

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



21 November 2017

Mr Andrew Griffin
Principal
Manchester Academy
Moss Lane East
Moss Side
Manchester
M14 4PX

Dear Mr Griffin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manchester Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 8 November 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy.

The academy should take further action to:

- make silent reading sessions more purposeful by:
 - pupils having the opportunity to be heard reading
 - teachers extending pupils' vocabulary and improving pupils' skills in comprehension
- evaluate fully the impact of Year 7 catch-up funding for numeracy so that leaders and governors know whether this spending is helping pupils to catch up
- evaluate more thoroughly the impact of pupil premium funding to improve the achievement of all pupils entitled to this support, but particularly those pupils in Years 7 to 10, so that leaders and governors know whether it is making a difference.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal and other senior leaders, including the executive principal, who works across the three academies in the cluster. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors, and the regional director of the trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A group of pupils in Year 8 discussed with me the support they had received to help them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. I spoke with other pupils during short visits to lessons and the internal exclusion room, accompanied by your vice-principals. I met with pupil premium leaders and scrutinised a range of documentation on safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and monitoring of teaching and learning. The academy action plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a staffing restructure has led to some redundancies and a high turnover of teaching and non-teaching staff. About 17 new teachers have joined the academy since September 2016. The senior leadership team has also been restructured and two new vice-principals are in post. Manchester Academy works closely with William Hulme's Grammar School and Stockport Academy following the forming of a cluster of three academies within the United Learning Trust from summer 2017. The executive principal works across all three academies, spending four half days each week in Manchester Academy from September 2017.

Main findings

Following a period of almost 12 months of relatively slow progress towards tackling the areas for improvement from the last inspection, things are now moving at a more rapid pace. A key delay has been in making sure that the right leaders are in post and new systems and procedures are implemented. As a result, some staff are relatively new to their role and new systems were only introduced in September 2017. This means that although there are early signs of improvement in some cases, evidence of sustained impact is not convincing.

Your key priority has been to improve pupils' behaviour in the academy so that all pupils are ready to learn. You have completely changed the way that internal exclusion is used since the time of the previous inspection. The small number of pupils who use this facility now have meaningful work so that they continue to make progress with their learning while excluded from their lessons. Pupils are supported well by adults while using this facility because staff are able to support learning and help pupils to manage their own behaviour. The number of referrals to internal exclusion have reduced markedly compared with those at the time of the previous inspection, along with the number of repeat referrals. Pupils confirm that behaviour around the academy is improving but there is still further work to do to improve behaviour in lessons. Pupils say that not all teachers manage behaviour in

the same way and shared particular concerns they had about behaviour in science. New behaviour management systems are effective and, as a result, fixed-term exclusions have reduced for the first half term this year compared with the same time last year.

Although overall attendance shows little sign of improving and remains just below average, persistent absence is reducing. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities who have previously attended less well than their classmates are now attending regularly. One reason for this improved attendance is the greater focus on rewarding pupils for their good attendance or for meeting their attendance targets. Support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has also improved. Leaders work closely with parents and pupils to help them to attend the academy regularly.

Pupils say that they feel safe in the academy and this is because behaviour has improved, particularly outside lessons and around the academy site at break and lunchtime. Pupils say that there is now very little bullying and are confident this will be tackled by staff if it does occur. Staff have received training in safeguarding and all necessary checks are in place to make sure that appropriate staff are recruited.

You have rightly given a high priority to raising the quality of teaching and learning in the academy and your monitoring demonstrates this is improving. Training has been given to teachers to help them to plan interesting learning activities which better match the needs of pupils. Subject advisors from the trust work across the three academies in the cluster with a focus on improving teaching, such as in geography and history. Further benefits of working in the cluster are evident in the moderation of pupils' work across the cluster, which ensures that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate. From my short visits to lessons, I saw how teachers use their good subject knowledge and well-targeted questions to challenge pupils. Your aim to develop a culture of sharing of effective practice is clearly developing. However, you are aware that inconsistencies exist and learning is all too often disrupted due to staff absence, for example in science.

You have worked hard to improve the accuracy of monitoring teaching and learning. Improvements are closely checked by senior and subject leaders through a wide range of evidence, including short visits to lessons as well as formal observations. This greater rigour and raised expectations has not been welcomed by all staff, which has partly contributed towards the high staff turnover. Outcomes of monitoring activities are fed back to individual staff and to subject leaders, but are not always combined into a report for governors, who know less about the impact of this monitoring work.

You have reviewed the curriculum to make sure that pupils are following courses that interest them and provide them with the best chance of success. The curriculum is, therefore, more bespoke to the needs of pupils. For example, in art the GCSE course was changed and pupils in Year 11, who previously followed a

resistant materials course, are now studying construction and achieving higher standards.

Literacy development has been given a high priority. This is because of the low starting points of many pupils in the academy but also because academy leaders welcome many pupils who are international new arrivals. Most of these pupils start in the academy with little or no understanding of spoken English. Academy leaders use a wide range of support strategies to help pupils to develop their literacy skills, most of which are highly effective and greatly appreciated by pupils in the induction groups. Silent reading is less well structured and there are inconsistencies in the way these sessions are taught in literacy time across the academy. The weakest readers have no opportunity to be heard reading aloud to an adult. They are not sufficiently challenged to extend their vocabulary or to improve their skills in comprehension which slows the development of pupils' oracy skills.

Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and are a well-trained, skilled and experienced group who are committed to improving the academy. Governors are fully aware of the slow progress towards tackling weaknesses over 2016/17 but are more confident that improvements are now happening at a faster pace. The recommended review of the use and impact of pupil premium funding was carried out shortly after the last inspection. Some of the recommendations from this report have been addressed, but there is still further work to do. Namely, leaders and governors do not know whether the considerable amount of money being spent on current pupils is making any difference for pupils in Years 7 to 10.

Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to support reading development through the use of a phonics-based approach. However, there is no evidence of how the funding is spent to improve numeracy for the pupils entitled to this support in Year 7. For the few strategies that do exist to improve numeracy, there is no evidence of the impact of this spending. Leaders aim to tackle this and say that the appointment of a numeracy coordinator will help.

Academy action plans are suitably detailed and clearly demonstrate how identified weaknesses are being tackled with appropriate actions. Further improvement of these plans is required to detail costing of the actions, with clear strategies for monitoring and evaluation.

External support

Academy leaders draw on a wide range of effective external support from across the trust, but particularly through the cluster. The education director, who provides challenge and support to academy leaders, knows the academy well. Following a series of external reviews through cluster leaders it is clear where there is still further work to do.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector