

Salford City Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135071
Inspection number	322340
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	624
6th form	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Roger Glew
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Haddock
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Northfleet Road Peel Green Eccles Manchester Lancashire M30 7PQ
Telephone number	0161 7895359
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Salford City Academy opened in September 2005, originally housed in the buildings of the predecessor school before moving into its new buildings in September 2006. Some of the old buildings were refurbished to house the sixth form which opened in September 2007. The academy has a Christian ethos and its sponsors are the United Learning Trust (ULT) and the Diocese of Manchester. It gained sports specialism in 2005 and retains the predecessor school's designation as a Training School, partnered with Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan and Edge Hill Universities for initial teacher training.

The academy is a smaller than average sized school with a small sixth form. Students attend from the local area which includes districts of high social and economic disadvantage. A third of the students are eligible to claim free school meals, which is well above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although a below average number have a statement for their special educational needs. The majority of students are of White British heritage. Only a small number are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as their second language.

The academy has achieved Healthy Schools, Futures Vision and Investors in People awards, the Inclusion Quality Mark and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Salford City Academy is providing a good education for its students. The impact of good leadership and management can be seen in a number of improvements in the academy's provision since it opened less than three years ago. There is a shared commitment by leaders and the whole staff team to improving students' life chances and opportunities. Achievement is good: students are progressing well to reach standards which are broadly in line with the national average and indicate a rising trend. The academy's GCSE examination results for Year 11 students in 2007 placed it in the top 40 most improved schools over a three-year period. Leaders recognise that progress in Key Stage 3 has not been as strong as in Key Stage 4 and are taking action to remedy this. As a result, the academy is on track to reach its challenging targets for both key stages this year.

The quality of teaching is good overall, as the academy has put much time and energy into improving this and raising teachers' expectations of what the students can achieve. Staff are working well as a team with the shared determination to make lessons more consistently interesting and challenging.

The academy is committed to inclusion and provides good levels of care, guidance and support for all students. A range of effective systems are in place to achieve this, including personal mentoring, learning support and close links with a number of outside agencies for the benefit of students experiencing personal or learning difficulties. These measures have yet to have a full impact on students' personal development, which is satisfactory. Not all students, or their parents and carers, feel that they can express their views and be more involved in contributing to the academy's current work and future developments. Whilst good behaviour and attitudes to learning are evident in the majority of lessons, some students require close supervision rather than taking responsibility for achieving good standards of behaviour for themselves. A minority display some cynicism towards life in the academy, rather than a sense of pride. Others are more appreciative of what the academy has to offer them, including its very good facilities, new technologies and enrichment opportunities within a good quality curriculum. Many also enjoy the additional opportunities provided by the academy's sports specialism. This is also leading to a significant increase in the number of students participating in physical education subjects at Key Stage 4. The role of the specialist subject is beginning to contribute to the wider work of the academy and the local community.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the newly-formed sixth form is satisfactory and developing well. There are strengths in the quality of care, guidance and support which students value. Their personal development and well-being is a high priority, and inspectors agree with the academy's judgement that this is currently satisfactory overall and improving at a good rate.

Standards in the sixth form are broadly in line with national average figures and students overall make satisfactory progress when compared with their attainment prior to entering the sixth form. The academy has responded well to variations in attainment between subjects.

Challenging targets and systems to track students' progress are in place. Students' performance is closely monitored and they are fully involved in assessing their own progress through regular meetings with their personal mentor. Students speak in glowing terms of the help and support

they receive, both personally and academically. Good relationships between staff and students are evident. Students value the small class sizes and high levels of individual attention they are offered.

The curriculum is satisfactory with a developing range of advanced level and vocational courses for students of all abilities. Students are able to access an extensive variety of enrichment opportunities, including leadership development and careers information, which they value and enjoy. Sixth form leadership is satisfactory and improving, with close attention paid to student support and the organisation of provision to meet individual needs and career preferences.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use a wider range of positive strategies to improve students' personal development and ensure they have a strong voice within their academy and an increased sense of involvement and pride.
- Build on the improvements already made in teaching and learning to ensure that they are consistently good or better in order to raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' attainment on entry to the academy varies from year to year but is generally below average. Results in the 2007 national tests at Key Stage 3 were well below national average levels overall, although this represented satisfactory progress for those students. Variation between the three subjects indicated better performance in English and mathematics than in science, which was significantly below average. The number of students reaching the higher levels in these subjects was just below average in English and well below in mathematics and science. Effective actions have been taken to tackle these variations in performance, including where there were noticeable differences between the progress made by girls and boys. As a result, evidence shows that the academy's challenging targets for Key Stage 3 attainment in 2008 are within reach. This represents substantial improvement over previous years and exemplifies the continuing upward trend in achievement.

Most students taking examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2007 made very good progress, given their relative starting points in the predecessor school at Year 7. No groups underachieved, although girls' progress was more significant than that of boys. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made similarly good progress to their peers. These results also represented a good improvement on the academy's first examination results in 2006. The number of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE and equivalent was marginally above the national average. The proportion of students who attained five good passes with mathematics and English included was 14% higher than in 2006 and just below the national average. The academy has again set challenging targets for Key Stage 4 performance in 2008; progress-tracking records and students' work indicate that these are likely to be met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory with some good features.

Students demonstrate a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle through the academy's work in achieving the National Healthy Schools award and the range of popular sporting activities developed through the academy's specialism.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students contribute usefully to the wider community through initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and Junior Sports Leaders Award and have raised considerable funds for a charity project in Tanzania. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most students conduct themselves appropriately in lessons and around the academy, enabling effective learning to take place. However, some find it easier to exercise self-control when they are closely supervised. Students know that bullying and unfair treatment of others is unacceptable. Where bullying is reported, it is recorded and dealt with effectively by the academy, particularly incidents of racism and homophobia. A number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed some negative views about behaviour, but inspectors saw no poor behaviour during the inspection.

Attendance is satisfactory as a result of close monitoring and intervention with individual students whose attendance or punctuality gives cause for concern.

Students are making good progress in developing the personal qualities that will enable them to contribute effectively to the community and secure their own future economic well-being. Students are helped to develop good workplace skills through a range of vocational courses and enterprise activities such as the super-learning days.

The student council provides some opportunities to take responsibility but it does not have a strong presence in the academy and many students do not know who their council representatives are or how the council operates.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

The quality of teaching and learning is good. During the last two years, the academy has placed a strong emphasis on improving classroom practice, and monitoring systems are robust. Effective strategies have included individual support plans and the opportunity for teachers to share good practice.

Teachers plan their lessons well using a common format, and students understand fully what they are expected to learn. Relationships between students and teachers are effective. In the most successful lessons, teachers use prior attainment information and skilled questioning to challenge students of all abilities. Resources, particularly information and communication technology, are well used to support different activities in lessons and cater for a range of learning styles. There are also examples of students evaluating their own and other students' work to establish a clear understanding of how to improve further. This clearly strengthens students' ability to work independently. Students enjoy these lessons and they make good or better progress.

The academy has established rigorous systems to monitor student progress and set targets for improvement. Students are aware of their targets. Work is regularly assessed and marking generally explains to students how they might improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum meets well the students' interests and needs. The introduction of a Year 7 foundation group is helping the induction of less able students to the academy. Students enjoy a wide range of courses including accredited vocational options in Year 9. The academy's sports specialism is evident in much of what is on offer, particularly in the popular enrichment programme where students partake of a very wide range of activities from water-sports to breakdancing and photography.

Gifted and talented students benefit from the opportunity to broaden their curriculum diet by attending the twice weekly 'period 6' lessons, by joining AS classes in year 11, and through 'Aimhigher' activities such as visits to institutions of higher education.

A significant number of students take part in college and on-site based courses in areas such as hairdressing, vehicle repair and construction. Students studying health and social care benefit from health related placements as part of the 'medical mentoring scheme'. Along with an extensive range of work-related experiences and chances to develop enterprise skills, these factors help to ensure that students are well prepared for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding students are in place and meet current legal requirements. Staff work hard to provide a secure environment for students and there is a shared commitment from a range of personnel within the inclusion team to ensure that all students do as well as they can academically. Induction procedures are thorough and allow Year 7 students and those arriving midway through the academic year to settle quickly into academy life. The academy offers a comprehensive programme of careers advice for Year 9 and 11 students.

Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from a secure safety net of extra support and activities; there are strong and effective links with a range of outside agencies. For those at risk of exclusion, the 'reflection zone' provides a valuable alternative and helps to reintegrate students into their regular lessons. Many students know their target levels or grades and are beginning to understand how they can take responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The principal provides strong leadership and articulates a clear vision for the future of the academy. Her effective management of change has enabled the academy to develop in a positive direction as it moves towards its fourth year of existence. The principal is very well supported by a senior leadership team which carries responsibilities for key aspects of the academy's work. This team has been strengthened by additional appointments and training opportunities, and

has therefore increased in confidence and experience. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, although they have overestimated the impact of their work on students' personal development. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion and providing good levels of care, guidance and support.

Middle leadership has strengthened due to continued training and development, so that this is becoming more consistent. Good practice is shared and middle leaders are accountable for the performance of their departments through line management and exam review meetings. Departmental development plans are informed by monitoring activities, and many middle leaders are linking the evaluation of outcomes for students to the quality of classroom practice.

The academy is working hard to develop a good reputation in the community and is largely successful at this. However, the inspection questionnaires indicated that some parents have mixed feelings about the quality of communication with the academy and its ability to fully take into account the views of students and parents. These suggest that there is more to do in this respect.

The academy has maintained some productive links with the local authority and partnerships with other schools to share good practice.

Governors provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support to the work of the academy. They are aware of its strengths and of the challenges that are to be overcome if the academy is to continue its good rate of improvement. Effective forward planning is in place to secure the academy's financial future and capacity to improve is good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your academy recently to carry out its first inspection. We appreciated being able to talk to you around the building, during lessons and in meetings. Your views were important in helping us to make our judgements. The inspection team has agreed that the academy has developed well since opening less than three years ago, and is now providing a good education for you. It is led and managed well, and the teachers and leaders have worked hard to improve lessons so that more of them are now good. You receive good guidance and support from all of the staff, who want to make sure you have the best chance to succeed in the academy. You have good curriculum opportunities in class and enjoy a wide range of enrichment and sporting activities. As a result of all these things, standards are rising and you are making good progress.

Although the majority of students and parents expressed positive opinions about life at the academy, there are some who feel that your views are not listened to and taken into account sufficiently. The inspectors found that some of the points you raised in discussions with us showed that there is still a little way to go in ensuring that everyone feels involved in and loyal to their academy.

The inspectors have recommended two key priorities for the leaders and all staff to help improve the academy further. These are:

- look at ways to improve your personal development so that, for example, all of you display good behaviour and attitudes and take on responsibilities all the time, even when you are not closely supervised by staff; that you are more involved and confident in contributing positive ideas to influence decision-making; and you are proud to be a part of the 'academy family'
- continue the improvements already made in teaching and learning, aiming to make all lessons of good or excellent quality and to help to raise standards further.

Each of you has an important part to play in the academy's success, for instance by attending regularly and taking an active and positive part in all of your lessons and extra activities. We wish you all the best for the future.