

# Wellacre Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	136378
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	395336
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Shirley Gornall HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	972
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martin Tanner
<b>Principal</b>	Ray Howell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Irlam Road Flixton M41 6AP
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Shirley Gornall  
Chanan Tomlin  
David Woodhouse  
Andrew Henderson

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons taught by 38 teachers, of which seven were joint observations with members of the academy's senior leadership team. They visited two assemblies and five Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) sessions. Meetings were held with four groups of students, three members of the governing body, a representative from Trafford local authority, the academy's senior leaders, middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. The inspectors observed the academy's work and considered a wide range of documents, including the academy's improvement plan and self-evaluation, behaviour records, monitoring records and minutes of governing body meetings. They analysed 202 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 151 received from students and 37 from staff. There were no responses to the on-line Parent View survey at the time of the inspection.

## Information about the school

Wellacre converted to academy status in January 2010, replacing Wellacre Technology College. It is an average-sized secondary school catering for boys aged 11-16 and has a co-educational sixth form that opened in September 2009. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Most students are white British. An average proportion of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. Around one quarter of students have special educational needs or are disabled; this is much higher than the national average. Few students join or leave the academy at times other than the usual transition points. The academy has established specialisms in technology and applied learning. It is a National Support School, a Teacher Learning Academy, an Investor in People and holds the International Schools award and Silver Arts Mark award. The academy's performance meets the current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

**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 of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- Wellacre Academy is a good school that provides a good standard of education. Students enjoy the exciting range of opportunities the academy provides for them, particularly those related to applied learning and enterprise. Their achievement in English and mathematics is rising in response to increasingly consistent teaching and targeted intervention. The new sixth form is satisfactory and improving.
- Achievement is good. Almost all students leave the academy with five or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A\* to C. However, the proportion of students attaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics is below average. The progress of middle and higher ability students, especially in English, was below average in 2010 and 2011. For this reason the academy is not judged as outstanding. The progress of students currently in the academy is accelerating. Students with special educational needs make consistently outstanding progress. The achievement of students in the sixth form is satisfactory.
- Teaching is good overall, with an increasing amount that is outstanding and some that is satisfactory. Teachers know their students well and provide lively, enjoyable lessons. Support for students with special educational needs is very well-managed, contributing to their rapid progress. Some teaching does not challenge students sufficiently to give extended spoken or written explanations.
- Students' behaviour is good. Most students are polite, sensible, show positive attitudes to learning and are proud to be members of the academy, which they regard as a very safe place. Attendance is above the national average.
- Leadership is good; the Principal and senior leaders communicate a clear vision for the academy's future development. The academy's specialisms are particularly successful and excellent partnerships with local employers and other agencies provide students with valuable experiences that equip them well for further

education and employment. Coaching, monitoring and support have improved the quality of teaching and performance management is strong. The curriculum has been adapted to raise attainment in English and mathematics. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strongly promoted through a very effective taught programme and a vibrant extra-curricular curriculum.

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

- Accelerate the progress of middle and higher attaining students, in subjects across the curriculum, and particularly in English, by ensuring that work is carefully matched to students' abilities and provides sufficient challenge.
- Ensure that teaching strengthens students' literacy skills by:
  - providing more opportunities in lessons for students to give extended spoken responses
  - developing reading comprehension across the curriculum
  - encouraging students to improve the presentation, composition and accuracy of their writing.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Boys enter the academy with prior attainment that is broadly similar to the national average, although fewer boys have high prior attainment than in most secondary schools. They make good progress overall and leave with results that are above average, and well above average in some subjects, particularly those related to the academy's specialisms; the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at A\* to C grades is consistently exceptionally high. However, students' attainment of five or more GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, is below average, largely due to slower progress in English by middle and higher attaining boys, resulting in attainment that is below average. Attainment and progress in mathematics are similar to the national average. The achievement of students with special educational needs is outstanding.

Students' learning in lessons confirms that their progress is accelerating due to more accurate assessment, more consistent teaching and the allocation of more curriculum time to core subjects. On the basis of examinations taken by students currently in the academy, achievement in English and mathematics is showing strong improvement.

A significant number of students have low literacy levels on joining the academy. The academy has responded to this by introducing a silent reading initiative that has raised boys' enthusiasm for books. Most students have reading skills that enable them to access the curriculum. Those with very low reading ages make accelerated progress in response to individual support. Students' comprehension skills are less well-developed than their other reading skills and this is evidenced in subjects across the curriculum. Students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well-developed and applied in a wide range of contexts. Some students' oral skills are

under-developed and their responses to questions tend to be brief. The quality of their writing, in terms of presentation, composition and accuracy, is variable and not consistently addressed.

The achievement of students in the new sixth form is satisfactory and improving rapidly as the academy adjusts its provision to meet their individual needs. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with their children's achievements. Inspection evidence confirms that they are right to be proud.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is good overall, in the main academy and in the sixth form, leading to most students achieving well over time. An increasing amount of teaching is outstanding and some is satisfactory. Teachers establish positive relationships with their students, have strong subject knowledge and willingly give their time to provide additional support and intervention. Students comment that they enjoy lessons that are interactive, varied and challenging. They are less enthusiastic about those which are textbook-based or those where teachers 'talk for too long.' Their success in active learning was evident in a particularly successful drama lesson in which boys showed an impressive degree of concentration as they observed their peers' mimes and considered how masks would affect communication. They made rapid progress in response to the teacher's prompting to extend their descriptive vocabulary when providing feedback. Some teachers have excellent questioning skills that probe students' thinking, as seen in an ambitious design and technology lesson in which students generated design solutions. Similarly, in an outstanding geography lesson, students discussed the advantages and drawbacks of an industrial incinerator and achieved very well because the teacher's planning enabled them to develop their analytical skills and present their ideas in an extended way.

In a very effective French lesson, the teacher was careful to ensure that all students contributed to discussion and that their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening were carefully interwoven to maximise progress. In satisfactory lessons, an over-reliance on volunteers to answer questions causes some students to become passive. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to challenge students' thinking by requiring extended written or spoken responses.

Teachers know their students well as individuals but do not consistently adapt tasks to ensure that there is an appropriate level of challenge for all. Sometimes exactly the same tasks are presented to all students, irrespective of their differing attainment levels. This slows progress for some middle and higher attaining students. The needs of students with special educational needs are effectively met through targeted support and intervention, contributing to their exceptional progress. The quality of teaching in English is generally good although some is still satisfactory. It is improving due to determined leadership, better assessment and greater ambition in approach. This was evident in a successful lesson in which students enjoyed the challenge of discussing how Shakespeare used imagery to emphasise Lady Macbeth's power and were able to consider the moral implications of her character traits.

Teachers' marking is of a good quality and most students have a good understanding of their targets and the steps they should take to achieve them. They appreciate that their teachers are accessible, approachable and willing to give them support and advice.

Teachers make good use of planned and spontaneous opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Ecological awareness is promoted particularly strongly and students are aware of the power of their own decision-making.

The vast majority of parents and carers agree with inspectors that the academy provides a good quality of teaching. One commented, 'teachers are extremely helpful and encourage my son in both the academic and social aspects of his school life.'

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour and safety are good and contribute to students' good achievement. Virtually all students, parents, carers and staff agree that the academy is a safe place. Students say they are taught effectively about many aspects of personal safety. They state that bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber bullying, is rare, and that they have confidence in the academy's systems for dealing with it. The causes of bullying and intolerance are discussed openly in assemblies and tutorials. Initiatives, such as the 'Well Wall' web page, provide students with effective channels to explore their concerns. Students enjoy the academy's 'super learning days' and cite examples of how inspirational speakers have influenced their attitudes and behaviour. They celebrate individual differences and are tolerant of each other's beliefs.

Behaviour in lessons is mostly good, and in some cases outstanding, underpinned by positive relationships and an environment that builds students' self-esteem. On a few occasions they lose concentration and their learning slows. The majority of parents state that behaviour is good. A few have concerns about occasional disruption to learning caused by a small minority of boys. Students echo this view. The academy's behaviour management system is effective in promoting positive behaviour for learning. Exclusions are rare due to the tenacious efforts of staff and the governing body to support students with particular needs. Attendance levels have risen and are above the national average. There has been a reduction in the number of students who are persistently absent from the academy. Students are involved in monitoring their own attendance, along with their form tutors, and understand its importance in relation to their achievement. Punctuality to lessons is good and conduct around the site is orderly and good-humoured. Many students willingly take on leadership responsibilities and are proud to be ambassadors for the academy. Sixth formers contribute to the main academy, for instance, by acting as reading mentors for younger students.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good, resulting in improving achievement as a result of increasingly strong teaching. The Principal, senior leaders and the governing body are highly ambitious and committed to raising the achievement of all students. Their mission is to foster the skills and talents of students in different contexts and to this end they have established a range of successful partnerships that enhance students' employability by providing them with relevant work-based experiences. Students' enterprise and ecological responsibility are encouraged through initiatives from bee-keeping to go-karting and they have achieved success in national technology challenges. Partnership with the local girls' school is valued by students, particularly when they contribute to each other's drama productions. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted across the curriculum, with exemplary practice in religious education. International dimensions, including through a longstanding African link, add to students' understanding of global diversity. Equality is emphasised through the academy's curriculum and pastoral arrangements. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Students engage with visitors from a variety of cultures and backgrounds, whom they treat with respect. The academy operates as a harmonious community.

The academy's curriculum is kept under continuous review and is regularly adjusted, following consultation, to reflect the academy's priorities. Leaders recognise the need to accelerate students' progress and to develop a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy skills; a new literacy co-ordinator has taken up post and has linked with another school to explore and adapt effective practice. A new head of English started at the academy in September 2011 and has been instrumental in securing greater consistency of assessment within his department.

Senior leaders have devised a quality assurance framework that provides a structure for self-evaluation at faculty and whole school levels. Lesson observations are undertaken regularly and inform performance management. A systematic programme of continuing professional development supports staff and enables sharing of good practice. Leaders do not always make links between lesson observations and other evidence of students' progress when evaluating the impact of teaching over time. The academy's improvement plan is comprehensive and reflects leadership that has been distributed so that a range of staff have responsibility for key developments. Planning addresses the areas of relative weakness in students' achievement. Lines of accountability are clear. Success criteria are not always closely linked to students' outcomes and this leads to the academy's self-evaluation being over-generous in some aspects. Leaders' track record of making improvements, along with their energy and drive, indicate that they have good capacity to take the academy from strength to strength.

The governing body is fully involved in the life of the academy and contributes significantly to its development. Members offer challenge and support to both staff and students. The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and students' safety is given a high priority.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor Standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



20 April 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Wellacre Academy, Flixton M41 6AP**

Thank you for the help you gave to the inspection team when we visited your academy recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us and those who completed the questionnaire.

We judged Wellacre Academy to be good in all aspects. Most of you achieve well; the academy's performance in terms of the numbers of you who gain five or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A\* to C is particularly impressive. You enjoy your lessons and the wealth of extra-curricular activities available to you, including sports, drama and many clubs associated with technology and enterprise. You take on responsibilities willingly and are proud ambassadors for the academy. Your behaviour is generally thoughtful and good-humoured. You appreciate your teachers; inspectors agree that staff work very hard to ensure that you understand your work and find it interesting.

We have agreed with the views of the academy's leaders about how it can improve further. We think more of you can make even better progress, particularly in English. To do this, we are asking all your teachers to help you develop your literacy skills further. Many of you told us that the Drop Everything and Read programme has made you more enthusiastic about books. The academy has plans to build on this to help you with your comprehension. Together with this, we think that there should be more opportunities for you to explain your ideas fully in lessons. Also, the quality, presentation and accuracy of your writing can be improved.

We are confident that you will play your part by continuing to read enthusiastically, contributing your ideas in class and acting on your teachers' advice. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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