

# The Bulwell Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	135685
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	381914
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Davinder Dosanjh 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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	928
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	34
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Mitchell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Graham Roberts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Squires Avenue Nottingham NG6 8HG
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<b>Fax number</b>	0115 975 4888
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	16–17 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	381914



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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Davinder Dosanjh	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christopher Cheswright	Additional Inspector
Jean Whalley	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed 38 lessons taught by 35 teachers, including six joint observations with members of the school's senior team. They made short visits to other lessons and an assembly. Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the new sponsor. They observed the school's work, looked at the tracking of students' progress, and scrutinised students' work, whole-school and subject monitoring and evaluation documents, records of students' attendance and reports from consultants. They reviewed responses to questionnaires from 125 parents and carers, 123 students and 59 staff.

## Information about the school

The Bulwell Academy opened in September 2009. It is sponsored by Edge, an independent charity, and specialises in business and enterprise. The academy is an average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is very much higher than the national average. The proportion of students registered by the academy as having disabilities or special educational needs is above the national figure; however, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is similar to that found nationally. The academy has a specialist unit for students with autistic spectrum disorder. In 2011 the academy's results did not meet the floor standard set by the government as a minimum expectation 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>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory academy. It is a cohesive and an inclusive academy. Relationships between adults and students are positive and a significant strength. The specialist unit for students with autistic spectrum disorder provides focussed care and support for a small number of students. Most aspects of the academy are improving. The academy was not judged good because attainment in English and mathematics is low. The quality of learning in lessons is too variable to secure consistently good progress across the curriculum. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Students' achievement is satisfactory because from below-average starting points they reach below average levels of attainment by the end of Year 11. Intensive additional support for students in the current Year 11 means the academy is on track to exceed the floor standard in 2012 because it has already secured examination results.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, including in the sixth form, with some that is good and outstanding. The quality of teaching is variable. Lessons are consistently planned to ensure students know what they will be learning. However, not all teaching meets the varying needs of students sufficiently well and does not always engage students to be more active in their learning. There is not enough focus on improving weak literacy skills and marking is sometimes inconsistent in supporting students' next steps for improvement.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. The school is a calm and orderly place. Conversations with students indicate they feel safe and well cared for. Variations in the way staff manage behaviour in lessons affect students' learning. Attendance continues to improve but older students have higher rates of persistent absence.

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- The sixth form is satisfactory. Given their starting points, students make satisfactory progress overall. The curriculum that is offered is continually being enhanced through partnerships with other schools. Sixth form students are good role models for younger students, helping in lessons and taking on leadership roles. Attendance is high.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders are effectively tackling past weaknesses. Middle leadership is improving. Performance management systems are being used effectively to improve the quality of teaching but there remain too many inconsistencies. Engagement with parents is not effective enough and the academy has identified that this needs improving.

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

- Accelerate the rate of progress all students are making in English and mathematics by:
  - consolidating opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
  - setting literacy and numeracy targets for students to be used across subjects when appropriate.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that the vast majority is consistently good by:
  - ensuring that in all lessons, teachers match learning activities more closely to the individual needs of students
  - ensuring lessons engage all students, promote active learning and provide good opportunities for students to work independently
  - ensuring marking is of consistently high quality and informs students how to improve and requires them to act on this feedback
  - ensuring that staff consistently reinforce good behaviour so students are ready to learn and take an active part in lessons.
- Sustain the rising trend in attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent by:
  - evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance
  - improving the academy's engagement with parents and carers.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Students' attainment when they join the academy in Year 7 is below average, particularly in their literacy skills. Having exceeded the government's floor standard

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in 2010, it dropped back to below in 2011. The academy is back on track to exceed the floor target because students have taken examinations early in mathematics and English and secured their positive results already.

There is focused support to improve literacy and a skills-based learning programme in Years 7 and 8. Alongside satisfactory teaching this means students make satisfactory progress in lessons. The use of a reading programme to tackle students' weak literacy skills is helping to raise achievement. However, the focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is not always precise enough to enable students to use specific subject vocabulary more confidently.

Among the different groups represented in the school, girls reach higher standards in English than boys, with only a small difference in mathematics. The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs is improving because there is better targeting of the support and strategies for use in lessons. Teachers comment on how well informed they are of the individual needs of each student. However, there remains a wider gap between the performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students. Students with autistic spectrum disorder make satisfactory progress and receive personalised support within the unit. The majority of parents and carers feel their child is making good progress in the school, but the inspection findings indicate that progress is satisfactory. In lessons, most students apply themselves productively. Learning is strongest in lessons where there is an element of independence, pair and group work. In a Year 8 Geography lesson students shared ideas very well on the causes and effects of flooding in pairs and then compared answers with other groups. They were making good decisions about short-term and long-term effects of flooding and sharing their thoughtful analysis with each other. In some other lessons, learning tasks do not always meet the needs of students sufficiently well because all groups are learning at the same pace.

### **Quality of teaching**

Most students, parents and carers, are positive about teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is improving; however there still remains considerable variability and it is satisfactory overall. Teaching facilitates good relationships between students, paired and group work is effective at promoting collaboration and there are positive and respectful relationships between students and between students and teachers and other adults. Most lesson plans include clear and appropriate learning objectives. In the best examples there are an appropriate range of activities which build on students' earlier learning and prior attainment. However, in too many lessons it remains the case that all students complete the same task regardless of their prior attainment. Resources are sometimes well matched to the needs of students and contribute to good learning. A variety of teaching styles and a wider range of activities to engage, motivate and build the independence of learners are being increasingly used. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson on ratios the teacher fully engaged the students by his passion for the subject and his strong relationships with the class. There was a clear focus on students' progress, which was achieved

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by the students being fully aware of what was needed to achieve their target levels, and beyond. Students were given a range of opportunities to find different ways to meet their targets. Students had opportunities to work both individually and in groups, with progressive activities which effectively built upon one another. The lesson also supported the development of social skills and mutual respect and support. A well planned History lesson on the 'Blitzkrieg' allowed many opportunities for students to reflect on how weapons were used in war. Students showed good empathy. While some lessons positively promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, opportunities are often missed.

Initial questioning is used well to elicit students' understanding; however the effective use of follow-up questioning to challenge is less well developed. The pace of lessons varies from good to sluggish. Where pace is good it is due to well-structured lessons often with well-managed and timed sequences which move learning on to meet objectives, with regular reviews of learning and progress. The marking of books is variable: the best marking gives clear guidance to students on how to improve their work and achieve and exceed their target. Assessment-and-record logs in humanities and English enable students to keep a clear overview of their progress. However, it remains the case that some books have no targets for improvement with scant comments that do not really inform the students of their progress. Students do not always sufficiently act on the comments and targets set by teachers. The teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs shows similar variation to that of other students. Teachers do not always adapt their lessons effectively to follow the suggestions set on the individual needs plan.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

While parents and carers express some concerns about behaviour, most students are positive. Strategies to deal with students experiencing behavioural difficulties are effective and students report positive improvements in the way they take responsibility for their behaviour. During the inspection, students' behaviour was good around the school. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. They are cooperative but are passive rather than active learners because not enough lessons are developing independent learning skills. Behaviour in lessons is less than good when teachers are not consistent in using agreed behaviour management strategies and this was raised by parents and carers in the questionnaires.

Students know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that the small numbers of bullying incidents are dealt with appropriately by their teachers. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. As a result, students feel safe in school and a large majority of parents and carers agree.

Attendance rates are below the national average. There is a more systematic approach to improving attendance. These include the work of two attendance officers and rewards for good attendance. Although attendance is improving, it

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remains a focus for the school. School action plus students have lower levels of attendance in comparison to other groups.

## **Leadership and management**

The academy is led effectively, and senior leaders are driving forward improvements. There are rigorous systems to track students' progress and as a result intensive intervention is put into place to deal with underachievement. This has led to the current Year 11 securing examination results which will put them on track to exceed the floor standard in 2012. There are clear lines of accountability between senior and middle leaders to provide challenge and support. Newly appointed middle leaders are being coached through their roles to ensure increased rigour in their work. Some aspects of the academy's monitoring and evaluation is not sharp enough because it is not always clear that actions are making an impact. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Clear priorities have been identified for whole staff training and this has enabled more teachers to teach effective lessons. However, these priorities remain for some staff as they are not yet consistently fully established as routine practice within the academy. Monitoring of teaching and learning is broadly accurate, although the academy's view of the overall quality of teaching is optimistic.

The academy's effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is satisfactory. It is closing the gap in achievement between different groups of students. The academy has demonstrated that it has capacity to make further improvements because of improvements in attendance, provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs and attainment in Year 11. The governing body discharges its responsibilities effectively. Members understand the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and thus ensuring the well-being of students. The majority of parents and carers were positive in their responses but a minority did not feel the academy responded well to their concerns. Leaders of the academy are promoting more positive engagement.

The broad and balanced curriculum enables students to achieve satisfactorily. The range of GCSE and vocational courses meets students' needs. In addition, students have two hours of business and community time a week to develop skills for enterprise. The business and enterprise specialism is enhancing the curriculum through specialist lectures and a broad range of trips and visits. Students with autistic spectrum disorder have personal timetables and access relevant parts of the curriculum as appropriate for their needs. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development reasonably well. These aspects of learning are evident in subjects and promoted through lessons in personal development, enrichment activities, assemblies and cultural links with Zimbabwe and Nepal.



## 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.**



18 May 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Bulwell Academy, Nottingham, NG6 8HG**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us during the inspection. We found it very helpful to talk to you, look at your work and visit your lessons.

The academy provides you with a satisfactory education. Staff work hard to support you in your work. Relationships between adults and students are positive and a significant strength. Most aspects of the academy are improving. It provides an inclusive environment for all students regardless of their circumstances. Overall teaching is satisfactory and improving. The school is an orderly place. Conversations with you indicate that you feel safe and well cared for. The curriculum is broad and you benefit from a wide range of courses and business activities. The sixth form is satisfactory. Sixth form students are good role models to younger students. Your academy is led effectively by your principal and the team of leaders and managers who are determined to ensure that it provides the best for every one of you.

To improve some areas of its work, we have asked the academy to:

- accelerate the rate of progress you are making in English and mathematics
- improve the quality of teaching so that the vast majority is consistently good
- continue to improve attendance and reduce the number of students who have high absence.

You have a part to play and you can help your school by ensuring that you attend regularly and take an active part in lessons and in your learning. I wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh  
Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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