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» **A NEW CHAPTER** Pupils Ivy Makhoha, Zaya Purevsuied, and Ka Yan Yiu celebrate the news that Manchester Academy – which replaced Ducie High, once branded the worst school in the country – has been given the highest grade by school inspectors. The Moss Side school has been described as 'outstanding' » **Full story Page 5**

Reborn school is now a class act

■ Academy awarded highest possible status

■ Inspectors say pupils' progress 'outstanding'

YAKUB QURESHI

ASCHOOL branded 'the worst in the country' has made an astounding transformation.

Manchester Academy, which replaced Ducie High six years ago, has been hailed by inspectors as 'outstanding' - the highest possible grade.

The Moss Side school had been blighted by damning results, chaotic classroom behaviour, spiralling truancy and a £500,000 deficit.

A fifth of students left without a single qualification and two-thirds of new places were unfilled.

Education bosses finally backed make-or-break plans to change it into a pioneering city academy, which is state-funded but independently run.

Now, thanks to millions of pounds of investment and the

hard work of teachers and pupils, the new school has been held up as a glowing example to others.

A £12m building featuring the latest technology was built. Lessons were overhauled and students got a smart new uniform. Last year, 62 per cent of Manchester Academy students scored strong A-C grades compared with 13pc at Ducie.

Principal Kathy August, a former director of education in Stockport, credited the determination of students and staff for helping transform the school. She said: "Transforming a school is a marathon not a sprint. It has taken hard work each and every day to create something which will benefit the lives of each student and raise aspirations and self-belief in this part of Manchester for generations to come."

Ofsted highlighted 'an exceptional level of pastoral care' at the school and the report added: "Overall, students start at the academy with exceptionally low standards. No matter what their background, all students make outstanding progress as they move through the years."

Half of pupils are entitled to free meals and many are from



» **MAKING THE GRADE** Manchester Academy pupils Ivy Makhoha and Faizan Hassan

refugee or non-English-speaking families, but experts say the children perform much better than they would at most other schools.

And local councillor Alistair Cox, also a governor at the school, said the diverse background of Moss Side had been turned into a strength.

He said: "The range of pupils and the fact they speak so many languages has been celebrated rather than used as an excuse. All the pupils I've spoken to are incredibly proud that they represent so many different communities."

» **Comment: Page 8**

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PRAISE Kathy August, principal of Manchester Academy