

Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135905
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381958
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Jones HMI

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	915
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Taverner
Principal	Helen Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jane Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Liptrot	Additional inspector
Sonja Øyen	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 40 teachers in 40 lessons, three jointly with learning leads for subjects, and a mathematics intervention session. A 'learning walk' across five lessons focused on literacy across the curriculum and an inspector heard two Key Stage 3 students read. Visits were made to the two internal exclusion rooms and the special educational needs centre. As well as talking informally with students and staff during the inspection, inspectors held meetings with four groups of students, a representative of the sponsors and governing body, senior leaders in relation to their areas of responsibility, four subject learning leads, and the coordinators for literacy and special educational needs. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at management information including the self-evaluation document and supporting evidence, the academy's improvement plan, assessment data, information on attendance and behaviour and the strategies to improve them, monitoring records, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and a sample of work from students in Years 8 and 11. In addition, they analysed questionnaires received from 120 parents and carers, 155 students and 42 staff. Owing to a nil response, inspectors were unable to take into account Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009 at the same time as the Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Boys, with which it is federated. The two academies are due to be located together in September 2012 in new buildings on the site of the boys' academy. The lead sponsor is The Manchester College, Microsoft is the co-sponsor and Manchester City Council is a partner. In addition to creative and media, the girls' academy specialises in science. It holds a Leading Parent Partnership Award. The academy met the current floor standard in 2011.

The academy has experienced a large decrease in staffing and considerable turnover in senior leadership: the first Principal left in September 2010, and a vice-principal was appointed as acting principal. Following the first monitoring visit in December 2010, when the academy was judged to have made inadequate progress in raising standards, the Executive Principal and governing body brought forward plans for a new leadership and staffing structure. From June 2011, the Principal of the boys'

academy became Principal of both academies. She is supported by a team of four vice-principals whose responsibilities span both academies, as do the subject learning leads. At the second monitoring visit in September 2011, the academy was again judged to be making inadequate progress in raising standards. The Executive Principal left in October 2011.

While the planned number of Year 7 students starting at the academy each year is lower than the cohort leaving Year 11, the academy is undersubscribed in the present Year 7. The academy is of average size compared with other secondary schools. A few students attend alternative provision. One girl, who is in the second year of the sixth form, is on roll at the boys' academy which is the current site of sixth-form provision. The academy decided not to recruit any students into the academies' shared sixth form in September 2011 but, in conjunction with The Manchester College, is recruiting sixth-form students for September 2012.

Approximately 45% of the students are of minority ethnic heritage. About 16% speak English as an additional language and a few are at the early stages of learning to speak English. Around 26% of students are disabled or have special educational needs, which is higher than average. Of these students, nine have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is double the national average.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement, behaviour and attitudes to learning, and the quality of teaching.
- The academy is not satisfactory because achievement is inadequate, too much teaching is weak and students' behaviour is unsatisfactory. Attainment in 2010 and 2011 at GCSE and equivalent qualifications was significantly below average, with 38% of students gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. These results represented inadequate progress from students' starting points. Students achieved much better in vocational qualifications. The academy's data, coupled with Year 11 results achieved already, point to a substantial rise in 2012. Current rates of progress are closer to satisfactory but remain inadequate in some subjects and classes. Weak communication skills continue to be a barrier to students' learning.
- Despite improvement in the quality of teaching, it is unsatisfactory overall. Not enough teaching is good or outstanding to accelerate students' progress and overcome the legacy of underachievement. Weak teaching is being tackled robustly and suitable approaches adopted to improve the skills of individual teachers and the teaching staff as a whole. Inconsistent application of policies is an impediment in some areas.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are inadequate. Questionnaires completed by parents and carers, students and staff raised significant concerns about behaviour. Although students respond positively to effective teachers' high expectations, misbehaviour too often disrupts learning. Sometimes, students exploit differences in how teachers manage classes. Although students know right from wrong, some behave inappropriately, from low-level chatter, especially while the teacher is talking, to open defiance. Most students move

sensibly around the site, but a minority are boisterous, loud, and show a lack of respect for others.

- Considerable improvements have been made in the last six months to management systems and practices. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. Development planning prioritises key areas with the governing body taking an active role in regular monitoring, holding leaders to account. The accuracy of assessment has improved and tracking systems are used more effectively: the academy has a clear grasp of the rates of progress of different groups and cohorts. Impact is uneven but is most evident in the rising achievement, improvements to teaching, and better attendance. Capacity to improve further is satisfactory.
- The main sponsor, The Manchester College, has stepped up to the mark in the last few months by investing in quality external support in addition to giving time from its own staff for committed governance, support for English and mathematics, and other management functions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment across the academy, through judicious use of short-term and intervention strategies combined with longer-term strategic development of good-quality learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching further, concentrating initially on eradicating inadequate teaching and working collaboratively to move the satisfactory to good and then outstanding, so that students make consistently good progress from their starting points and regain ground lost earlier, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can do
 - ensuring lesson planning sequences episodes of learning effectively to make good use of time and to promote progression within lessons as well as over time
 - insisting that teachers apply policies consistently, including those for managing behaviour, the presentation of work and marking students' work.
- Develop students' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing to help them make the most of opportunities for learning and to support their ability to reason, ensuring teachers model good practice in communication and follow agreed guidance on promoting literacy across the curriculum.
- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:
 - setting out and implementing consistently an academy-wide programme of rewards and sanctions for behaviour
 - gathering and analysing rigorously data on behaviour and attitudes to learning, including the impact of arrangements for grouping students
 - identifying and tackling the principal causes of and triggers for misbehaviour in lessons and around the academy's site.

- Galvanise staff, students and their parents and carers in the drive to secure improvements to provision and students' achievements, making it clear that the bar has been raised.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment in Key Stage 3 is below average overall and represents inadequate progress from students' varied, but often below-average, starting points. The academy's data, based on rigorous and regular assessments, show that current rates of progress have improved but that students are not catching up quickly enough from earlier poor progress. Attainment at Key Stage 4 in 2011 was similar to 2010 with 75% of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE and equivalent qualifications, but with only half of these including English and mathematics. The difference is largely accounted for by students' success in vocational qualifications, particularly in the performing arts. Attainment on most measures was significantly below average in both years, particularly when compared with the performance of girls nationally. Although attainment in GCSE English and mathematics rose in 2011, it was not high enough given students' test results at age 11. Students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve less well than their peers though the gap is narrower than that seen nationally. Students of minority ethnic heritage outperform their White British classmates.

Students' learning and written work observed in lessons, combined with scrutiny of samples of work across all subjects, confirm improvements to progress for many students but learning remains fragmented in some subjects for others. The quality, quantity and presentation of students' work varied similarly but showed improvement since the monitoring inspection in September 2011.

The academy has honed its strategies to raise attainment of the current Year 11 students. Intervention, mentoring, and regular monitoring of the progress of individuals, particularly but not exclusively those on the grade C/D borderline, are providing senior leaders and subject learning leads with more precise information about students' current achievement, and the topics on which to focus specifically. Assessment data and results of examinations already completed point to 49% of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Progress in mathematics for this cohort has accelerated and is approaching satisfactory. Effective external support in English has resulted in higher quality GCSE controlled assessments. Improved stability in staffing is leading to better progress in science. Students attending alternative provision are due to take some qualifications which could mean that no-one leaves the academy this summer without a qualification.

Although learning was satisfactory or good in the majority of lessons, it was inadequate in too many. Many students are cooperative and want to do well, but flourish only when skilful, vibrant teaching secures good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. When students are passive, reticent to participate or deliberately misbehave, learning slows. The quality of learning of disabled students

and those who have special educational needs also varies. It is slower when teaching does not take sufficient account of their needs, although some benefit from effective support from additional adults.

Weaknesses in many students' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing continue to impede their progress and prevent them from capitalising on some lesson activities. The range of students' reading is often narrow. Not enough is done to develop reading aloud as a presentation skill or to develop students' skills in deducing and inferring from what they read. Despite training and guidance, strategies to promote literacy are too often implemented superficially. Good habits in speaking and listening are not nurtured consistently, and expectations of students' writing and presentation are too low overall. Samples of work showed the extent of variation for individual students with high-calibre, well-presented work in only some subjects. Opportunities are missed to use classroom displays to draw attention to aspects of high quality work in a subject and to provide aids and prompts for learning.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching varies widely: it is inadequate overall because it does not ensure that students make consistently satisfactory or better progress in lessons, from lesson to lesson, and over time. Its variability mirrors the unevenness in students' progress seen in their written work. The overall profile of the quality of teaching was close to the academy's self-evaluation. Of the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire, most consider that their children are taught well and that they make good progress as a result. Inspection evidence does not support these views.

The academy has a core of good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching. Strengths of such teaching included teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm which challenged students to think and participate fully. Skilful questioning checked learning, with follow-up questions and timely teaching points that furthered students' understanding. Students were clear about what they were learning and how to achieve it. They collaborated well, helping each other with practical activities, and contributed thoughtfully to discussions.

Important weaknesses in the satisfactory teaching contribute to inadequate progress in the longer term. Time was not used consistently well: some lesson plans were more appropriate for 60 minutes of teaching and learning rather than the 100 minute sessions. Several classes had packed away 10 minutes before the end of the afternoon. When faced with lengthy exercises or undemanding tasks, some students lost interest: the better teaching broke learning into carefully sequenced chunks that held students' attention while moving learning on. Not all teachers were clear enough about what students would learn and how the activities would support that learning, particularly for students of high or low ability or those who have individual needs. Sometimes, students' poor attitudes or inappropriate behaviour were a barrier to learning and teaching.

Improvements to teaching since September 2011 include better use of discussion and paired work and less reliance on unchallenging worksheets. However, guidance

on the development of students' literacy skills has not had a noticeable effect. Marking remains variable in quality and too often does not challenge poorly presented or incomplete work. Some teachers write helpful comments or points for improvement but these are not routinely followed up. Useful reference to assessment criteria was a feature of the better practice in Key Stage 4.

Although opportunities are missed, teaching promotes aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the planned curriculum. For instance, students' moral and cultural understanding was developed in humanities lessons through learning about the tensions in balancing agriculture and economic development, and the horrors of slavery and Nazism. In another lesson, students compared styles of modern art, discussing Picasso's paintings in French.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is unsatisfactory: in lessons, it impedes the learning of the class and, in some cases, the misbehaviour of a few influences others to join in. Behaviour around the site is also inadequate. Students are adequately supervised at lunchtimes and generally behave satisfactorily. Sometimes, food is taken out of the dining room, against the academy's rules, and scraps are left in corridors, on stairs or outside. Behaviour was worse during this inspection than it was during the monitoring visits, although students, staff and external consultants spoke of how it has improved this academic year. Questionnaires completed by parents and carers, students and staff were largely negative with over 50% of each group disagreeing with the statement that behaviour was good. On bullying, their views were more positive although a minority said it was not dealt with effectively. Students understand about keeping themselves and others safe, for example showing awareness about e-safety.

One student has been permanently excluded this year. Fixed-term exclusions have fallen although, to a considerable extent, this relates to the academy's use of its internal exclusion rooms. These provide the opportunity for 'cooling off' prior to reintegration into lessons and prevent disruption to learning for the rest of the class. However, some teachers from whose classes a student has been removed fail to attend the meetings after the academy day when incidents of poor behaviour are discussed. The students who attend off-site provision benefit from the academy's effective links with other providers through which provision is tailored to individual needs, thereby avoiding exclusion and ensuring engagement in learning. Successful placements have been followed by smooth reintegration, improved attendance and achievement. Students who are vulnerable or have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties receive good support pastorally and through multi-agency working. While their academic progress is tracked carefully, the impact of the provision on their achievement is less clear than on their personal development.

Attendance continues to rise slowly, up a further percentage point on the same time last year, but still below average. Persistent absenteeism is reducing but remains too high. Punctuality has improved but too many students still linger on corridors after the bell has rung.

Leadership and management

Weaknesses in leadership and management, including governance, impeded the academy's progress during its first two years. Significantly strengthened leadership at all levels is now driving improvement, albeit with some unevenness, across the priority areas for development. Capacity to improve further is therefore satisfactory. Parents and carers are increasingly involved with the academy's work; for instance, in working to improve behaviour and attendance. Most parents and carers of Year 9 students attended the recent options evening.

Management practices are better established and considerably more rigorous than seen previously. In particular, robust arrangements for performance management and line management are focused on holding staff to account for their effectiveness. All teachers have action plans to improve their teaching and some benefit from individualised support plans, with stories of success. Training has been provided for groups of teachers who share similar areas for development. Recently, several effective teachers completed training in coaching techniques to enable them to work with colleagues with the aim of raising their teaching to good. The academy understands well the necessity of increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to secure better outcomes for all students and to promote equality more effectively. The academy tackles discrimination satisfactorily and meets statutory requirements for safeguarding.

Detailed self-evaluation captures realistically the quality of provision and informs improvement planning, in which actions are supported by suitable training and monitoring activities. Systems for setting targets, tracking students' progress and intervening are established and middle leaders are increasingly involved in their use. However, monitoring information has further potential to give insight into links between behaviour, teaching, the curriculum and achievement. For example, the academy has not analysed the effects of its banding system or Key Stage 4 pathways on each of these aspects. Low-attaining students are generally taught together, creating a higher level of individual need in these classes. Preparations underway for the move to the new buildings include restructuring staffing and tackling curricular matters such as too little time for physical education, the length of lessons, the systematic development of literacy skills in all subjects and the potential to make more of the academy's creative and media specialisms, particularly in fostering students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Significant improvements have been made to governance with strong involvement of the main sponsor, The Manchester College. Vacancies on the governing body have been filled and sub-committees restructured with regular, purposeful meetings. Governors, including representatives of all three sponsors, are closely involved in monitoring the academy's improvement plan. The College's commitment includes provision of support in key subjects and management operations, as well as funding external consultancy for the academy.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 March 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Girls,
Manchester – M40 9QJ**

I am writing to tell you about the findings of the inspection and, on behalf of the team of inspectors, to thank you for your welcome. We were interested to hear about your experiences and your views, particularly on what has improved since our last visit and on what could be better.

We found that almost everything is a mixture of good and bad, although improving.

- You are learning better this year than last. But, sometimes, your written work in one subject was really good and beautifully presented but in another subject was scrappy or incomplete. You need to reach a good standard in all of your subjects.
- The teachers told us they are expecting Year 11 to achieve higher results this summer, including in English and mathematics, as well as their other subjects.
- Many teachers are encouraging you to discuss your ideas in lessons, though not all of you are good at listening to each other. Some of you find reading and writing difficult. The teachers can do more to help you with this.
- Some of you take part enthusiastically in extra activities like the Press Team, in creative and performing arts, and in sports.
- While many of you behave well in all lessons and around the academy, too many do not. Bad behaviour in lessons stops you from learning and teachers from teaching. Even chatter can slow it up. Your parents and carers and the students who completed questionnaires showed they are rightly worried about behaviour.
- Your attendance has improved again this year but can still be better.

Some important things are not good enough. Therefore, we have given the academy a notice to improve. We have asked the staff and governors to do several things.

- Raise standards in all year groups.
- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching.
- Help you develop better skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Improve behaviour and attitudes to learning – you have a big part to play in this.
- All work together – you, your parents and carers and the staff – to improve the academy.

Another inspector will visit in a few months time to see what improvements have been made.

With best wishes for the future, including the exciting move to the new building.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

