

Salford City Academy

Northfleet Road, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester M30 7PQ

Inspection dates 22–23 September 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare Good

Outcomes for pupils Good

16 to 19 study programmes Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The Principal has a passion for improvement and drives a strong leadership team. Consequently, the quality of teaching has rapidly improved and is now good.
- Leaders in the academy share the same vision and determination, so that barriers to learning are being eroded and students are making better progress. Progress is particularly strong for disabled students or those who have special educational needs.
- Inventive approaches to strengthen reading and writing in literacy are used across the academy, resulting in students making great strides in their phonic and reading development.
- The sixth form is good. Students who study vocational subjects make excellent progress.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to their learning are good. The academy provides well-structured care and support and is exemplary in its approach to keeping students safe
- Staff have high expectations for students and good advice and support are provided to ensure that next steps in education, training or employment are successful.
- The school improvement board works rigorously with the Principal and provides good support and challenge to improve the academy's performance.
- The academy equips students to be thoughtful, caring and active citizens in the academy and wider society. Strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates through the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Excellence in teaching is not always shared across the academy. As a result, teachers do not always benefit from the expertise of colleagues.
- Students who re-take GCSE English and mathematics examinations in the sixth form are not always successful in achieving a grade C.
- Quality assurance systems are not strongly embedded across the whole school.
- The academy does not yet fully meet the needs of the most-able students in all subjects.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers needs to be fully closed.
- The substantive governing body is not yet in place.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress and raise attainment so that:
 - disadvantaged students in the academy achieve as well as students nationally
 - the most-able students achieve consistently high standards across all subjects.

- Further strengthen the impact of leaders at all levels by ensuring that:
 - effective quality assurance systems are embedded to further improve and support good practice across the academy
 - excellent practice in teaching that is apparent in some subjects is shared and developed
 - the strengths of the school improvement board are taken forward into the new governing body.

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics of students who retake GCSE examinations in these subjects in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment, the Principal has taken an inspiring and firm lead in driving strong and decisive action across the academy to address areas for improvement.
- The capacity to improve is good. Senior leaders are effective and determined to make a difference to students' lives. They work hard with students and their families to remove barriers to learning.
- Senior leaders have a clear long-term strategy for improving the academy and work in collaboration with the school improvement board, which provides effective challenge and support. The local authority and sponsor have representation on the school improvement board, ensuring close links and involvement in strategic decisions within the academy and procuring support for the school where they need to develop further.
- The middle tier of leadership within the academy, including subject leaders, is now much stronger. Middle leaders take responsibility for the achievement and personal development of students and hold staff swiftly to account for the quality of their work.
- Staff receive appropriate professional development to improve the delivery of teaching within the classroom, for example the use of staff briefings to share good practice, with initiatives like 'flutter Fridays' and 'butterfly farms'. Teachers are supported and strengthened by United Learning Trust advisers among a plethora of other school support partnerships. However, this good practice has not percolated into all areas of the academy. Newly qualified teachers and teacher trainees are provided with high-quality support and flourish under the academy's care.
- The academy's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders are able to identify where improvement is needed and can show the impact of their actions. For example, following disappointing BTEC sport results in 2015, the academy's leaders sought external support to improve outcomes for future learners.
- Leaders at all levels know the progress that groups of students are making and their attainment. However, not all staff are familiar with, or can effectively use, new academy systems used for tracking and recording assessments, so the impact on students' progress is not excellent across the academy. Communication with parents and carers regarding students' progress has been sharpened. Engagement between parents and teachers during organised meetings is now blossoming.
- The Principal and school improvement board take decisive action when individual teachers do not meet high standards. They also reward appropriately, through the pay structure, teachers who perform well.
- Additional funds to support disadvantaged students and those who need to catch up in Year 7 are used effectively. The academy spends this money in a variety of ways to nourish and support student development in literacy and numeracy in, for example, the use of a reading support programme for students and the implementation of phonics training for key staff who drive literacy. Students who join the academy with low reading ages and a lag in numeracy advance quickly in their development due to carefully targeted support. Gaps in progress have narrowed over time, allowing those from disadvantaged backgrounds to move closer to similar standards as their classmates.
- Since the previous inspection, the academy has invited external evaluations and validation from a wide range of education professionals. However, this is not strongly embedded across the whole academy.
- Leaders communicate and consult with students regularly and promote student leadership skills well. The head boy and girl lead a proactive student council which provides regular feedback to teachers. The student council is a strong hub of communication, driving fundraising across the student body. Two students are members of the Salford Youth Council, reflecting the academy's positive view on equality and democracy.
- The citizenship curriculum is well designed to capture opportunities in all year groups, for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, the police and prison service have been used to promote an understanding of the consequences of students' behaviour, 'right and wrong'.
- Academy leaders work hard to promote equal opportunities for all. The curriculum is wide and varied, allowing for students' interests and needs. The caring and calm ethos within the academy provides an oasis of enrichment accessible for all students. Visits to Chester Zoo and local theatres instil a fascination for learning and enhance social development. Students also have opportunities to experience national initiatives such as Debate Mate, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- The academy safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Statutory requirements are met and staff are well trained on child protection. The academy website also promotes current safeguarding procedures and offers parental support.

- The academy provides its students with good careers guidance and advice that helps them to make informed choices about their next steps. Transition from each key stage is well supported with clear, thorough steps communicated well to parents.
- **The governance of the school**
 - the school improvement board is effective in governing the school, holding the Principal and other staff to account
 - senior leaders have a clear long-term strategy for improving the academy, and work in collaboration with the school improvement board who provide effective challenge and support. The local authority has representation on the school improvement board, ensuring close links and involvement in strategic decisions within the school
 - the school improvement board has high aspirations and expectations for staff and students. As a result of consistent, careful checks, the board has a good understanding of how funding is spent and the impact of this spending.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has rapidly improved across the academy and pockets of excellent practice are developing in modern foreign languages, English, mathematics, religious studies and vocational subjects.
- The use of secure and shrewd student targets is distilled and displayed across the academy. Targets are reviewed regularly, contributing to raising aspirations among staff and students. Leaders and teachers celebrate students' academic success across the academy in corridors and classrooms.
- Teachers know their students well as individuals. Since the last inspection, leaders have worked hard to ensure that teachers' assessment of students' attainment and progress is accurate. Where learning is more effective, teachers are increasingly using this information to plan work that challenges learners to do their best and to identify which students might be likely to underachieve. When the progress of some students is weaker than others, teachers have not used the information well enough to plan learning activities that match students' interests or needs. This is particularly so for the most-able students. Consequently, they do not consistently reach their potential in all subjects.
- Regular meetings to check students' progress allow staff to identify those who are not progressing in line with expectations. Support through small-group and one-to-one sessions closes gaps in students' attainment and progress. Specific support to improve students' performance with particular learning needs is well designed, and is having a positive impact. Teaching assistants are well trained and deployed to help disadvantaged and disabled students and those who have special educational needs to close gaps in their learning. The needs of students are communicated well using 'student passports' to guide teachers with effective strategies for teaching and learning.
- Staff do not consistently follow the academy policy when planning for the specific needs of students. Consequently, not all learners make exceptional progress.
- Teachers' marking has improved, and examples of detailed and frequent marking can be seen in many subjects. Good examples were seen in English, history, and religious studies, where marking contains good advice on how students can improve their work.
- Teachers use interesting and varied vocabulary to extend students' literacy. This was commonly seen in modern foreign languages and English, so raising the importance of literacy across the curriculum.
- Students make strides of progress with literacy across the academy. Senior leaders have driven a crusade to improve the quality of students' literacy and oracy (the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech). Effective plans and schemes of work underpin a strong literacy thread across all curriculum areas. Reading is taught well. Students are supported with phonics (the sounds that letters make), and other reading development programmes, to advance their reading. However, the pleasure of reading and promotion of wider independent reading is not yet thriving across the academy.
- The academy makes good and appropriate use of alternative provision within and beyond the building. The internal alternative provision is a calm supportive environment which supports learning well, and leaders prevent any loss of learning when students embark on this provision.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.
- Students' attitudes to their learning are good across all areas of the academy. Students say that they feel safe and that they know how to seek help should they need it. Students have confidence in their pastoral support systems.
- The pastoral care of students is excellent. Heads of year, inclusion managers and mentors collectively foster strong relationships with students and use appropriate agencies to tailor support to students' needs. This approach, combining academic and welfare checks, prevents academic achievement from slowing.
- Concerted action from the academy has led to improvements in attendance and punctuality since the last inspection. There is a tidal change in attitudes to poor attendance and punctuality among staff and students. The promotion of a 'perfect week' has driven improvement, combined with rigorous systems to catch students falling below the academy's new improved standards.
- There are robust and meticulous procedures to ensure students' safety and well-being at all times, including thorough risk assessments and child protection arrangements. Leaders act swiftly if they are alerted to any concerns. There is rigorous checking of the identity of visitors to the academy, and staff undergo strict vetting procedures in order to safeguard students.
- Assemblies and form period 'hub time' are used to pursue an understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, alongside citizenship and life in modern Britain. For example, students are fundraising for Syrian refugees and have an understanding of the complex issues involved in this. Students have the opportunity to learn about extremism and are able to recognise the potential dangers of being online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- The overwhelming majority of both staff and parents believe that behaviour is managed well across the academy. Teachers and support staff follow the robust systems and policies set in place by leaders. As a result of these clear systems, behaviour has dramatically improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Students do their best to uphold the behaviour policy across the academy. They are calm and polite, showing a pride in their uniform and their academy. Behaviour observed in lessons and during social times is good. Students attending the alternative provision behave well.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Students enter the academy with low prior attainment and low literacy levels. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2015 show considerable improvements in attainment, particularly for further mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, geography, catering and religious studies. The academy met the government floor targets.
- In 2015, some of the most-able students did not make consistently good progress across the academy. However, academy information shows a rise in the success of the most-able students in further mathematics and better than expected progress in English. This is because successful support had been put in place to stretch and challenge learners.
- The academy's tracking of in-house student information shows that more students are now making expected progress across Years 7 to 11. This is due to the improved foundations for teaching and learning that is now being driven across the academy by resolute leaders. However, the unvalidated progress made in 2015 in English and mathematics GCSE is still below national average.
- Students' writing is improving rapidly, with an increase in opportunities to reinforce skills in all subjects and guidance from teachers' marking of their work. Literacy support across the academy is also having a positive effect on driving improvements in chronological reading ages for all students.
- Disabled students or those who have special educational needs made significant progress across their best eight subjects, including English and mathematics GCSEs.
- Disadvantaged and disabled students and those who have special educational needs made better progress on average than their peers in the academy.

- The attainment of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium funding has been better than that of other students in the academy. In 2015, the eligible Year 11 students were, on average, just over half a GCSE grade behind other students in mathematics and English within the academy. The academy has recorded a dramatic reduction in gaps compared with overall national performance in English and there has also been a continued reduction in the gap for mathematics compared with national figures. However, gaps are not reduced or closed in all subjects when compared to national figures.
- Good careers advice is provided and this is reflected in the number of students gaining university places and in the number of those who also gain employment or training. Advice and guidance processes for students making study choices for GCSE are very thorough and lead to very few pathway changes. The academy is committed to developing students' understanding of the world of work. All students are encouraged to take part in quality work experience during Year 12. Commitment to work experience is strong and runs alongside well-structured impartial careers advice to support learners' next steps.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The very small sixth form provides a safe environment in which expectations placed on students are high. Arrangements for academic tracking and personal tutoring are strong and bespoke, due to low numbers. Students say that there is always support available. The sixth form tailors its structure and curriculum to students' needs and abilities.
- The behaviour and safety of students are good. Students are courteous, polite and friendly. Attendance and punctuality are average. The sixth form provides excellent care and support for students and students feel safe. A comprehensive programme is in place to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Leaders are ambitious for, and devoted to, students to do well and have a clear plan for improvement. The range of subjects available is limited by student numbers, and includes mainly vocational and some academic options to suit the aptitudes and interests of the students.
- The quality of teaching and learning in both vocational and academic subjects is good. Effective teaching and personalised individual support in small teaching groups allow students to respond well to teachers' questions, providing thoughtful responses that demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students interact well with their teachers and their peers in class to support their learning.
- In 2015, students made good progress towards their targets in vocational subjects. Attainment and progress in the small number of academic subjects is not as strong. Overall sixth form outcomes meet the national 16 to 19 interim minimum standards.
- The advice and support given to students on entry to the sixth form are strong, as is the advice that students receive in preparation for applying to university, further training or employment. The academy has an excellent record of success in this regard, and very few students are not in education, training or employment after their time in the sixth form.
- Further work is needed to improve the success rate of students resitting English and mathematics GCSE within the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	135071
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10004290

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	585
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	45
Appropriate authority	School improvement board
Chair of the school improvement board	Jenny Andrews
Principal	Helen Mackenzie OBE
Telephone number	0161 789 5359
Website	www.salfordcity-academy.org
Email address	enquiries@salfordcity-academy.org
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- Salford City Academy is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school with sixth form provision.
- The academy leadership and staffing have undergone significant change since the last inspection.
- The academy is part of a multi-academy trust, United Learning. This trust is the accountable body for the academy. It provides governance, although there also remains a school improvement board.
- The academy meets the government’s current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of these supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The academy is an accredited Investors in People organisation at bronze level and holds a Silver School Games Mark.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a large range of lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors saw students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy throughout the academy day. During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke to students about their work and progress and looked at students' work in books.
- Inspectors viewed registration periods, an assembly, the student council and reading support sessions.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students and had informal discussions with students in corridors, in lessons and also during social times.
- A further scrutiny of work was undertaken in which inspectors sampled students' work across a wide range of subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors looked closely at a wide range of documents, including: the academy's view of how well it is performing; development planning; policies and procedures; student progress tracking; records of leaders' monitoring of teaching; arrangements for the appraisal of teachers' work and staff training records. Inspectors also reviewed records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, as well as a wide range of information uploaded on the academy website.
- Formal discussions were held with the Principal, head of school, senior leaders, the chair of the school improvement board, middle leaders, support staff, the academy trust and a phone call to a representative of the local authority.
- Meetings were held with qualified teachers and those undertaking training at the academy.
- Inspectors took into account parent responses provided by the academy (due to a low response on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire) and 47 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victoria Atherton	Ofsted Inspector
Marcia Harding	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Caldicott	Ofsted Inspector

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