

# The Albion Academy

1 London Street, Salford, Lancashire, M6 6QT

**Inspection dates** 24–25 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' attainment was unacceptably low in 2013 and students made slow progress. Their current progress is better, but is still not good enough.
- Progress in English is slower than the national expectation.
- Teaching lacks the consistent effectiveness to ensure that students learn well enough. Too much teaching requires improvement and some is inadequate.
- Teachers' marking is of variable quality. Opportunities to promote students' literacy are missed in some lessons. Students' presentation is not good enough in some lessons. Homework is not set frequently enough.
- The attendance of students with a statement of special educational needs is lower than others. Students with disabilities or special educational needs do not always achieve well enough.
- Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are not always good enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- The principal provides effective leadership and sets high expectations.
- Senior and middle leadership are good.
- Rates of progress, including those of the most able and those supported by the pupil premium, have increased and the academy's data indicate that results will improve this year.
- The quality of teaching is improving and there is good practice that is beginning to be shared.
- Attendance has risen to above the national average.
- Teachers and other members of staff know students as individuals very well and provide good support.
- The academy keeps students safe and secure. The academy works well with parents.
- Governors provide strong support and effective challenge to academy leaders. They are well informed about the academy.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons taught by 32 teachers. They examined a sample of students' work and students' exercise books in lessons.
- The conduct of students was observed throughout the school day.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. They met with groups of students and talked informally with others in lessons and around the academy.
- Documents were examined including the academy's self-evaluation information, development plan, safeguarding records, governing body minutes and data relating to students' achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, representatives of the academy's sponsor and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed 11 responses to Parent View, which is Ofsted's on-line questionnaire for parents. Questionnaire returns from 59 members of staff were examined.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

## Inspection team

David Selby, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Hayter	Additional Inspector
Johan MacKinnon	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary academy.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium<sup>1</sup> is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students that the academy has identified as disabled or having special educational needs and requiring support through school action is well above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average as is the proportion of students whose first language is not English.
- The proportion of students who live in areas of high deprivation is well above average.
- Eight students in Year 10 and three students in Year 9 take part in off-site alternative learning provided by six local organisations.
- The principal joined the academy at its start in September 2012.
- The academy is sponsored by the Salford Academy Trust.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Ensure that the quality of teaching continues its improvement so that all is at least good and more is outstanding by:
  - further sharing the existing effective practice in the academy
  - ensuring that marking gives clear advice on how students can improve their work, encourages them to respond and checks further on these responses
  - using opportunities to develop students' literacy in all lessons and written tasks
  - regularly setting homework which is sufficiently demanding
  - requiring students to present work to the best of their ability.
- Further embed the systems to support the learning needs of students with disabilities or special educational needs by:
  - ensuring that all have equally good attendance
  - ensuring that they make consistently good progress.
- Improve students' management of their own behaviour around the academy.
- Ensure that the systems to support good behaviour in classrooms are consistently implemented by all teachers.

The pupil premium is specific, additional funding provided to support the education of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years and children who have been looked after continuously for a period of 6 months.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with attainment which is generally well below the national average.
- In 2103, the proportion of Year 11 students gaining at least five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, was much lower than the national average. Their slow progress in earlier years did not speed up enough to raise their attainment. The current progress of students is much more rapid. Academy data indicate that students now in Year 11 are likely to gain results which are much closer to the national average.
- The low attainment of Year 11 students in 2013 overall was also seen in other subjects. Students' poor attendance, late changes to the subjects studied in Year 10 and teaching which did not ensure students' learning was good enough, contributed to this. The significant improvements to all these aspects and other areas of the academy's work mean that achievement is improving across all subjects.
- In 2013, the proportion of Year 11 students who made the progress expected nationally in English and mathematics was very low. Very few also made more than expected progress. The academy now challenges students to progress more quickly than the national expectation. The academy's measures of the progress of Year 11 show that students are exceeding this in mathematics. While rates of progress in English have shown marked increases, senior leaders' analysis suggests that progress in English will not reach national expectations until 2015.
- The current data suggest that students supported by the pupil premium will achieve at least as well as others. In 2013, the slower progress of students supported by the pupil premium resulted in their GCSE grades in English and mathematics being roughly half a grade below those of others. The closing of gaps in attainment is a result of the well planned use of the pupil premium, particularly to improve the attendance of the students involved, and the improved teaching.
- The number of students entered for GCSE examinations in mathematics and English before the end of Year 11 has reduced significantly. Students are entered early only if leaders judge this will help the students achieve better grades.
- Senior leaders carefully track the attendance and achievement of the small number of students taking part in alternative provision. The alternative provision contributes well to students' wider achievement.
- Academy leaders set the same high expectations for the progress of students with disabilities or who have special educational needs, but their attendance is lower and their achievement varies. Systems to support these students are well planned but have not yet had time to be fully embedded by all teachers. Students with low starting points and poor literacy skills are provided with support that matches their needs. This includes, for example, smaller classes for identified groups of students in Key Stage 3 that give highly structured literacy and social skills development and the use of software packages designed to develop literacy skills. This work has led to gains in these students' reading ages. Students' literacy skills are further developed by their increasing use of the recently-created library.
- Progress seen by inspectors in lessons varied. High expectations of the quality and quantity of most-able students' written work were seen, for example, in mathematics books. This is contributing to the better achievement of these students.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not ensure that students' achievement has been good over time. While teaching is improving, it is not consistently good enough to overcome slower learning in the past.
- Good teaching and learning was observed by inspectors and some that was outstanding. However, too much required improvement and a small proportion was inadequate.

- Where students learn most quickly, teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour, effort and high quality work. Teachers check that students are developing their understanding and use this to provide extra challenge. When this happens, the students show a keenness to learn which, in turn, raises their aspirations further. This was seen in a Year 8 science lesson where students were exploring ideas about photosynthesis to GCSE standard. Their learning was demonstrated in the length and high quality of their written work.
- In the lessons where learning was less rapid, the leaders' high expectations of students' progress are not matched by teachers' expectations of students' work. When the work set did not help students to understand, they lost interest which meant that teachers had to spend more time managing students' behaviour. In these lessons teachers used questioning less well to extend and explore students' knowledge and understanding.
- Marking is inconsistent. In some books, teachers use their comments on students' work and the students' response to build students' knowledge and confidence. In others, marking does not clearly assess students' learning, tell them how well they are doing or give specific feedback. In some books, poor standards of presentation or graffiti are not challenged. Some teachers miss opportunities to further develop students' literacy through, for example, identifying spelling errors.
- Students who spoke with inspectors said that homework is generally infrequent or when it is set, that it is sometimes undemanding. Inspectors saw little homework being set.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding that only the most effective teaching will allow students to overcome previous underachievement and the social challenges many face that make learning harder. Senior leaders' line management of middle leaders and, in turn, their work with teachers, is being used to ensure that teaching improves. Some less effective teachers have left the academy. A small group of highly effective teachers is used to provide training and support of others. External training programmes that aim to help teachers to improve their practice, whatever their starting points, are offered. The academy identifies that these steps have led to improvement with less effective teaching becoming infrequent.
- Teachers have started to share more effective teaching practice. A pilot programme where groups of three teachers have learned from each other has been completed. However, sharing of best practice in the academy is at an early stage.

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

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Attitudes to learning are variable and behaviour on corridors is occasionally boisterous.
- The behaviour of many students around the academy is good. Students are friendly towards each other and the atmosphere is generally calm and pleasant. Staff supervision levels are high, which encourages most students to behave well. However, when staff were not as visible, behaviour became less good. Some slow response by students to teachers' instructions was seen by inspectors.
- The students who met inspectors demonstrated a commitment to the academy. They felt that it was good. They said that behaviour had improved since the academy started, although younger students felt that a high proportion of their lessons was disturbed by poor behaviour. Inspectors saw behaviour in classrooms which was not good enough in a minority of lessons. This included instances where students lost their concentration, in addition to instances where students' behaviour caused some disturbance to the class. Where teaching captivates students' interests and gives them confidence, behaviour is very good, for example in a very effective Year 8 food technology lesson where student 'Head Chefs' were asked to provide advice to other students; they did this to very good effect.
- While students talk positively of the academy and know of its high expectations, this is not always reflected in students' actions. Too many students chew gum in class and around the academy. Too much written work is untidy. Some students are too slow to get to lessons.
- Students told inspectors that bullying is rare and if any occurred, it would be acted on by staff.

They said that homophobic language was heard and that there had been instances of racist behaviour between students. Inspectors found that academy leaders, teachers and other staff know the students very well as individuals and provide comprehensive support to students. Support includes longer-term guidance to any student whose relationship with others has deteriorated, so that any issues are resolved. The good knowledge of individuals underpins the academy's commitment to equality and valuing all people.

- The academy has introduced new systems to reward good work and behaviour and to discourage poor behaviour. These are understood by students, who say that the systems help them to behave well. The frequency of fixed-term exclusion has increased as sanctions are now followed through rigorously. Rates of students being required to leave lessons to work elsewhere in the academy have fallen significantly. This is as a result of senior leaders' clear expectation that students should be in classrooms learning and that class teachers have a responsibility to make sure this happens.
- The attendance of students is above the national average as a result of the actions taken by academy leaders to engage well with all families and to ensure that parents and students know how important it is for students to be in the academy. The attendance of students with a statement of special educational needs is lower than others. A new system to support good attendance has been introduced. Follow-up to any absence is rigorous.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and they are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example, when using the internet. Arrangements for ensuring that students involved in off-site provision or activities are safe are thorough. The work of academy leaders with other agencies that support potentially vulnerable young people is highly effective.
- The arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

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

- The principal provides resolute leadership that is based on widely understood and shared high expectations amongst staff and students. She has ensured that the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders are clear. This has led to increasing confidence and effectiveness. The principal's work is valued by staff. Students say that she is fair.
- The academy's systems for accountability and line management are very secure. All leaders and teachers are involved in frequent discussion about their impact. The academy's systems to collect and evaluate data on students' achievement provide high quality information which leaders and governors routinely use to check that achievement is increasing and, if not, to decide what needs to be done to ensure that this happens.
- The performance management arrangements for teachers are rigorous. Any underperformance of teachers is tackled with a combination of firm and supportive line management and training and further action, if improvement does not follow. This has contributed to the improvement in leadership and teaching. Teachers' salaries do not increase unless their demanding targets have been met.
- The academy's evaluation of its effectiveness is detailed and honest.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it meets students' needs. Senior leaders have ensured that the interests of students and their achievement have been fully taken into account when deciding when to implement changes. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' learning are given due importance. A 'Giant Spirits of Salford' exhibition had been presented to members of the wider community on the day before the inspection. Students as well as members of the wider community had contributed to this and it was then used with Year 7 students in the academy. This led to students deepening their awareness of their local community. Student participation, for example, as ambassadors or as part of the academy's community team also allows students to develop their wider life skills.
- Senior leaders make contributions to improvement in other schools. The principal chairs a local emotional health and well-being board which reviews how education and health professionals

can work together to support young people. A vice-principal spends three days each week this term supporting another local school.

- While the response to Ofsted's on-line survey for parents was low, those who responded were satisfied with the academy. The large majority of parents who have completed the academy's own surveys share a similar view.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support and challenge to this academy. The local authority is a partner in the Trust arrangements for the academy. There is a common understanding of the different responsibilities of the academy, its Trust and the local authority, which allows the academy to benefit. These relationships mean that the academy can make best use of the support the local authority makes available from its limited resources. The local authority is prepared to adopt good practice developed through its partnership with the academy, for example, in the use of educational welfare officers.
- The Salford Academy Trust is active in monitoring and supporting to quality of education in the academy. Trust members are committed to further building on the improvement in the academy. The Trust provides a very experienced consultant who provides additional challenge to academy leaders.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body provides good support to academy leaders. The good match of governors' skills and experience to the needs of the school mean that governors are able to offer well-judged challenge. The principal has worked closely with the Chair of Governors to ensure that their weekly discussions are as probing as possible.
- Governors are appropriately involved in the management of teachers' performance. This includes the review of the principal's recommendations on teachers' pay progression, but also support to senior leaders as they make difficult decisions on issues of teachers' underperformance.
- Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching through their link arrangements with subject departments and their discussion with senior and middle leaders. Their discussions also include the achievement of students. They are well informed about this through the academy's own data systems.
- Senior leaders provide governors with detailed information about the use and impact of the pupil premium. Governors' scrutiny of this is detailed and includes, for example, challenge to ensure that a small underspend in one year is used for its intended purpose in the next.

## 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>	138418
<b>Local authority</b>	Salford
<b>Inspection number</b>	426044

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

<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>	754
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Wilson
<b>Principal</b>	Jenny Langley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 921 1230
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