

# Manchester Communication Academy

Silchester Drive, Harpurhey, Manchester, M40 8NT

**Inspection dates** 19 - 20 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	<b>Not previously inspected</b>	
	This inspection:		
		<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The Principal, academy sponsors, and senior leadership communicate an exceptionally strong and well-articulated vision for the academy. The staff culture, and the climate for learning successfully communicate high expectations and common values.
- Year 7 students entered the academy with below average attainment and reached average levels by the end of Year 8. This represents good progress.
- The good teaching is characterised by high quality planning, strong relationships and good use of learning resources.
- The strong ethos promotes good behaviour and a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the academy.
- The innovative Key Stage 3 curriculum is well structured and promotes good learning. Extensive out-of-hours learning extends students' experience and enriches their good social, moral, cultural and spiritual development.
- The Principal and senior leaders have led the planning and development of the academy very well. The professional development of staff and the induction of students are effective. Performance management is rigorous.
- The sponsors and governors play an influential strategic role and are robust in monitoring performance.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching and learning is not outstanding.
- A number of middle leaders are new to their role and have not yet demonstrated their impact.
- The academy's assessment of students progress has not been externally validated by national tests.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons of which two were joint observations with senior staff. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, two representatives of the governing body and school staff.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at range of documents, including the academy’s own data on students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records of behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- They took account of the six responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the twenty four staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Bernard Campbell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional inspector

Irene Lavelle

Additional inspector

Kath Harris

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Manchester Communication Academy opened in September 2010 with just Year 7 students. It has expanded each year and now has students in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is currently smaller than the average secondary school. Each year as the school has grown a significant number of new staff have been recruited.
- About half the students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is a high proportion.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy has a specialism in communication. The lead sponsor is BT, and The Manchester College and Manchester City Council are co-sponsors.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
  - strengthening the skills and confidence of teachers new to the academy, especially in English
  - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching, with more creative activities and increased challenge and exploration of student responses to extend learning
  - ensuring that the use of the large open plan areas enables students to listen and learn from each other and contribute more effectively to whole class dialogue.
- Further develop middle leaders new to their role in order to extend the skill and creativity of existing staff as well as inducting and supporting new staff.
- Improve parents and carers' understanding of the curriculum so they are better equipped to support their children's learning.
- Build on the success of the Key Stage 3 curriculum at the next stage of constructing the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with below average attainment. On entry attainment is broadly average in mathematics and below average in English.
- There are no national benchmarks for attainment at the end of Year 8. However, teacher assessment shows that, in 2012, Year 8 students were on track to meet national average levels of attainment, for Level 5 or above, by the end of Year 9. The proportion on track to gain Level 6 or above is below average.
- Teacher assessment shows that students in 2012 students in Year 7 and Year 8 made good progress from their starting points in all subjects. The large majority of students are on track to make at least two levels of progress from Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science. School data also shows that students eligible for the pupil premium and that disabled students and those with special educational needs also make good progress.
- Assessments are internally moderated to check the accuracy of assessment but there has been no external validation to confirm their reliability. The inspection evidence from lesson observations demonstrates that students of all levels of ability learn well and make good progress in most lessons.
- Students are motivated by the high expectations set by the academy and they demonstrate a desire to learn. Their positive attitudes contribute to the calm and purposeful climate for learning. The wide range of additional learning opportunities beyond the school day enables them to extend their experience, increase their enjoyment and to catch up on learning in lessons. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive well targeted and effective support in lessons from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Reading is promoted effectively through a wide range of activities. Targeted students with weaker reading skills regularly read a book with member of staff or a governors and evaluation shows an increase in reading ages. Special events involving different areas of the curriculum promote interest and enjoyment in particular works of fiction. Weaker readers and writers receive good encouragement and direction through the personal and flexible small group work by teachers and teaching assistants. Teacher assessment indicates the students of all abilities make good progress in reading and writing.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The large majority of teaching observed was good. Strong relationships and the use of a good variety of resources and activities engage students well.
- The planning of the longer-than-average teaching sessions is detailed and well structured. This good planning enables students to get involved in and extend their learning and they generally work at a good pace to the end of the lesson.
- The collaborative team teaching by teachers and teaching assistants makes effective use of the variety of spaces for grouping students for different activities. For example, the innovative use of the 'discovery rooms' with different seating and variable lighting is effective in promoting students' thinking and eliciting personal responses. The availability of a number of teachers or teaching assistants in the open plan areas promotes good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

- Teaching assistants are purposeful and effective in their work with individuals and small groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. They question students skilfully and adopt a problem-solving approach which promotes independence.
- Frequent assessment of progress in all subjects provides clear guidance to students on what and how to improve. Marking is generally effective in highlighting strengths and specifying areas for improvement, although there is some inconsistency.
- Where teaching required improvement, the teaching focussed too much on getting students to complete the tasks and did not make sufficient use of students' responses to develop the learning. For example, this occurred in a few cases in English with teachers new to the school.
- In the open plan learning areas, the background noise level from other classes sometimes limits the ability of students to listen and learn from each other. In addition, teachers miss creative opportunities to use student responses to challenge thinking and develop dialogue and learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students respond well to the high standards set for behaviour. Relationships are good, students are attentive in lessons, and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the academy.
- Behaviour is managed consistently well and this is reinforced by the collaborative and flexible ways of working by teachers and teaching assistants. Behaviour is monitored closely and students appreciate the rewards for good behaviour and attendance and believe that the system of sanctions is fair. A reduction in the level of exclusions shows improved behaviour by the more challenging students.
- Attendance is below average. Persistent absence is also above average but has shown a decrease in the last year as a result of effective work with students and their families.
- There are few instances of bullying and these are dealt with well. In the Friday morning 'communications' sessions students have enjoyed learning from each other about the different cultures in the school and they behave respectfully towards each other.
- Students feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The Principal, the sponsors and senior leaders have worked very effectively to strategically design and develop the academy within the context of the wider community. The Principal, supported by able senior leaders, has been highly effective in planning the academy, communicating high ambitions, and in leading its development in the first two years of operation.
- Each year the numbers of students and staff have grown significantly. Thoughtful long-term planning has ensured that students and staff are effectively inducted into the academy and

quickly adopt its values. Each year a high proportion of new staff join the academy, many of whom are newly qualified teachers, often already known to the academy through their close partnerships with higher education teacher training providers. The clarity of leaders' expectations, strongly-established ways of working and close links with external partners, including primary schools, have enabled these major changes to be managed smoothly.

- Effective systems of staff support and good practice in collaborative planning and teamwork provide a robust framework for staff development. The significant investment in weekly staff training provides secure professional development and a strong commitment from staff. Many staff are also involved in research and further professional qualifications.
- Senior leaders are reflective and have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They are robust and proactive in tackling any issues in relation to the quality of teaching and learning or staff performance. Some middle leaders are relatively inexperienced and need further development.
- The innovative structure of the curriculum within well-defined areas of learning has been implemented effectively. This provides a strong framework for learning and for students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. The extensive provision of enrichment activities beyond the school day has been enhanced by the contributions of sponsors, external agencies and the commitment by staff. These activities broaden students' experience, develop their understanding of the world of work, and enable them to catch up on learning from lessons.
- The academy has effective procedures for involving parents in the pastoral support of students. Leaders have identified the need to improve parents' understanding of the curriculum so they are better equipped to support their children's learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The sponsors and governors have played an influential and effective role in developing the academy's vision and strategy. The sponsors have brokered a wide range of partnerships which have extended the learning opportunities for students and adults in the community.
  - Governors play a strong and active role in the performance management of staff. For example, they actively contribute to the leadership panels which consider the evidence presented by staff about their performance. Key governors are well informed about improvements in the academy and rigorously scrutinise the performance of the academy.
  - Effective procedures are in place to ensure that financial and safeguarding procedures are robust.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136105
<b>Local authority</b>	NA
<b>Inspection number</b>	399787

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	0-19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	682
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Blackburn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lynne Heath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	NA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 2020161
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