

# Essa Academy

Lever Edge Lane, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL3 3HH

**Inspection dates** 15–16 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students achieve well, particularly in mathematics.
- The large group of students who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, students maintain their focus, develop their understanding and learn new skills effectively.
- Teachers use hand-held technology well to support their teaching and students' learning.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students form a calm and orderly community.
- Leaders, including governors, have been successful in maintaining the academy's strength in mathematics and raising standards in English.
- Good leadership and management of teaching are helping teachers to develop their skills so that the quality of teaching continues to improve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The achievement of the most able students lags behind that of other groups, and students make less progress in humanities and languages than in other subject areas.
- Teachers do not always take sufficient account of the range of abilities within a class and, in particular, do not challenge the most able students consistently.
- A small number of students have not yet developed good habits of attending regularly.
- The quality of leadership at subject level is not consistently good.

## Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors observed 34 lessons, including four that were observed jointly with senior staff at the academy.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Acting Principal, members of the governing body, staff and students. They spoke informally to several groups of students at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the academy’s data about the achievement, behaviour and safety of students. They also looked at management information such as minutes of meetings of the governing body. They took account of 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paul Chambers , Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Wendy Bradford

Additional Inspector

Andrew Henderson

Additional Inspector

Osama Abdul Rahim

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Essa Academy is smaller than average for a secondary school but has grown substantially in the last two years.
- There are more boys than girls in the academy.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is high at approximately twice the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and those from service families).
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 30% of the students are of Indian heritage and a similar percentage is of Pakistani heritage. About 10% of students are from White British backgrounds and a similar percentage are from African backgrounds. Several other ethnic groups are represented in small numbers.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high.
- More students than usual join and/or leave the academy at other than the usual times. Recently, most of those joining at other than the usual times have been recent international arrivals, several of whom are at the early stages of learning English.
- There are no students attending off-site provision.
- In 2013, the academy met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- After a short period of absence, the previous Principal left the academy in December 2013. An Acting Principal is currently in post.

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

- Improve students' achievement further by:
  - ensuring that teachers take greater account of the range of abilities within a class and that, in particular, the most able students are challenged consistently
  - improving students' attainment in the humanities and languages subject areas.
- Improve attendance by continuing to work with those parents whose children are persistently absent.
- Improve leadership and management by helping more subject leaders to match the skills of those in the most successful subject areas.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well. From attainment on entry that is below average, they reach standards at the end of Year 11 that are in line with national figures. Students' achievement in mathematics is particularly good and, for less able students, outstanding.
- Students' attainment is average overall. For example, the unvalidated GCSE results for 2013 show that 55% of students gained five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, compared with a national average of 60%. While results that include GCSE-equivalent qualifications are above average, results based purely on GCSEs are below average.
- Students make good progress in mathematics: from their different starting points, the proportions of students making and exceeding the expected progress compare favourably with national figures. Students also achieve well in English. Although progress measures are not as consistently strong as in mathematics, inspection evidence confirms the improvements evident in 2013 are secure and can be built upon. The academy's records show that current students are making good progress across a range of subjects. The achievement of students in humanities and languages lags behind that in other subjects.
- The academy's initiatives to improve standards of literacy are having a positive impact. Scrutiny of written work showed clear improvements in students' powers of expression since the beginning of the current academic year.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Not only do they benefit from the experience and expertise of staff across the academy, but ready access to tablet computers enables those at an early stage of learning English to translate words they do not understand or to submit work in their native language. Disabled students and those with special educational needs also make good progress.
- The achievement of students who enter the academy with relatively high prior attainment requires improvement because not all teaching provides sufficient challenge for this group. The policy of early entry for GCSE limited opportunities for some of the most able students to meet their full potential. The academy's leaders have reviewed the early entry policy in order to ensure this does not continue.
- There is little difference between the achievement of male and female students and no established pattern of students joining the academy at other than the normal times doing better or worse than other groups. Students from White British backgrounds achieve less well than those from other ethnic backgrounds.
- Students eligible for support through the pupil premium achieve well. Gaps between the attainment and progress of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students are small in comparison with the national picture. In 2013, the attainment gap for English was equivalent to just over half a GCSE grade, while in mathematics it was equivalent to about three quarters of a grade. Actions aimed at closing achievement gaps have been successful in some measures: for example, the gap between the proportions of students making the expected progress in English narrowed considerably in 2013.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Scrutiny of students' books and examination results indicate that the quality of teaching over time is good, including in English and mathematics. In the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was good, with some that was outstanding.
- Teachers use well students' access to hand-held technology to promote investigative skills and to ensure that students reflect on their learning. They plan activities that build understanding effectively: for example, they ensure that students broaden their thinking by explaining their reasoning or listening to the views of others. Because teaching is lively, students maintain their focus, develop their understanding and learn new skills. Relationships between teachers and

students are strong.

- Students in need of extra support often benefit from good guidance on how to structure their written responses. However, where learning is less successful, teachers take too little account of the range of abilities within the class and give the most able students work that is not sufficiently challenging.
- Teachers use marking well to provide guidance on how students can improve their work. Leaders are aware of the need, and beginning to take action, to strengthen assessment throughout the academy so that students' progress can be monitored more clearly.
- Teaching prepares students well for the next stage of their lives. For example, the proportion of recently left students not in education, employment or training is low, and numbers going on to further education are high and above the local average.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Inspectors saw consistently positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons and students confirm that this is the norm. Students take a pride in their school and their work.
- Students behave well outside lessons. They move around the academy building calmly and demonstrate good social skills. The number of exclusions has reduced considerably in the last two years.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe in the academy. They understand about different kinds of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and know how to deal with it.
- The small number of parents who answered the Parent View questionnaire all say that students are safe and enjoy school. This reinforces the views expressed by those who responded to the academy's own surveys. Staff in the academy share this positive view.
- Attendance over time is in line with national averages. Recently, attendance figures have dropped owing to the poor attendance of a small number of students, several of whom have joined the academy this year. Leaders are aware of the need, and taking action, to establish patterns of good attendance for these students.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The academy's leaders have successfully minimised the impact of the recent change of principal. The current senior team, led by the Acting Principal, promotes the academy's ethos effectively. Teachers share a common philosophy of how to achieve successful learning through developing students' thinking skills. Responses to the staff questionnaires, supported by other inspection evidence, show that staff across the academy know what they are trying to achieve in the long term.
- The academy has good capacity to improve. Leaders have successfully maintained good achievement in mathematics and secured rapid improvements in English, following the dip in performance in 2012. The proportion of students exceeding the expected progress in English has risen steadily. Self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the key areas where the academy can improve.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good. Teachers value the academy's established programme for helping teachers to develop their skills. Leaders respond appropriately when they find evidence of underperformance and ensure that teachers' pay is closely linked to their performance. The academy has evidence that, over time, more teachers are teaching well. Where inspectors and academy leaders observed lessons together, there was broad agreement on the quality of teaching and how it could be improved.
- The academy's leaders are aware that the effectiveness of leadership at subject level varies. They have plans in place to provide support where it is needed in order to raise the quality

overall to match that in the most successful subject areas.

- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to set up a summer school for students about to join the academy. While leaders can discuss the success of the summer school in terms of the numbers attending, they have yet to evaluate its impact on students' progress.
- The academy is a very mixed community where staff celebrate diversity and promote achievement for all. However, because there are differences in the achievements of different groups, the academy is not fully successful in its aim of promoting equality of opportunity.
- Responses to Parent View and the academy's own survey information confirm that parents are supportive of the academy. During the inspection, one parent raised a number of concerns with inspectors, which were passed on to the academy's leaders.
- The academy's leaders have provided support to other schools nationally and internationally on integrating hand-held technology effectively into teaching.
- The academy provides parents with good information via its website, including a statement about the academy's ethos and values, information about curriculum provision and admission policies. Parents do not yet have additional information about governors and about academy policies, such as on behaviour.
- The curriculum meets students' needs. An integrated approach to ensuring effective learning is helping students to develop good learning habits, such as reflecting on their learning. While continuing to offer vocational courses that meet the needs of some students in Key Stage 4, leaders have ensured that a greater proportion of qualifications gained in the current year will be GCSE rather than GCSE-equivalent. The curriculum provides ample opportunities for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- The academy's sponsors provide strong contributions to governance, particularly through providing expertise in financial management and human resources.
- The academy's arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students are in line with requirements. Leaders are taking steps to broaden the number of staff trained in safer recruitment practices.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors understand the academy's priorities for improvement and know where teaching is stronger and where it is weaker. They are engaged with the local community and this helps them to be accessible to parents and aware of local concerns. They have good financial expertise that helps in their oversight of teachers' pay and has contributed to the academy's strong financial situation. However, they have not given sufficient priority to monitoring how effectively targeted funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135770
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	440341

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	880
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anwer Patel
<b>Principal</b>	Jeff Ellis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 June 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333222
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