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Mr Steve Brice  
Principal  
The Co-operative Academy of Manchester  
Plant Hill Road  
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Manchester  
Greater Manchester  
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Dear Mr Brice

### **Short inspection of The Co-operative Academy of Manchester**

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 2018 with David Roberts, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school continues to improve because of the strong leadership that you provide with the very able support of your senior leadership team and the multi-academy trust.

You have maintained and developed the strengths of the school and made improvements where there were weaknesses in the previous inspection. You have high expectations and are not complacent about what needs improving and have planned carefully for the future development of the school. You and your senior colleagues work well as a team and hold all staff to account. You believe strongly in empowering staff and pupils to do their best.

You have established a clear sense of purpose and direction and a strong work ethic among all leaders who aspire to create a haven for pupils, so they can 'dream big' and secure a positive future journey beyond school. Staff morale is good and you have established a healthy and collaborative approach to improving standards across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and lessons are purposeful. Teachers are not afraid to be innovative to ensure that pupils receive the best life chances.

Leaders have responded well and addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Oracy is now very well developed across the school and is supporting pupils' socialisation skills and confidence. Adjustments to the curriculum

have improved boys' achievement. Professional development opportunities have supported staff in fine-tuning their questioning skills.

You, your leaders and all staff show a genuine desire for pupils to be safe and happy while they achieve to the best of their abilities. The quality of pastoral care in the school and the school's values of 'Fairness, Ambition and Respect' stand out.

Pupils are friendly and courteous, and their attitudes to learning are good. The school is a calm learning environment and pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. Attendance figures for the school are exemplary and well above national averages due to the diligent work of leaders. The importance of attendance is echoed across the school along with the high expectations that staff have of their pupils.

Parents and carers speak warmly about the school and the efforts of teachers and leaders to ensure that their children thrive and achieve. Some parents eloquently commented on the online questionnaire (Parent View). Their positive views are summed up by one parent who stated, 'The school has had a life-changing impact on my child. It has helped mould them into a young person with the right values and aspirations for a successful future.'

You have ensured that the school supports its local community well. The school building is home to local police cadets and a local music centre, and it opens its doors through a wide range of school engagements. The Hive, a local business centre, is also located on campus and provides the local community with business and employment opportunities. As a result, the school's profile among the community is high and resources and facilities have an impact on the lives of pupils beyond the school gate.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. You have ensured that safeguarding is paramount and a continued high priority across the school. The school's systems for child protection are very effectively led by senior leaders and the designated safeguarding lead. All staff are thoroughly trained and diligent in their responsibilities. They have a clear understanding of current guidance and legislation. Consequently, members of staff are vigilant and readily pass on any concerns that they have about pupils. Parents, pupils and staff consider the school to be a very safe place. Pupils at most risk are well supported through a myriad of specialist persons and pastoral avenues. For example, mental health workers, vulnerable students' coordinators and learning pastoral support officers regularly meet and share information to ensure that 'no stone goes unturned' in supporting individual pupils.

### **Inspection findings**

- A focus for the inspection was the progress that pupils make. In 2017, pupils' overall progress from their different starting points was just above national

average. Some subjects within the school performed well above the national average, such as English language and modern foreign languages.

- Pupils enter the school with very low attainment compared to pupils nationally. Even though some pupils arrive with a considerable learning lag, leaders are aspirational and ensure that all pupils have challenging targets for the end of key stage 4. A high number of pupils arrive into the school without any primary performance data. Consequently, a number of highly successful pupils have been unable to contribute to the school's GCSE performance measures in 2017.
- A high proportion of current pupils make good progress across year groups and across a wide range of subjects. Pupils who arrive at the school with low prior attainment make strong progress as a result of appropriate support and provision.
- Leaders recognise the need to take effective action towards improving pupils' achievement in mathematics and science. Clear action plans are in place and effective support is provided from the trust. Information provided about pupils currently in the school shows that pupils' achievements in mathematics have improved and more pupils are now on track. However, actions taken to improve pupils' achievements in science have yet to have any meaningful impact on progress.
- Leaders have taken some effective action to narrow the gap between the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in the school and nationally. Gaps in English are closing more rapidly than in mathematics. Information provided about pupils currently in the school reveals that gaps remain but are closing.
- Leaders have adjusted the spending of pupil premium additional funding and the impact of this can be seen in English. Leaders are aware that the additional funding is not fully effective in mathematics and have recognised this with their spending approach.
- Standards in English are very strong within the school because of the exemplary leadership of English. The curriculum is well structured to ensure that pupils develop strength in their writing and understanding. English teachers have high expectations and ignite an interest and love for learning. Consequently, progress in this subject is well above national average.
- Standards in mathematics are improving within the school because of improved leadership and new curriculum developments. Problem solving and mathematical reasoning are now being woven into the curriculum. Pupils' engagement in mathematics is improving and larger numbers of pupils are now making better progress in mathematics across the school.
- Improvements to the overall quality of teaching and learning have been at the heart of the school's work since the last inspection. Teachers benefit from regular scheduled professional development opportunities. There are many opportunities for teachers to share good practice within departments and across the school. Consequently, teachers are willing to try new approaches to improving their practice.
- Leaders have invested heavily in careers education and guidance. A full-time,

well-respected careers adviser guides and raises pupils' aspirations through an effective programme. This results in a high proportion of pupils successfully continuing in education, training or employment after Year 11. Destinations and next steps are very well planned and clearly supported; all pupils receive high-quality advice and guidance. Enterprise and employability skills are taken seriously and the school invests heavily in work experience for all pupils. Events are offered across the year to raise aspirations, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

- Governors are passionate about the school and have extensive relevant expertise that they bring to bear on their roles. Governors use their rich skills to challenge and support the school effectively. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governing body meetings are well attended. Records of meetings show clear and appropriate challenge to school leaders. Governors make good use of the information that they receive on pupils' progress and visit the school regularly to keep abreast of leaders' progress and whole-school developments.
- The multi-academy trust has provided helpful support through visits to the school to evaluate leaders' impact and to provide further advice for improvement.
- Pupils do not currently enter the school sixth form. Consequently, inspectors were unable to view the impact of leaders' work in this area. Leaders are working on reshaping the sixth-form offer and intend to relaunch entry into the sixth form in 2018.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils continue to make rapid progress in their GCSE subjects so that their progress matches other pupils in the school and nationally
- they pursue further improvements of pupils' achievements in science.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the Co-op academies trust board, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, and the regional schools commissioner. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dawn Platt  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- Inspectors undertook 'learning walks' with senior leaders and observed teaching and learning in many subjects across the school. Inspectors scrutinised the work in some pupils' books during visits to classrooms.
- Meetings took place with you, your senior leaders, middle leaders, members of

the governing body and a member of the academy trust, and a group of pupils.

- A phone conversation was also held with the chair of the governing body regarding leadership and school improvement impact.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils around the school to gather views about behaviour and learning.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation about safeguarding and child protection, the school's self-evaluation, monitoring information and improvement plans, minutes of governors' meetings, records related to attendance and information relating to pupils' achievement.
- Inspectors took into account 48 responses to Parent View, along with 55 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 56 responses to the online pupils' questionnaire.