



Manchester Academy

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134224
LEA Not applicable
Inspection number 283103
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Jane Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Academy	School address	Moss Lane East
School category	Non-maintained		Moss Side
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Manchester M14 4PX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2321639
Number on roll	726	Fax number	0161 2321640
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr A Millward
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Kathy August

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

Manchester Academy opened in September 2003 following the closure of Ducie High School. Most of the staff and all of the students transferred to the academy, which was initially housed in the predecessor school's buildings. It did not move into its own purpose-built and well-equipped accommodation until January 2005. In the first two years, students aged 11 to 16 attended the academy. The number on roll has increased; the current Year 7 is at full complement. In total, there are 794 students, with nearly twice as many boys as girls. In September 2005, the academy opened a sixth form; there are 41 students in Year 12. A senior manager whose responsibilities included the curriculum and the development of the sixth form, left the academy in October 2005.

The academy serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. About two thirds of the students aged 11 to 16 and all the sixth form students are eligible for free school meals. While the academy admits students of all abilities, many had low results in national tests at primary school, achieving standards well below the average for their age. Twenty nine per cent have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including eighteen students who have formal statements of special educational need. Far more students than is typical join or leave the academy at times other than at the start of Year 7, including a significant number whose families have sought refuge or asylum in this country. Nearly 10% of the students are at the early stages of learning to speak English. This diverse and multicultural population of students is a distinctive and valued feature of the life of the academy and is reflected in its status as an International School. Many faiths are represented in the academy, but the sponsors, United Learning Trust, provide a Christian foundation to its work. The academy is strongly committed to serving the local community, and works in partnership with other services and agencies, as well as with various schools. It has specialist status for business and enterprise, and creative arts. Many teachers are in the first two or three years of teaching.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The academy provides a satisfactory education for its students with several good features. This judgement matches the academy's view. Moreover, there is a clear pattern of improvement and capacity for further improvement is good.

The principal's leadership is outstanding: she is very clear about what needs to be done and how to do it. She has been instrumental in securing the academy's improvement over the last seven terms, having won the support of students and staff. Her focus on raising standards is well understood, and is underpinned by a determination to bring out 'the best in everyone'. Overall, leadership and management by other senior staff are good and by middle managers are satisfactory. Governance is good. There are adequate arrangements for checking performance. The academy works effectively with other agencies.

Students' personal development is good. Students behave well and enjoy coming to the academy. Effective care, guidance and support help them to develop personal skills and positive work habits. They feel safe, knowing who to turn to if troubled. Teaching is satisfactory overall but is not yet sufficiently consistent to ensure students make good progress in each lesson. Teachers' use of assessment is underdeveloped. The curriculum is appropriately adapted to students' needs and is enhanced by a good range of additional activities.

Standards are low but, in comparison with schools in similar contexts, most students achieve satisfactorily given their starting points. The academy met almost all its targets in 2005. There were significant improvements at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) or general national vocational qualifications (GNVQ), with all students passing at least one GCSE, and a quarter gaining five or more A* to C grades.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors judge that the effectiveness of the sixth form is just satisfactory but with capacity for improvement. This agrees with the academy's view. The sixth form is in the very early stages of development: it is only 12 weeks old. Students enjoy life in the sixth form and attend regularly. Most make satisfactory progress in lessons and are keen to succeed. They appreciate the support and guidance they receive. The recently appointed director of sixth form is enthusiastic but inexperienced and there are some weaknesses in day-to-day management. She has a clear vision of establishing sixth form provision that meets students' needs and aspirations, and understands current shortcomings. The principal acted decisively in tackling the previous inadequate leadership. Planning for improvement has begun, including through collaboration with a local 'leading edge' school. The development of the sixth form is now on a secure footing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement.
- Strengthen further the quality of teaching and learning, so that more is consistently good.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment in their day-to-day work.
- Continue to develop the role of middle managers.
- Establish effective sixth form provision that meets students' needs and aspirations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the academy that achievement and standards are just satisfactory overall.

Standards are low, although improving. In comparison with schools in similar contexts, most students achieve satisfactorily, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2005, nearly half the students achieved the Level 5 standard expected at age 14 in national Key Stage 3 tests in English and mathematics, which exceeded the academy's targets. However, only one third were awarded Level 5 in science. Not many students achieved higher levels, and boys outperformed girls.

There were significant improvements at GCSE/GNVQ in 2005 in comparison with the previous year. One hundred per cent of students passed at least one GCSE, which reflects the academy's inclusive approach. Eighty one per cent passed five GCSE/GNVQs, and twenty five per cent gained at least five A* to C grades. The academy met its targets. While many subjects showed improved performances, there remains considerable variation between them.

In lessons, most students make at least reasonable progress. They are keen to do well but some still have ground to catch up from earlier years. Variation in the quality of teaching means that not all students make consistently rapid progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Inspectors agree with the academy's view that students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The academy has worked hard to establish a climate of mutual respect that enables students to develop self-esteem and confidence as learners.

Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Students know what is expected and they try hard to live up to their teachers' high expectations. They understand that they are responsible for their actions and also know they will receive support in resolving any problems. Students from a wide range of backgrounds get on well with each other and enjoy good relationships with adults. They are courteous and helpful. They enjoy coming to the academy and are proud to be part of it; one said that it was

worth coming because 'people make you feel good about yourself'. Improved links with parents and a consistent approach to implementing strategies have proved successful in raising attendance significantly. It is now close to the national average.

Students feel safe at the academy, a view echoed by the vast majority of parents. They say that bullying is not a major issue and they know who to speak to if they are troubled. Those who act as ambassadors support their peers and staff responsibly. Students are enthusiastic about the introduction of the 'Student Voice', an elected group who will represent their views.

Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities, young enterprise schemes, and competitions organised by staff, and enjoy working together in teams. They are encouraged to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles and show awareness of local environmental issues. Links made through the academy's international school status give students a wider perspective of community.

Students enjoy the sixth form and attend regularly. They have mature attitudes to their studies. They are beginning to organise social and other activities such as fundraising for charities but would welcome more opportunities to contribute to the academy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most lessons were at least satisfactory and many were good. This confirms the academy's evaluation and the picture of improvement reflected in its monitoring.

Good relationships and well established routines underpinned all the lessons, which were based on clear learning objectives and benefited from sound planning and organisation. Teachers gave clear explanations, aided by proficient use of interactive whiteboards, and insisted on attention from the students. While they often modelled methods well, they did not always expect students to think enough for themselves. Although the standard of work was generally appropriate, it was rare to find tasks set at different levels to allow for the range of ability and individual needs in each class.

Good teaching was characterised by a challenging pace, regular checks on students' understanding, and activities that grabbed their interest. The weakest lessons involved tasks that were too easy, a slow pace and too much talk from the teacher or copying from the board as opposed to work by students. The best sixth form teaching engaged students in carefully sequenced tasks that developed their understanding and used questioning to promote discussion. In some lessons, students' independence was not promoted enough.

For their part, students arrived at lessons ready to learn with equipment and books to hand. They were generally interested, and most listened well and concentrated hard.

They were confident to speak when asked, and many volunteered to answer teachers' questions, and sometimes posed their own.

The academy has introduced a suitable structure for setting targets for students' performance and gathering data on the standard of their work in order to check on their progress. This system offers promise. More generally, however, teachers made little use of assessment information to help them plan activities suitable for students of different abilities. Some marking provided guidance on how to improve, but there was little display of students' work that illustrated particular standards towards which students might aspire.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The curriculum is broad, balanced and adapted to students' diverse needs, except in the sixth form where the range of post-16 courses is limited and vocational options are few.

The emphasis on literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3 recognises that students often have weak basic skills. Those who arrive from abroad with little English are given special lessons until they are able to cope, with support, in ordinary classes. The academy also takes care to ensure that girls receive appropriate attention since they are heavily outnumbered by boys. At Key Stage 4, there is a suitable range of courses, including vocational options. The interests of students and the local community have been recognised in the introduction of courses in food technology and the possibility of taking a GCSE examination in different first languages.

The academy's priority has been to establish sound basic provision, but its specialisms in business and enterprise, and more recently creative arts, are being developed appropriately. All the students experience the world of work in Year 10. Courses in business are being expanded and there are links with local companies, colleges and schools.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities that have been taken up by around a hundred students. Sports are the most popular choice. A young enterprise scheme has involved students setting up their own company and learning about marketing. Overall, the academy is right to judge provision satisfactory, and the seeds have been sown for further worthwhile development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The academy rightly judges care, guidance and support to be good for students aged 11 to 16 and satisfactory for those in the sixth form. Students are very well cared for and the wealth of available support is tailored carefully to meet individual needs. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust, and risk assessments secure. Staff

act as good advocates for students who are vulnerable or new to the country, working closely with external agencies to support their well-being. House tutors and year directors constantly reinforce the academy's expectations, providing a strong framework in which students are able to develop personal skills and good work habits to prepare them for the future. Year directors are beginning to monitor closely the progress made by groups of students so that any potential underachievement can be targeted and tackled early. Arrangements for transition into Year 7 are good. Appropriate guidance is provided for students choosing Key Stage 4 courses but pathways into, through and beyond the sixth form are not well defined. Previous weaknesses in academic guidance mean that not all sixth form students are well equipped to study their chosen subjects. However, they do appreciate the support and guidance they receive now, particularly from the director of sixth form.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Inspectors agree with the academy's judgement that leadership and management are good overall. The academy is governed well. The Local Governing Body has formed appropriate committees and meets regularly to hold the academy to account, providing challenge and support. Governors are tenacious in ensuring that the complex and diverse needs of the students are met well. Recent audits have shown financial management to be good. Resources are used effectively and efficiently.

The principal's leadership is outstanding, and is described as inspirational by many staff. She has secured the loyalty of students and staff and united them in a drive to raise standards, setting high expectations that are reflected in the aims 'the best in everyone' and 'no excuses'. She is an excellent role model, providing clear direction and a well considered staged approach to improvement that she has communicated very effectively to all stakeholders. She has rightly concentrated on establishing the academy's ethos through demanding that policies are implemented consistently with a relentless focus on routines. She has tackled successfully some difficult personnel issues and has allocated responsibilities shrewdly. She is well supported by senior staff who share her vision for the academy and communicate it well, including through their active presence around the site. Although variable, the impact of their work has been good overall. There is a strong team spirit and determination to succeed. The effectiveness of middle managers is satisfactory but improving. Many share the principal's vision and appreciate the support and guidance they receive from the senior team.

Arrangements for monitoring performance are satisfactory. As the academy develops, it is growing less reliant on external evaluation and is beginning to establish its own systems for checking and improving performance. The principal has an accurate picture of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Development planning has been appropriately focused on improving attendance, behaviour, and the quality of teaching and learning, and has made a positive impact. Progress is reviewed regularly and

includes surveys of the views of stakeholders. The academy is justifiably proud of the progress it has made: no Year 11 student left the academy without a qualification last year.

The academy has made very positive use of the distinctive diversity of its community to form a unique ethos. All members of the community are valued highly and served well. The academy is also outward-looking and has developed a good range of productive partnerships.

Inspectors agree with the academy's view that leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. The principal acted decisively in tackling the previous inadequate leadership and the sixth form's development is now on a secure footing. Planning for improvement has begun, including collaboration with a local 'leading edge' school. The recently appointed director of sixth form is enthusiastic but inexperienced. She has a clear vision of establishing sixth form provision that meets students' needs and aspirations, and understands the shortcomings that are attributable to weaknesses in initial planning for the sixth form and the narrow curriculum subsequently offered to students. There are some weaknesses in day-to-day management, but the sixth form operates smoothly. Plans to monitor the quality of provision are timely.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School 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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to tell you about the findings of our inspection but, first of all, I would like to thank you for welcoming us to Manchester Academy. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, seeing your work, and hearing about your thoughts and experiences of the academy and how it has improved over the last two years.

These are some of the things we liked best about your academy.

- You enjoy being at the academy and are proud to be part of it.
- Your behaviour is good. You are polite and considerate, and get on well with each other and with staff.
- You want to learn and try hard in lessons, especially when your teachers give you interesting things to do and that make you think!
- You have an interesting range of subjects to study, and lots of extra activities at the end of each day.
- You are interested in getting the 'Student Voice' going so that you can have even more involvement in making improvements.
- The principal, helped by the staff and governors, manages the school very well. They care for you well and have high hopes for your futures.

We have asked Mrs August, the staff and governors to do some things to improve the academy further.

- Help you achieve better results in tests and examinations.
- Continue to improve lessons so that more are like the best ones.
- When they mark your work, teachers should tell you how well you have done and what you should do to improve, especially so that you can achieve your target grade or level.
- Develop the sixth form so that it equips you well for the future.

I am sure that you will play your part in helping the academy improve even more. I look forward to hearing about your successes.