

The Co-operative Academy of Manchester

Plant Hill Road, Higher Blackley, Manchester, M9 0WQ

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Fewer students make expected progress in English and in mathematics than they do nationally. This leads to overall attainment being well below average.
- The courses offered in science at Key Stage 4 do not provide sufficient challenge for middle ability students.
- The gap in attainment between students who are eligible for the pupil premium and their peers is too wide.
- Some students find it difficult to work independently.
- Teaching is good overall but in a few lessons teachers do not ensure that the needs of the highest and lowest attaining students are met within mixed-ability classes.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy's leaders show relentless drive and determination to improve standards. Their plans are well-judged and their self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The academy has improved strongly since its opening and its capacity to secure further improvement is clear.
- Students behave well, act responsibly and enjoy learning. They make a significant contribution to the academy. Attendance has risen sharply to above average.
- The academy provides consistently excellent pastoral support to students.
- Teaching is good. Teachers work hard to enthuse students through well-planned lessons. They willingly give extra support to any student who needs it.
- The co-operative values on which the academy is founded are apparent in relationships between staff, students, governors and the community. Students feel safe.
- The small sixth form is good and prepares students well for further education or employment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, including three joint observations with senior leaders. They also visited an assembly, tutorials and a reading session where Year 7 students read to Year 10 partners.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, senior leaders, heads of department, the librarian, the Chair of the Governing Body and another representative of The Co-operative Group that sponsors the academy. A telephone discussion was held with the head of Manchester Pupil Referral Unit.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the surveys of parents' opinions carried out by the academy. They also considered 22 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors took account of the academy's work and looked at a wide range of documents, including the academy's assessment data on students' progress, improvement plans, self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour logs and the academy's safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Shirley Gornall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kath Harris

Additional Inspector

Lenford White

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2010. It is sponsored by The Co-operative Group, The Manchester College and Manchester City Council. It is much smaller than the average sized high school.
- Around two-thirds of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for students who are known to be eligible for free schools meals, are in the care of the local authority and those whose parents are in the Armed Services. This is much higher than the national figure.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than that found nationally, as is the proportion that speaks English as an additional language. A few students are at the early stages of learning English.
- Around one-fifth of students are supported at school action. This is much higher than the national figure. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs, or supported at school action plus, is slightly higher than the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy holds numerous awards, including the Food for Life Partnership Award, Green Flag Award and Information Advice and Guidance Bronze Award.
- Twenty one students are educated off-site. Seven of these study motor vehicle engineering at Kick Start for part of the week and spend the remainder of their time studying academic subjects in school. Fourteen students are educated off-site on a full-time basis at various settings, including The Manchester Pupil Referral Unit, Bethel College, Hopwood College and Lighthouse.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress from their relative starting points, and attaining five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all students receive appropriate challenge and support to meet their needs, particularly in classes where there is a wide range of ability levels
 - developing students' skills as independent learners so that those who are heavily reliant on their teachers' direction gain confidence and resilience to think for themselves.
- Review the science curriculum to ensure that the aspirations of all students are met through more varied course choices.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with attainment that is significantly lower than that found nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is well below the national average. More students achieved good grades in mathematics in 2012 than in the previous year but fewer higher-attaining students made good progress from their starting points than in schools nationally. In English, fewer middle and higher-attaining students made good progress than the national average. However, lower-attaining students made good progress in both English and mathematics.
- The attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is lower than that of their peers as measured by their average points scores. The gap in attainment narrowed in mathematics in 2012 but widened in other areas.
- The vast majority of students attain five or more GCSE grades. The academy's strong improvement on this measure reflects its inclusive ethos and the greatly improved attendance of students.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs supported at school action plus requires improvement. The academy is taking concerted action to provide effective support to these students.
- Achievement is strong in religious studies and English literature. A small number of students took GCSE science in 2012 and their results show good progress. The skills development of other students in science is depressed at Key Stage 4 because too many middle and higher-attaining students follow courses that are relatively undemanding.
- The achievement of students currently in school is strengthening across subjects, according to the academy's rigorous tracking and evidence of students' work in lessons. The results of recent external examinations in mathematics show that more students are achieving grades that represent good progress. There are reliable indications that attainment in 2013 will rise strongly.
- The academy makes use of early entry for GCSE in mathematics. Students are encouraged to re-sit the examination if they do not achieve their target grades. The academy's evidence indicates that students' motivation is enhanced through gaining an 'early taste of success.' Academy leaders are monitoring the impact of this policy closely. Students who gain the highest grades on early entry proceed to take an additional mathematics qualification.
- Achievement for students who access some or all of their education off-site is closely monitored by the school. They make progress similar to that of their peers.
- The academy strives to improve the literacy standards of students so that they can succeed in all their subjects as well as enjoying reading. Appropriate programmes are in place to support those with particularly weak reading levels. Some Year 7 students have trained reading partners in Year 10 who work with them and boost their confidence and reading skills. The number of students visiting the school's well-stocked library and enjoying reading challenges has increased significantly.
- Students' skills in speaking, reading and writing are improving as a result of opportunities provided for them across subjects. Initiatives such as a debating group are building students' confidence in addressing wider audiences. Their skills for future employment are fostered through an exciting business studies programme and a range of initiatives such as work experience provided by the sponsors. Some students' progress is hampered by their lack of confidence in working independently.
- The achievement of the small number of students in the sixth form is good. They benefit from personalised support and teaching that consistently meets their needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers build good relationships with their students and consistently show concern for them as individuals. They have a clear expectation that all students should make good progress in every lesson, and records indicate that they are increasingly successful in this aim.
- Most lessons are well-planned and include an interesting range of activities that maintain students' interest. Good opportunities are provided for students to develop their literacy skills, such as in an effective art lesson in which the teacher encouraged students to use correct terminology when providing feedback to each other. Most students take care to present their work neatly and to think about their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- There is some outstanding practice in the academy, where teachers successfully enable students to lead their own learning. This was demonstrated in an English lesson in which the teacher challenged students to debate whether or not musicians are good role models, drawing their evidence from pictures and text. His probing questions helped them to refine their ideas which they presented convincingly. In a high quality physical education lesson, students made outstanding progress because of the way that the teacher designed activities so that they could support and learn from each other.
- Teachers' feedback to students, including through marking, is of a high quality. There is increasing evidence of students acting upon their teachers' advice. Some students write their own comments in reply to those of their teachers, explaining how they are going to improve their work.
- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement. In these cases, teachers have not planned activities that help students of all abilities to learn, particularly in classes where there is a wide spread of ability. This results in the progress of higher-attaining students stalling because of insufficient challenge whereas the least-able feel overwhelmed and do not complete the work that is set. A few lessons also lose pace because teachers spend too long giving instructions or explanations.
- The academy's leaders have a thorough knowledge of the quality of teachers' work and have a proven track record in improving the performance of individual teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Students who spoke with inspectors regard good behaviour as one of the most significant strengths of the academy. They feel safe and well-supported and are keen to do their part as members of the 'co-operative community.' Several younger students mentioned that mixed-age tutor groups help them to settle in because 'there's always someone looking out for you.' Students move around the academy sensibly, are courteous and considerate.
- The academy provides students with guidance about bullying in all its forms. Intolerance and harassment are contrary to co-operative values, and students understand this. They think that bullying at the academy is rare and swiftly addressed. The school's behaviour logs confirm that this is the case. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that behaviour is good, that the academy is safe and that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Lessons are very rarely affected by low-level disruption. There is a clear behaviour management policy that teachers apply consistently when incidents occur.
- Students willingly work with each other and enjoy team membership. A lack of confidence prevents some of them from making the most of opportunities to work independently. The academy's leaders are well aware of this and are working hard to develop students' resilience so that they have 'backbone not wishbone.'
- Students take on additional responsibilities enthusiastically. They know that the senior team and their teachers genuinely value their opinions as to how the academy can be improved, and for their part they want to be part of the improvement process. This was powerfully illustrated by the community cohesion task force, who presented an assembly that included a very professional film they had produced, that had considerable impact on the Year 7 students who viewed it. Students raise money for their chosen charities and give generously of their time, for

example, by running bingo sessions for the local community.

- Attendance at the academy has improved greatly and is above the national average. The number of students who are persistently absent has significantly reduced as a result of partnership working between the academy, families and other agencies. Students say that they enjoy learning and 'don't want to miss a day.'

The leadership and management is good

- The Principal and the senior team are relentless in their determination to provide students with the best possible opportunities. They have established strong and secure foundations for future success. The co-operative values that underpin the academy are apparent in relationships between adults and students. As a result, the academy is a calm, orderly business-like and outward-facing place. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted through the academy's core values.
- Leadership is strong throughout the academy. There are clear lines of accountability and communication so that everyone knows the academy's priorities and the part they have to play. The academy's improvement planning is carried out systematically and thoughtfully. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. Lessons are regularly observed by school leaders and by other colleagues. The open-plan arrangement of the academy is exploited imaginatively so that teachers can share practice. All teachers are actively encouraged to reflect on their skills and to contribute to the work of the 'learning hub', which considers and directs improvement.
- The academy provides well for teachers' professional development. All teachers have mentors and coaches who are staff peers. This structure enables good practice to be shared and individual skills to be developed within a supportive environment.
- The management of teachers' performance is rigorous. Teachers' objectives are closely linked to students' progress and decisions about their pay are made according to strict criteria.
- The academy is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity through its policies and practices. Leaders recognise that the gap in performance between students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers is too wide. They are taking rigorous action to close the gap, by adjusting the composition of classes, providing specialist support from High Level Teaching Assistants, running summer school programmes, using various initiatives to promote reading, and providing individuals with mentors. The academy's evidence shows that these initiatives are having a positive impact on students' behaviour, self-esteem and progress, and that the attainment gap is beginning to narrow.
- Academy leaders work very effectively with other agencies to help students overcome difficulties and thereby improve their achievement. The excellent pastoral care provided by the academy is appreciated by students and their families.
- The academy's procedures for safeguarding students are exemplary.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the work of the academy and play an active part in its development, particularly through the strong links with the Co-operative Group that have been instrumental in shaping the academy's ethos and strategic priorities. Governors work closely with the Principal to ensure that the 'business' of learning is developed in a sustainable way. They have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and ensure that performance management is properly conducted. Governors provide challenge and ensure support in a balanced way. Coaching opportunities provided for senior leaders through the Chair of the Governing Body strengthen the academy's leadership.

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

Unique reference number	136174
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	399791

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	592
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Moira Lees
Principal	Kathy Leaver
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 795 3005
Fax number	0161 702 3324
Email address	principle@cam.coop

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