

Manchester Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134224
Local Authority	NA
Inspection number	331639
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mark Wilson

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	863
Sixth form	76
Appropriate authority	Local governing body
Chair	Mr A Chamberlain
Headteacher	Mrs K August
Date of previous inspection	November 2005
Academy address	Moss Lane East Moss Side Manchester M14 4PX
Telephone number	0161 2321639
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the academy

Manchester Academy is sponsored through the United Learning Trust and holds dual specialist status in business and enterprise as well as creative arts. It has a wide, ethnically diverse population of students, the largest proportion being of Somali heritage. The number of students is slightly smaller than average. Many come from very challenging social and economic backgrounds. A significantly higher than usual proportion of students is boys. Many students join the academy after Year 7 and a considerable number are from overseas with little or no prior experience of formal education. More than half speak English as an additional language and a similar proportion is entitled to a free school meal. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The academy has a sixth form, which focuses predominantly upon meeting the needs of students with no obvious alternative place to continue their learning. Many of the sixth-form students are new to the country, speak English as an additional language and are in local authority care. The academy has won several national awards, including Artsmark Bronze and is deemed an International School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the academy

Grade: 1

Manchester Academy provides students with an outstanding education. This is because the outstanding leadership of the academy knows precisely what needs to be done to ensure students get the best possible start in life. The staff work incredibly hard to meet the very diverse needs of the students. This is rewarded in the exceptional improvements students make by the end of Year 11.

Overall, students join the academy with exceptionally low academic standards, often not having developed the learning skills expected for their age and with little or no spoken English. Nonetheless, very swiftly, the academy provides students with a highly personalised learning journey, through its outstanding care, guidance and support that very much supplements the overall good quality of teaching and learning that students receive. Consequently, by the end of Year 11, students show outstanding academic achievement, reaching standards that are broadly average to below average. Some of the teaching students receive is outstanding. However, there has not yet been sufficient sharing of this exemplary practice amongst teachers to provide students with more lessons that are outstanding.

Overall, students' personal development is good. The exceptional needs and extreme circumstances faced by some students in their lives outside of education mean the academy has to provide an exceptional level of pastoral care. The level of care is far more than would be needed ordinarily, to secure the good personal development. Students feel safe and especially well cared for. Bullying and racist incidents are rare and, if they do occur, they are tackled quickly and effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding students meet current government requirements. Students' good attitudes in lessons and their improving, now broadly average, attendance very much exemplifies the good level of enjoyment students have at the academy. One student summed up the views of others by saying, 'I'm really lucky to be at the academy, I love it here, I feel really safe, it's wonderful.' Students make excellent progress in developing the basic skills they need, especially in literacy.

Students also benefit from an outstanding curriculum, very much tailored to their individual needs and learning styles. The academy's areas of specialism, especially the business and enterprise strand, have helped develop significant opportunities for students to progress. An 'enterprise for employability' theme permeates the curriculum. Through its exceptionally strong partnerships with other organisations and businesses, students are prepared exceptionally well for further study and work beyond school.

The leadership and management overall, including the local governance, is outstanding. The principal and the senior leadership team set very high standards and demonstrate these as very effective role models. The impact of the work of the middle leaders has improved since the last inspection. These leaders are now very focused upon the key challenges the academy faces; they understand and rise admirably to the high level of accountability expected of them. The leadership know precisely what needs to be done and get on with it very effectively. Consequently, there has been sustained improved in the outcomes for students since the last inspection. This demonstrates how the academy provides outstanding value for money and gives it outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The academy has risen well to the challenge of providing for the needs of the unusually diverse group of students in the sixth form. An excellent curriculum has evolved to provide a very flexible set of courses within four pathways. Students are able to change pathways when appropriate, or, because of the excellent partnership arrangements, to take courses elsewhere. The strong emphasis on literacy and life skills means that students gain in confidence quickly and contribute more to their lessons.

Teaching overall is good, but there are some inconsistencies. Careful monitoring by leaders has highlighted the inconsistencies and training has been undertaken. However, teachers' skills in helping students to learn and think by talking ideas through are still variable. Excellent systems to support, guide and care for students are firmly established. Help with practical issues like opening bank accounts or registering with doctors goes alongside regular reviews of students' academic progress. As a result, students settle quickly and all achieve well, although the standards they reach are low.

Students' personal development is good; they show positive attitudes to learning and genuinely appreciate what is on offer. They talk of feeling part of a family and of the way the head of sixth form always has time for them. Their enjoyment is seen in the notable increase in those staying on at the sixth form for a second year and then planning to pursue further studies. As one student put it, 'This academy accepted me despite my low grades, when schools wouldn't. I am doing well now.'

The leadership of the sixth form is good. It has, for example, managed a growth in student numbers and expanded the curriculum significantly. Given these recent improvements, there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What the academy should do to improve further

- Share with teachers the components of the exemplary teaching seen in the academy to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall, students start at the academy with exceptionally low standards. No matter what their background, all groups of students make outstanding progress as they move through the years. This is because of the good teaching they receive, an outstanding curriculum that meets their needs fully and exemplary support for their academic progress. Although standards at the end of Year 11 in 2008 were below average overall, students' achievement in their GCSEs was outstanding. Their results were very much better than might have been predicted given their starting points. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C was in line with the national average, as were, for example, standards in the specialist subject of art and design. Over the last few years, there has been a significant improvement in the

examination results at the end of Year 11. The academy's current data indicates this trend of improvement is continuing. However, students make much better progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. This is because teachers have to work harder with younger students to overcome weaknesses in their learning skills and the inability of a minority to concentrate long enough in lessons. Consequently, it takes time for the full impact of the academy's actions to be felt. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, progress as well as other students because they are supported extremely well. Students arrive in the sixth form generally with very limited skills in speaking English. They achieve well though their standards remain very low in relation to national standards for sixth forms.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good and the academy works very hard at this. Students show a strong sense of right and wrong in how they respect each other and staff. They show good spiritual, moral and social development. They also enjoy the good opportunities to learn about other cultures through literature, art and music. Students' limited language skills restrict the effectiveness of some of their responses and discussion skills. Students' good knowledge of the implications of diet, allied to their enthusiasm for the many sporting opportunities, from dance to cricket, gives them a good start in leading healthy lives. Behaviour is good, with notable levels of tolerance and good humour between different groups. The number of exclusions has declined. However, immaturity shows itself occasionally and can become disruptive if teachers do not nip it in the bud. An exceptional strength is the contribution students make to the community. Within the academy, this contribution includes organising charity events and influencing decisions, such as improved canteen facilities or interviewing prospective new staff. Students show their wider commitment to the community through extensive work with local primary schools and sitting as advisory members on an NHS Trust forum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall good quality of teaching and learning contributes well to the students' enjoyment and achievement. The best lessons are characterised by strong planning, based on very effective assessment procedures, in order that students are very well challenged and their needs very well catered for. In these lessons, very good questioning helps students to think deeply and secures mature and well-considered responses. Similarly, relationships between teachers and students are strong. The teachers' subject knowledge is very secure. Their teaching is energetic and they assess students' learning regularly against the lesson objectives.

Excellent use of technical language and approaches to develop students' literacy skills are also some of the features of these strong lessons. In these lessons, the pace of learning is accelerated, because the teaching is stimulating, allowing for both

group work and for students to learn independently. However, opportunities have not yet been taken fully to share the features of this exemplary teaching with other teachers in the academy, so that students can benefit from more lessons that are outstanding. Consequently, in the less successful lessons the pace of learning is slower because some of these features are missing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Overall the curriculum matches the students' wide ability range and learning styles very well. Courses are selected carefully to help the students achieve their full potential and aspirations. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is being re-shaped and now, for example, gives students in Year 8 the opportunity to study for qualifications that ordinarily would be started in Year 10. The outstanding learning pathways available also help all students engage very well. This is especially so for those who arrive at the academy from overseas and who speak English as an additional language. These students are provided with language lessons to enable them to access the curriculum fully and are offered an outstanding balance of other courses to match their interests, aspirations and abilities. Enrichment opportunities are also outstanding and provide additional support to lessons. They include literacy workshops and handwriting support, plus a range of sporting activities where participation rates are high. The specialist areas of creative arts and business and enterprise make a significant impact in improving outcomes for the students. This is clearly seen, for example, in the benefit students derive from working with a local football club in their study for a Business and Technology Education Council qualification in physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Students often arrive in the academy unaccustomed to life in Britain and at an early stage of learning to speak English. Many also have weak learning skills. The academy is relentless in the support and care provided for all students, whatever their particular needs. A network of very strong support arrangements ensures that students' behaviour and attendance are monitored closely and the academy takes extremely effective action to remedy any identified weaknesses. As a result, attendance has improved steadily and the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour has diminished. The presence of the academy's police officer helps students to feel secure and encourages more responsible behaviour both within the academy and in the local community. The academy tracks the progress of students very carefully. Curriculum and pastoral leaders use the resulting data to identify where students are not doing as well as they should and then take appropriate 'top up' actions, such as extending the school day for Year 11, to get students back 'on track'. These actions make a vital contribution to ensuring students make outstanding progress by the time they reach the end of their courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

As a result of the principal's outstanding leadership and her leaders' very high expectations, the academy brings about an exceptional improvement in the outcomes for students, living up to its motto of bringing out 'The Best in Everyone.' A very rigorous process of self-evaluation, undertaken by the leadership at all levels, ensures that any areas for improvement are identified swiftly and the necessary remedial action is taken. This has resulted in, for example, a much strengthened and more accountable middle leadership, as well as the outstanding progress of students. The local governing body discharges its duties exceptionally well, providing a wealth of experience and well focused support along with a strong degree of challenge to ensure continued improvement.

Very challenging targets are used to drive up standards and this has resulted in sustained improvement. Given its very diverse student population, the leadership is very successful in promoting community cohesion and in ensuring that an outstanding equality of opportunity is promoted. Leadership in the sixth form is good. This results in students achieving well and ensures their good personal development.

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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.	Academy 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?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the academy work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the academy's self-evaluation	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this academy require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	



2 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Manchester Academy, Manchester, M14 4PX

Thank you for making the inspection team feel so welcome at your academy and especially to those students who spoke with us in lessons and in meetings. You told us that you are really proud to belong to the academy and I can see why you say that, because we found your academy to be outstanding.

The team could see that students join the academy with a wide range of talents as well as needs and that the academy is providing you with teaching which is usually good and sometimes outstanding. Consequently, your achievement is excellent, so that you reach standards that are broadly average to below average. These standards are far higher than when you started at the academy. This is also because of the outstanding care, guidance and support you receive, which really helps you to achieve your potential and ensures your good personal development.

You also benefit from an outstanding curriculum, which gives you a very wide range of learning opportunities. A lot of effort has gone into giving you the very best of experiences both in and out of the classroom. This is very clear from, for example, the academy's business and enterprise activities that you get involved in. These activities strengthen your chances of success in further study and employment in later life. The team also found the sixth form provides well for its students, especially in preparing them for their future employment or education.

All of this has been made possible because of the overall outstanding leadership and management of the academy. The leaders are very focused upon providing the very best for you and improving that which is not good enough. To help them do this, I have made one suggestion; that they share with all teachers the features of the exemplary teaching in the academy so you can all benefit from more lessons that are outstanding. The leadership of the academy helps very much to ensure you live in a close and happy community and most of you behave well.

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Mark Wilson
Lead inspector