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	15	44	14	41	4	12	1	3
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	11	32	17	50	5	15	1	3
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	17	50	15	44	2	6	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	21	62	11	32	0	0	1	3
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well-informed	23	68	7	21	2	6	1	3
Q12 The school is well led and managed	20	59	11	32	1	3	1	3

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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 up 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"><li>■ The achievement of all pupils.</li><li>■ Behaviour and safety.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of leadership and management.</li></ul> <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</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.

**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.**



24 June 2011

Dear students

### **Inspection of Essa Academy Bolton, BL3 3HH**

I write on behalf of the inspection team that recently visited the academy. Thank you for being so welcoming and polite, and for sharing your thoughts with us. You said you feel very safe and enjoy life at the academy. We were impressed with students' confident contributions at the senate meeting and with how well you listened in assembly.

Mr Badat, governors and staff have made an enormous improvement to the quality of your education since the academy opened. All of you achieve well and many of you go on to further education. You enjoy a wide range of options and we agree that you have access to an exciting range of courses and enrichment activities. Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors are happy with the standard of education you are provided with and welcome the examination support sessions offered by the academy.

Teaching is good in the majority of lessons and allows you to make good progress in your learning. We think, and senior leaders agree, that the quality of lessons need to improve further in order to:

- enable you to make outstanding progress more frequently and only satisfactory progress less so, by helping teachers hone their skills even more sharply
- make sure that teachers of mixed-age classes always set work that challenges everyone in the group equally well by taking into account different levels of knowledge, educational experience, and skills.

All members of the academy's community have together made a considerable journey to become a good and improving secondary school. Through good behaviour, above-average attendance and trying your best, you have played your part in that process and should feel proud of your achievements.

I wish you all well in your continuing journey to excellence.

Yours sincerely,

Cathryn Kirby  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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