

18 March 2011

Ms N Birch
Principal
Manchester Enterprise Academy
Simonsway
Wythenshawe
Greater Manchester
M22 9RH

Dear Ms Birch,

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection to Manchester Enterprise Academy

Introduction

Following my visit to your academy with Paul Chambers HMI on 16 and 17 March 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting Vice Principals, staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and some governors.

Context

The academy, which is much smaller than the average secondary school, opened in September 2009 in the building of its predecessor school. Almost all the staff of the predecessor school moved to the academy. A new Principal was appointed, together with several other new senior staff. The Principal left in July 2010 and since then the academy has been led by an acting Principal, who is currently on maternity leave. Several other senior leaders hold posts in an acting capacity. The Governing Body has begun the process of recruiting a substantive Principal.

In September 2010 the academy moved into its new building on the same site. At this point the sixth form opened with a small number of students in Year 12. Although the building is complete, the grounds are not yet fully accessible to students, restricting outdoor social space. Almost all of the academy's students are White British and speak English as their first language. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school schools is very

high. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average.

The academy's main sponsor is Manchester airport: partner sponsors are Manchester College, the Willow Park Housing Trust and the local authority. The academy's specialism in enterprise reflects the expertise of its sponsors.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The 2010 GCSE results were low, compared with national averages, on all main benchmarks. The academy did not reach the national floor target for the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, at grade C and above. However, it did exceed its challenging target on this measure. In contrast to the national picture, boys' attainment was higher than that of girls. Students known to be eligible for free school meals, a very high proportion, did not attain as highly as others in the cohort. Students identified as in need of the first level of support with their learning did not attain as well as their classmates or their peers nationally. Overall, students did not make the progress expected based on their starting points at the beginning of Year 7. In particular, this reflects the low achievement of students in need of the first level of support for learning. Students' achievement was satisfactory in English whereas it was inadequate in mathematics. Boys' achievement was better than that of girls.

Currently, the academy's primary focus is on raising the attainment of Year 11 students. The academy's prediction of a rise this year in the percentage of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is well founded. Twenty seven percent of Year 11 students have already gained a grade C or above in both English and mathematics. Results of early entries are much stronger in English than in mathematics. The academy does not anticipate reaching the government's new floor target for this measure and, overall, the attainment of this year group is low. Regular and detailed tracking of Year 11 students' performance is enabling those in need of additional support to be identified. New groupings in English and mathematics are designed to ensure that provision matches students' needs more closely. In addition, there is a range of strategies in place to help raise their attainment such as additional lessons, holiday revision sessions and mentoring.

The academy's data on the performance of other year groups are less detailed or secure but here too attainment is low. The academy judges progress in Key Stage 3 to be inadequate overall. Inconsistencies in the way faculties report progress towards students' challenging targets are reducing the usefulness of the tracking data in making strategic decisions.

Inspectors agree with the academy's view that, overall, learning in lessons is satisfactory. It is not consistently good enough to raise students' attainment rapidly and improve their achievement. The large majority of students show positive attitudes to work and want to do well. Others, however, are too passive. They rely too much on the teacher for guidance and reassurance and work well only when given a clear, short-term supervised task.

Sixth Form

There are 41 students in the new sixth form following a limited range of courses at levels appropriate to their needs. The choice of courses is enhanced by links with the academy's sponsor, Manchester College, as well as other post-16 providers. Suitable targets have been set for this initial cohort of students and their progress towards these is tracked regularly. A tutorial system is in place and students appreciate the support and challenge they receive from staff. Sixth form staff have received relevant training in order to be able to meet the needs of sixth formers, for example with regard to the requirements of UCAS personal statements. Sixth formers feel they contribute to the life of the academy, for instance through paid supervisory roles and organising charitable fundraising events. They say their views are taken into account.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students' behaviour is improving with a marked decrease in incidents this year. In lessons and around the academy it is satisfactory overall, although boisterous on occasion. A recent re-launch of the behaviour management system, following a reorganisation of the learning zones, has had a positive impact and the academy is calm. However, the demands placed on the seclusion room are high and the academy recognises that this is not proving fully effective. Although the level of fixed-term exclusions has fallen, it nonetheless remains high. These exclusions are mainly short and the academy has a helpful system for ensuring that students catch up on some of the work they have missed.

Despite significant efforts by the academy, attendance remains low. There has been a small rise in the rate of attendance so far this year, compared with the same period last year. The number of persistent absentees is high. Attendance is lowest in Year 11 where 23% of the year group are persistent absentees; this is seriously limiting their achievement. The academy analyses patterns of absence and uses a broad range of well-considered strategies to promote good attendance. These are having a limited impact on changing the entrenched patterns of non-attendance of some students. A range of valued rewards provides incentives for good attendance. These appear to be having a positive impact in Years 7 and 8 where attendance is close to the national average. Too many students arrive at the academy late in the morning.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although a small number of lessons do not reach this threshold. Teachers demonstrate positive attitudes and use plenty of praise and encouragement. As a result, relationships between staff and students are good. Students support each other and work well together. In the better lessons, teachers have high expectations both of students' behaviour and their learning and consistently reinforce what is needed to reach these. They communicate clear learning objectives and share with the students the long-term aim of the work in hand, as well as the skills required to perform the current tasks. Some teachers use assessment well to help students to learn. For instance, they ask students to assess the work of classmates or an example piece of work according to set criteria. This process is effective in helping students to understand what is expected in

a good piece of work and how they can improve their own performance. Many teachers use good questioning and class management skills to promote positive contributions from the more-challenging students. Support in class helps students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make progress in line with others in the group. In less successful lessons, teachers allow a few pupils to dominate the responses to their questions and so are unable to ascertain how well the whole class understands the work. They fail to maintain a consistently strong pace of learning or miss opportunities to develop students' literacy skills. Some teaching takes insufficient account of the range of ability in the class. The quality of marking is variable but there is some good practice on which the academy can build.

The effectiveness with which form time is used is variable. Although some students benefit through being able to follow up areas of work of their choice, or which need additional attention, others are slow to settle and the time is not used productively.

The curriculum caters for the range of students' needs and interests and promotes satisfactory progress in their learning. At Key Stage 4, students study for a range of GCSE and BTEC qualifications. There is a good choice of vocational options with on-site opportunities, such as studying clothing and fashion, performing arts or travel and tourism, augmented by courses off-site including beauty therapy, hairdressing, construction and motor vehicle studies. The academy recognises that low literacy skills are slowing the progress of some students and has, for example, adapted the Year 7 curriculum so that students have one lesson per week devoted to developing these. A reading recovery scheme for weaker readers in Years 7 and 8 has had a positive impact on these students' reading skills. However, the promotion of literacy skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

The academy's specialism and sponsorship arrangements have a clear impact on the curriculum. For example, Enterprising Project days in Years 7 and 8 involve the development of enterprise skills in a range of subjects. All students in Year 9 follow an 'Enabling Enterprise' course. An enterprise week for all students includes a focus on developing workplace skills. In addition, the sixth form curriculum offers a diploma in the Aviation Environment.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

In the first year of the academy's operation there was insufficient impetus in setting a clear vision and establishing the key systems needed to deliver this. The academy's development has gained some momentum this year to which the well-calibrated support of the National Leader in Education and the appointment of an additional acting Vice Principal have contributed well. The academy's evaluation of its performance is broadly accurate and leaders know the strengths of teaching as well as the areas in need of development. A cycle of faculty reviews has been introduced this term, building on the recent introduction of faculty self-evaluations and development planning. The skills of middle leaders are being extended through these processes, as well as through the regular tracking of students' performance. The academy recognises that the assessment and tracking of students' learning requires further refinement to gain consistency and thus secure management information.

The governing body, ably led by the Chair, is providing a strong and committed contribution to the leadership of the academy. In representing the sponsors, the governing body has a significant influence on the academy's character and curriculum. Governors bring a considerable range of business and educational expertise, experience and acumen to their roles. They provide a high level of challenge to the academy through frequent and regular checks on its performance. They have been instrumental in successfully seeking a resolution to difficulties, linked to the academy's initial financial settlement, which hampered its early strategic development.

External support

The academy is benefiting from very well-targeted support provided by the National Leader in Education and the staff of his school. As well as enabling the academy to start this academic year with a realistic view of its position, support has been focused on building capacity through developing the skills of staff, both in terms of management and classroom practice. Through the School Improvement Partner, the Young People's Learning Agency provides an appropriately high level of challenge to the academy. Monitoring is regular through frequent visits. Reports clearly evaluate the academy's performance against national expectations and set out priorities for action.

Main Judgements

The academy has made inadequate progress towards raising standards. This monitoring inspection has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the academy's performance will be monitored.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise attainment overall and particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to at least good, and eliminate inadequate teaching, in order to increase the rate of students' progress.
- Increase the rate of students' attendance and reduce the number of persistent absentees.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector