

# The Macclesfield Academy

Park Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8JR

**Inspection dates** 21–22 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
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

- Although significant improvements have been made since the academy opened under two years ago, students' overall achievement is not yet good.
- Some lower-ability students and those supported through 'school action' do not always make sufficient progress to enable them to reach their full potential.
- The proportion of higher-ability students reaching the highest A\* to A grades at GCSE, for example in English and mathematics, is below average.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the majority of subjects, and there are insufficient lessons in which it is outstanding.
- Some teachers take too little account of students' prior knowledge when planning tasks, so that it is not built on sufficiently well to improve students' understanding and speed up their learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have set an ambitious agenda for improvement underpinned by challenging targets.
- The academy demonstrated one of the fastest rates of improvement in students' attainment of any school in the country in 2012. As a result standards in the core subjects are no longer low but in line with national averages.
- Most students with a statement of special educational needs make good or outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Students behave well and feel safe. They are proud of their academy and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what it has to offer. Many parents praise the excellent pastoral care and support for their children and are appreciative of how this is given equal emphasis to academic targets.
- The academy's good quality curriculum is enhanced by an excellent programme of enrichment activities. These engage and enthuse students in valuable experiences within and beyond the 'typical' curriculum.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders. Other aspects of the academy’s work were also seen, including tutorial and registration groups and the ‘House Cup Assembly’.
- Meetings were held with leaders, teachers and three members of the governing body.
- Discussions were held with several small groups of students, randomly selected from lessons observed on the first day, gathering the views of over 50 students in this process.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 responses to the online Parent View questionnaires, as well as the academy’s own recent surveys of student, parent and staff views. They gathered the views of 43 members of staff who completed the optional Ofsted questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at a range of key policies and other documentation including: the academy’s own data relating to students’ achievement; improvement plans and leaders’ checks on the quality of teaching and learning; minutes of governing body meetings; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and safeguarding arrangements.

## Inspection team

Marguerite Murphy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Woodhouse

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2011 on the site of the predecessor school, Macclesfield High. The academy is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Its main sponsor is Macclesfield College, with which it is co-located on the Macclesfield Learning Zone site, along with Park Lane School. Sixth Form provision on the Learning Zone is at LZ6, which is part of Macclesfield College.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and requiring extra support through 'school action' is just below average.
- An above average proportion of students has a statement of special educational needs or extra support because they have been identified as 'school action plus'.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after
- The academy offers alternative provision for a small number of students and this is now mainly in its own 'Aspire' facility on the campus.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Accelerate the improvement in teaching to ensure it is consistently good and that a higher proportion is outstanding by:
  - sharing best practice to improve teachers' use of information on students' achievements to set exactly the right level of work for all ability groups in lessons
  - reviewing the expectations of good quality marking that contributes more effectively to students' knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
  - providing more opportunities in lessons for students to take the lead in their own learning, for example in suggesting further problem-solving tasks and learning from each other.
- Further build on the substantial recent improvements made to students' overall rates of progress across a range of subjects by:
  - ensuring that students of all abilities in all year groups make consistently good progress from their starting points on entry to the academy
  - securing good progress for all higher-attaining students in order to increase the proportion achieving top grades, for example in mathematics and English GCSEs.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students' attainment on entry to the academy varies from year to year but is generally below average, though not significantly so. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have risen significantly since the academy opened, despite some variation between subjects. The current Year 11 students are confidently placed to at least match the academy's successful 2012 results in the proportion achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C with English and mathematics included.
- In the 2012 examinations, the gap between the performance of those students supported by the pupil premium and others was over 10 percentage points larger than nationally found in English and mathematics. Too few of those students made the amount of progress expected of them. Pupil-premium funding has been used well to support a number of actions taken by the academy to improve their learning and progress so that the gap in achievement is narrowing significantly.
- A group of higher-attaining students reached high grades in their biology, chemistry and physics examinations in 2012. In general, however, a below average number of students reach A\* or A grades in many subjects, with the exception of geography, history and French in 2012.
- Students generally make better progress in English than mathematics but the difference is beginning to narrow as underperformance has been tackled and teaching continues to improve.
- The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs and are supported at school action is variable. When teaching is good and takes into account their specific learning needs, some make good progress, but this is not always the case.
- A small group of students are educated at the relatively new off-site provision Aspire, which is managed by the academy and is actually located on the Learning Zone campus. These students are most at risk of permanent exclusion or non-attendance. They make suitable progress in their academic, social and emotional development to enable them to access education.
- Boys made less progress than girls last year. Although there is no evidence that this is typical, the academy is aware of the need to monitor this across year groups, for example where boys appear to be making better progress in science while girls are making more progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy has a flexible early entry policy for some GCSE examinations that makes a positive contribution to students' motivation and achievement because it is personalised to their needs.
- Good support and intervention for students who enter Year 7 with low literacy skills helps them to make quick gains in this aspect and the importance of reading and writing is promoted well. Some students also show an interest in reading widely, although this is more likely to be within lessons or enrichment activities than beyond the academy day.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving and the majority is now good, although leaders are aware that the proportion of teaching requiring improvement needs to be lower and that of outstanding teaching to be higher in order to accelerate students' progress further.
- The improvements made to students' attainment in English and mathematics reflects the positive actions taken to improve the effectiveness of teaching in these subjects, although some variability remains.
- When teaching is more effective, there are high expectations of students and good use of time during the double-periods to extend their learning through an interesting range of activities. A mathematics lesson in Year 7 had a 'buzz' about the room as students worked animatedly in pairs to tackle challenges within a set timeframe, with a 'pass the plenary' activity that kept them thinking. Students made good progress in their understanding of how to use brackets in algebraic problems with mixed operations.

- The quality of teachers' marking and verbal feedback to students is inconsistent and does not always provide useful guidance to students how to improve their work in lessons. When specific comments are given, students are not routinely expected to reflect on these and respond to or act upon them. Other than at particular assessment and reporting times, too many students are unaware of the level they are working at and how they can improve this.
- In the better lessons teachers take full account of what students have already learned and identify gaps in their knowledge, then provide either well-targeted support for those who require it or more difficult tasks for those who are finding the work easy. Good, open questioning is used to promote students' thinking skills and encourage them to respond more fully, thereby improving their learning and progress.

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

- Behaviour is good and most students demonstrate good manners and positive attitudes that contribute to good learning in the majority of lessons. They understand and appreciate the academy's raised expectations of behaviour and the rewards and sanctions in place to support this.
- Relationships between staff and students are positive and supportive and students feel safe. Movement around the building at break times and lunchtimes is orderly and sociable, with little need for constant adult presence or supervision. This reflects students' growing sense of responsibility and respect for each other and the local community.
- On the few occasions when behaviour and attitudes are less positive, this is usually in lessons when teaching is less than good and a small number of students take advantage by causing low-level disruption to learning.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and of all forms of bullying, saying that this is now very rare and dealt with quickly because everyone is encouraged to report any problems. They feel respected and listened to.
- Policies and procedures to promote good attendance and punctuality are effective and well communicated to parents and students. An apparent dip in attendance to just below average was a temporary effect of the 'zero tolerance' of poor behaviour, when a few students chose not to attend rather than face consequences.
- The academy's 'Room One' facility is well managed and provides successfully for students who need additional support on a temporary or occasional basis. This helps those who experience social or emotional difficulties, or students who need to work away from others for a short time to avoid recurrence of behaviour problems.

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

- The highly regarded headteacher and his staff are committed to working effectively in partnership with parents, taking account of their views and acting on these. Communication is regular and of good quality: parents are kept well informed about the academy's work and how best to support their child. Achievements are recognised and celebrated, promoting a good sense of community.
- Staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire overwhelmingly agree that the academy is well led and managed. Most staff feel well supported by good opportunities for professional development.
- Senior leaders make regular checks on the academy's progress and analyse the performance of all groups of students. Self-evaluation and improvement planning are concise and focused on the key priorities for improvement. These are also reflected in subject leaders' departmental action plans.
- Underperformance is tackled with determination and this was a contributing factor to the rise in

students' attainment at the end of the academy's first year. Robust performance-management systems are based on the requirement for teachers to meet challenging targets including those relating to students' progress. Expectations are appropriate to individual teachers' career stage, responsibilities and salary scale.

- Policies and procedures for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and in many respects exemplify good practice.
  - Leadership of teaching and learning is good. The profile of teaching continues to improve as a result of senior leaders' regular monitoring and feedback to staff, backed up by targeted training or coaching activities.
  - The academy successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a significant number of opportunities within and beyond the daily curriculum on offer. Students are able to take on roles of responsibility and engage in sporting, artistic, charitable and other community events.
  - The academy's clear commitment to equalities and the inclusion of all learners is a factor in students' growing confidence and knowledge that they are equally valued as individuals.
  - Partnership working with the main sponsor, Macclesfield College, helps to provide a good range of on-campus opportunities across the 14 to 19 age range. This is encouraging more young people to stay in education by accessing appropriate vocational courses, as well as those who choose a more academic route.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Members of the governing body have a good knowledge of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and hold the headteacher to account through a rigorous performance-management process.
    - The governing body provides a good level of challenge to the senior leadership team. Governors are knowledgeable about what the data on students' achievement shows and what questions should be asked about this.
    - Financial management and monitoring of resources, including the use of the pupil-premium funding, are strong and enable the academy to achieve a balanced budget while planning ahead for future needs.
    - Governors and leaders express a clear commitment to the further development and impact of the Macclesfield Learning Zone within the local community.
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## 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>	137064
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	399864

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	520
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	George Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Hedge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 383100
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