

Marlborough Road Academy

Marlborough, Salford, Greater Manchester, M7 4XU

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well, often from low starting points. They achieve particularly strongly in English. Pupils who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to their classmates, as do the large numbers of pupils supported through the pupil premium. Wide gaps in performance so often seen nationally are not evident in this academy.
- The many pupils who join the academy at all times of the year and into different year groups settle quickly into academy life and soon start to make good progress.
- The school's very effective systems for those pupils who join the academy with little or no English ensure that they too get a good start to their education in the academy. Their progress soon accelerates.
- Pupils of all ages are keen to learn and are confident writers from a young age. Pupils behave well in lessons: they concentrate hard and show pride in their work. They find the creative curriculum interesting, and enjoy the many extra-curricular activities and trips.
- This school has come a long way in the last few years under the leadership of the Principal and senior staff. Their determination to create an academy in which pupils are safe, develop enthusiasm for learning and flourish as individuals has been successful. But they will not stop there. The goal is to enable pupils to achieve outstandingly, through reaching excellence in all that the school does.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding, particularly in English, where the academy prioritised staff's development. Leaders' expertise is shared beyond the academy.
- The leadership of teaching is uncompromising in driving improvement. It has the right blend of support and challenge, underpinned by impressive rigour in the ways it gathers and analyses evidence of teachers' performance. Teamwork between all staff, including the many additional adults, is highly effective.
- Governors and Board members have high levels of expertise and provide well-informed challenge and support for the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not as strong in some subjects as it is in English. A focus on teachers' expertise in deepening pupils' understanding of those subjects is an important next step.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The rich choice of indoor activities contrasts with those provided for learning outdoors. Reception's outdoor area is shabby.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons across all the classes in Years 1 to 6, four of which were conducted jointly with the Principal and the vice principal. An inspector observed parts of five phonics sessions jointly with the vice principal. He also heard two Year 2 and two Year 6 pupils read. The lead inspector observed morning sessions on phonics and guided reading and afternoon outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage. An inspector carried out a learning walk to look at the behaviour and learning of a sample of White British pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with the Principal, the vice principal, the assistant principal, the three phase leaders, the new Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the subject leaders for English, mathematics and PE, staff who are responsible for child protection, safeguarding, and English as an additional language.
- The lead inspector met with the Chair and four other governors, and the Chair and two other representatives of the Salford Academy Trust.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils to hear their views of the academy, with each group focusing on different aspects. They spoke with some parents at the start and end of the academy day.
- Inspectors scrutinised work across all subjects from a sample of pupils in each class in Reception and in Years 2, 4 and 6.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of the academy's documents related to improvement planning, self-evaluation, performance management and professional development, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, support for pupils, pupils' progress, attendance, safeguarding and the work of the governing body.
- The team took into account the 30 responses from staff to the Ofsted questionnaire, the responses of 12 parents to online questionnaire Parent View and also the school's analysis of the responses from parents and pupils to its own questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jane Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Griffin

Additional Inspector

Mary Lanovy-Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2012 on the site of the predecessor school. The senior leadership team, staff and pupils transferred to the academy with the headteacher becoming the Principal and the deputy headteacher becoming the vice principal. The academy is sponsored by Salford Academy Trust, a partnership between Salford City College, the University of Salford and Salford City Council.
- Recently completed building work has extended and refurbished the infant section of the school, and has linked it to the junior section.
- The academy is double the size of the average primary school. The number on roll is rising. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the beginning of the Nursery or Reception Years is very high and is a striking contextual characteristic of the school. Many of these pupils speak little or no English and have little experience of schooling. In the two years since the academy opened, nearly 200 pupils have joined partway through their primary schooling and about 150 have left. This mobility is primarily due to families moving to other parts of Manchester or elsewhere in the United Kingdom, or returning to their country of origin.
- Around 85% of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages. 67% have home languages other than English – indeed, 37 different home languages are spoken by pupils.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is much higher than average at around 65% overall, but higher still in Reception at 80%. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportions of pupils who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are average, while the proportion supported at school action is above the national average.
- In 2013, the academy met the floor standard, which sets out the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and progress during Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further across the curriculum, particularly in mathematics and science, deploying strategies similar to those used previously to improve and embed excellent practice in English. In particular:
 - strengthen teachers' subject expertise so that they can deepen and extend pupils' knowledge, reasoning and conceptual understanding
 - draw on individual teachers' subject specialisms and involve subject leaders more directly to support improvement to the teaching of their subject
 - focus on subject-specific detail in monitoring activities and when feeding back to staff.
- Enrich learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the outdoor environment, particularly for the Reception classes
 - providing a good range of activities to complement those children can choose to do indoors
 - ensuring clarity in staff's planning about the learning each activity potentially offers for different groups of children.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is rising across the academy. From low starting points, pupils make good progress. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is approaching national averages. Improving achievement, demonstrated in the academy's data analysis and robust tracking, was evident in pupils' work and in their good learning in lessons.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are generally well below those typical for their age. The academy's emphasis on, and skilful development of, children's communication and language skills mean that, by the end of Reception, children listen and concentrate well, and speak with confidence. They use their knowledge of letters, sounds, and how they blend (phonics) to read and write simple words, such as 'bang' and 'chop', although 'quiz' proved more of a challenge for one group of children. Some can write sentences, reaching the standard expected of five-year-olds, and a few go beyond this to manage a paragraph or two. In other areas of learning, standards are more uneven; lower for example in mathematics and understanding the world. The academy's intention to improve the outdoor environment provides an opportunity to develop good-quality activities to support children's learning in these strands.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show a clear trend of improvement although attainment remains below average, particularly in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. The academy expects a significant rise in the outcomes of the Year 1 phonics test this year.
- Outcomes of the Key Stage 2 assessments in 2013 provide a mixed picture. Pupils made exceptional progress in writing to exceed the national average and they matched the average in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. By contrast, attainment and progress in reading were below average. The academy's analysis of pupils' test papers shows that many pupils for whom English is not their first language had difficulty in completing the test in the time allowed. Changes to this year's assessment should benefit similar pupils this year. In mathematics, pupils made slightly above average progress in mathematics, but attainment was below average.
- The academy's data for the 2013 Year 6 cohort show what remarkable progress they made during Year 6 – nearly one whole National Curriculum level in each of reading, writing and mathematics. This strong progress meant that they were able to catch up ground lost in their earlier years in primary school.
- The academy's projections for 2014 point to higher attainment and good progress, with more pupils reaching Level 5 and, for the first time, a small number of the most able working at or close to Level 6.
- Pupils who join the academy partway through their education usually make at least expected progress once they have settled into life at the academy, although they often start from lower points than their classmates. Pupils who join with little or no English make accelerated progress as their English develops. Pupils who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to their classmates. Sharp analysis of data and timely interventions help pupils to overcome difficulties.
- Pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve well and sometimes outperform their classmates, for example in the proportion attaining Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. This contrasts sharply with the gaps in performance seen nationally and reflects the academy's success in promoting equality of opportunity.
- Pupils' good writing skills are evident across the curriculum, for instance in topics they study through the creative curriculum, which incorporates aspects of many subjects including history, geography and music. Many pupils enjoy reading widely too.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and show pride in their work. They are keen to answer questions, happily discuss their ideas with others, and listen carefully to their teachers, teaching assistants

and their classmates. Their well-developed speaking skills support their thinking, helping to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers are particularly knowledgeable about the teaching of English. They model writing exceptionally well, using technical language effectively, and inspiring pupils to become fluent writers both when set tasks in English lessons and when using their literacy skills across the curriculum. They provide pupils of all ages with plenty of opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences.
- Teachers are skilled in asking questions that check pupils' understanding and further their learning; for instance, in a mathematics lesson, low-attaining Year 2 pupils were asked, 'Have you got them all?' when they had found number bonds to 6, such as $4+2=6$. The subsequent discussion helped the pupils to develop a systematic approach to organising their list of number bonds and to see the patterns involved. During a Year 6 English activity, the teacher's open questions, delving into the motives of characters in *The School of Good and Evil*, encouraged curiosity and speculation in pupils' responses, which were expressed fluently. These pupils also showed awareness of the reader, through expression and the structure of the text.
- Time is used well, with phases of the lesson moving seamlessly from one part to the next. Teachers are alert to pupils' difficulties and adapt their teaching accordingly, for instance to make a teaching point when a common misunderstanding is spotted. They work effectively with additional adults, who use their initiative to adapt the planned support according to pupils' emerging needs. Pupils who speak little or no English are immersed in lessons but have adult support in their home language. For instance, an adult explained to a boy in his home language that he was to count blocks in fives, but the counting was to be in English, '5, 10, 15'.
- Pupils rise to teachers' high expectations of their work, contributions, and behaviour. Good relationships between adults and pupils and well-established systems for managing behaviour mean that management of behaviour is usually unobtrusive. Sometimes, where activities are less well structured, or lack challenge for the more able, some off-task chatter or fidgeting creeps in but this is not a regular feature of lessons. Occasionally, teachers' explanations lack depth of subject expertise, causing pupils to have difficulty grasping a concept and/or why a method works, which slows learning.
- Teachers' use of assessment is good. The academy's system of marking using 'green for growth' to indicate areas to improve and 'tickled pink' for strengths works well. Its frequency and quality mean that teachers know how well pupils are doing, and pupils understand what it means and how they might improve their work.
- Teachers provide a good range of activities that children can choose to do indoors. Outdoors, however, their choice is more limited. Teachers' planning for such activities lacks clarity about the learning each potentially provides for different groups of children, unlike the adult-led activities, which are carefully thought through.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy the academy and all that it offers inside and beyond the classroom. They spoke animatedly about the various trips they had been on, including to Salford City Council and Magistrates Court, Jodrell Bank and the outdoor activity centre Lledr Hall. They also enjoy various sporting activities and clubs. Such memorable opportunities and experiences make a significant difference to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance has risen to just above average, and persistent absence has reduced. This reflects pupils' enjoyment of the academy and the increasingly successful relationships with parents and carers. Punctuality at the start of the day and to lessons is good.
- The school is calm and orderly and, despite its size, has a friendly, family feel. A productive buzz pervades the academy during lesson time. Children in Reception and Nursery are very confident

in showing visitors what they are doing; they are independent and eager to learn. Older pupils take on a range of responsibilities such as members of the school council for which they have to be elected, and some apply to become play leaders.

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They know and follow routines. As they move around the academy, they are polite and well mannered, smiling and holding doors open for others. Outdoors, play is sometimes a little boisterous – boys in particular letting off steam. Some girls then prefer to be with their friends indoors. Girls also said they do not like it when boys swear.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents are pleased with the academy. Most parents and staff agree that pupils' behaviour is good, that pupils are well looked after and feel safe. Pupils referred to occasional incidents of name-calling, which they knew to be bullying, but also how such incidents had been quickly 'sorted out'. Checks are made later to ensure bullying has not re-started. Pupils felt confident to raise concerns and to voice their views. In 'pupil voice' surveys, the views of those pupils who have little English are gathered by pupils who speak the same language.
- Records show that tailored support, aligned with regular reviews of progress, has led to improvements in behaviour and in attitudes to learning for the few pupils who have particular behavioural needs.
- Pride is one of the academy's values. It was the focus of a thoughtful assembly on taking pride in 'doing the right thing'. It is reflected in pupils' pride in their work, their smart uniform and their academy.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders, governors and staff share the highest aspirations for all pupils' achievement and personal development, and this underpins all that they do every day. They are invigorated rather than daunted by the high levels of challenge presented by pupils' mobility, difficult home circumstances and low starting points. This is because they know the importance of the positive ethos they have established, which is helping all pupils to develop their potential and be able to triumph in the face of adversity.
- The extended senior leadership team works extremely effectively. Senior staff model the highest professional standards. Self-evaluation is accurate and backed up by comprehensive detail. Improvement plans identify appropriate priorities. Policies are fit for purpose and followed consistently.
- The leadership of teaching is highly rigorous and has secured the very strong practice in the teaching of English that ensures pupils make excellent progress. Ensuring pupils are confident and capable speakers, listeners, readers and writers, able therefore to express their thinking, has been a top priority for the academy. In mathematics, teaching is generally good but the step up to outstanding is to develop secure conceptual understanding, so that pupils can reason about mathematical relationships and see how different parts of mathematics link together.
- Monitoring of teaching is backed up by regular scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of assessment data. This provides leaders with accurate information about each teacher's strengths and areas for development, although these do not always make the most of subject-specific elements. The role of subject leaders might be developed to support this. Good use otherwise is made of best practice in the academy to support consistency and improvement, for instance in the excellent teaching of phonics. The approach to weaker practice is robust, with the right mix of support and challenge, linked to performance management. Newly qualified teachers are very well supported.
- The pupil premium funding is spent well, tailored to the pupils' needs. Three additional teachers keep class size down and therefore more individual attention can be given, especially to those pupils who have just arrived or have little English. The funding supports the many trips, visits and other activities that enrich pupils' learning and personal development.
- The curriculum continues to evolve in response to the improving outcomes and pupils' needs and potential. The academy plans to introduce Spanish into the curriculum next year. An audit of

physical education equipment has led to the use of the primary school sport funding to buy new equipment. The audit also identified where staff would benefit from professional development, for instance in teaching dance. Pupils are keen on sports and participate beyond lessons in a variety of competitive games. Key Stage 2 pupils took home several medals from Sport England athletics competitions, and are currently lying sixth in the local league of 22 schools. Other extra-curricular sports currently played include curling and cricket. A wide range of information is provided for parents on the academy's website, which is easy to navigate and up to date, but information on the curriculum is thin.

- Safeguarding meets requirements. Child protection arrangements are very robust; they are attuned to the high levels of mobility and pupils' home circumstances.
- The academy retains links with Salford local authority and buys a number of services. Senior leaders contribute to school improvement beyond the academy, for instance on literacy to teachers in other north-west local authorities, provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language, bespoke support for individual teachers and leaders in schools, and through participation at meetings at the Department for Education on new National Curriculum performance descriptors for reading.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local governing body has a high level of educational expertise which it uses to best effect to support and challenge the academy in all its work. Individual governors have links with particular aspects and visit the academy to gather first-hand evidence as part of their monitoring role. They are exceptionally well informed about the academy's work, particularly about the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed, pupils' progress and their behaviour.
 - Two vacancies for parent governors have recently arisen due to mobility.
 - The Salford Academy Board has strategic leadership of policy across three academies on areas such as finance, human resources and risk assessment. Financial management is secure. It has also focused successfully on development of leadership capacity at different levels.

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

Unique reference number	138417
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	426038

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Cowpe
Principal	Alison Cookson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 921 2110
Fax number	0161 921 2120
Email address	marlboroughroad.academy@salford.gov.uk

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