

The Macclesfield Academy

Park Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8JR

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Students' attainment has risen rapidly in most subjects, including English and mathematics, to above average levels; this is in response to the vision and decisive action of the highly committed and enthusiastic headteacher and his staff.
- Students make good progress as they move through the academy. When they join the academy in Year 7, their attainment is below average, yet in Years 10 and 11 they achieve at least average GCSE results. In some subjects, such as science, their results are above average.
- The proportion of students across all year groups making more than the progress expected of them is also rising rapidly. They benefit from the positive ethos which pervades the academy and the usually good teaching which enables them to make rapid progress.
- Students' behaviour is usually good. Students are keen to do well, have good relationships with the adults who work with them and feel safe in the academy. Attendance is broadly average and improving. Parents and students appreciate the recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum which have led to better progress and attitudes towards learning.
- The actions taken to improve the quality of teaching, and an innovative curriculum underpins the good progress students make and, have led to significant improvements in the very short time since the last inspection.
- The academy's own evaluation of its performance is accurate and springs from a rigorous evaluation of students' achievement which in turn identifies how the academy can improve further. The effective tracking system picks up any students who are not making the progress they should and this triggers extra help for them.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

Teaching is not yet outstanding. Students are not always given the precise written guidance they need to improve their work, especially their spelling and grammar, and poorly- presented work is not always challenged.

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- Achievement is not yet outstanding. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE in some subjects is not yet high enough. Opportunities are sometimes missed in lessons to extend the learning, particularly of the most able, by providing further challenge.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, of which, four were joint observations with senior leaders. They also checked students' work. Other aspects of the academy's work were also seen, including a variety of extra-curricular activities and short visits to sessions in the 'Aspire' facility and at Macclesfield College.
- Inspectors had meetings with leaders, teachers and members of the governing body. They also held discussions with two groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4 to gather their views.
- Inspectors took account of 67 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and 34 responses to the optional Ofsted questionnaire for staff, as well as the academy's own recent surveys of student and parent views.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the academy's own data relating to students' current achievement, improvement plans and records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Johan MacKinnon

Additional Inspector

Paul Latham

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 and both are located on the Macclesfield Learning Zone site.
- 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 by the local authority.
- The academy offers alternative provision for a small number of students in its own 'Aspire' facility on the campus. Students also have access to some vocational courses provided by the college.
- 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding and thus raise standards further and increase the progress students make, particularly the most able, by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information, including that gained from marking, to always provide a high level of challenge and appropriate support for students
 - ensuring all teachers check students' progress in lessons and adjust tasks accordingly to extend students' learning
 - making sure students are always given precise written guidance about how to improve their work, particularly their spelling and grammar, in subjects other than English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have risen significantly since the last inspection, although there is some variation between subjects. The current Year 10 and 11 students are confidently set to improve on the academy's successful 2013 results in the proportion achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- Attainment on entry to the academy is generally below average, yet by the end of Years 10 and 11, the standards they achieved in GCSE examinations were broadly average in most subjects in 2013 examinations, except in mathematics where they were significantly below average. A higher proportion of students are set to achieve A* to C grades in the majority of subjects than in 2013. Standards in mathematics have risen significantly and students now make good progress in most subjects, including in both English and in mathematics, because underperformance has been tackled successfully and teaching has improved.
- In 2013, the gap between the performance of those students supported by the pupil premium and others was larger than nationally found in English and mathematics although it is closing. 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 continues to narrow significantly.
- The most able students reached high grades in their biology, chemistry and physics examinations in 2013. In general, however, a below average number of students reached A* or A grades in many subjects, including in English and mathematics. Current students' progress indicates that the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is also set to rise across most subjects to closer to the national average.
- 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 students' specific learning needs, some make good progress, but this is not always the case.
- A small group of students are taught at the Aspire facility, which is managed by the academy and is located on the Learning Zone campus, adjacent to the academy. 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 the curriculum.
- The academy has a flexible early entry policy for some GCSE examinations that makes a positive contribution to students' motivation and achievement. The curriculum is well thought-out and meets students' needs and aspirations well. For example, Year 9, 10 and 11 students in mixed-age classes, following one year courses in some subjects, achieve well.
- Support and intervention for students who enter Year 7 with low literacy skills helps them to settle in quickly and make rapid progress; reading and writing are promoted well.

The quality of teaching is good

Teaching has improved significantly across most subjects in the very short time since the last inspection and has resulted in higher standards and in students making swifter progress. The majority is now good with an increasing proportion of teaching that is outstanding.

- Students respond very positively and learn very effectively when they are challenged. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students from Years 7 and 8 explored the properties of right-angled triangles, identifying patterns which would enable them to arrive at the Pythagoras Theorem.

- Year 9 students made swift progress in a geography lesson because the investigation into how human activities affected deforestation and the conflicts arising from this captured their interest. Students in a Year 10 physics lesson made good progress in using data to explain energy transfer because their progress was checked regularly and the level of challenge adjusted accordingly in order to extend their learning. When the materials students are given provide an

appropriate level of challenge or support, they are able to work confidently.

- The quality of marking is usually good. Students' work is checked regularly and, in many cases, students enter into a dialogue with the teacher about how to improve their work. However, there remain instances where students are not given precise guidance about how to improve their work or errors in spellings and grammar are left unchecked. Sometimes untidy or poorly presented work is left unchallenged.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students' behaviour in lessons and as they move around the school between lessons and at break and lunchtimes is orderly, with little need for adult supervision. Students settle quickly in lessons and are usually keen to learn. They take pride in their appearance and usually come well prepared for lessons. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average.
- When working in pairs and small groups, students co-operate well and, when given the opportunity to solve problems, display high levels of concentration and interest and are keen to share their ideas, often participating in lively debate.
- Students have good relationships with each other and with adults. The 'zero tolerance' of poor behaviour has resulted in a higher than average incidence of temporary exclusions but this is decreasing.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and are confident that the academy deals promptly and effectively with any rare instances of poor behaviour and bullying. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- The academy successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a wide range of activities within and beyond the daily curriculum on offer. Students are able to engage in sporting, artistic, charitable and other community events. In addition, students take on responsibility as mentors, prefects and school counsellors within the academy and in the wider community. For example, students work with the local community to develop a wildlife area nearby.

The leadership and management are good

- As a result of the decisive action and very clear direction of the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, standards are rapidly rising and increasing numbers of students are making good progress. The proportion of outstanding teaching has increased significantly since the last inspection because the academy has been very successful in identifying and spreading best practice across the school.
- The leadership and management at all levels has been very effective in improving the quality and consistency of teaching rapidly across the academy, through lesson observations, feedback and coaching.
- The academy is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all its students. It has adapted its curriculum in order to better meet the needs and aspirations of its students. This is flexible and effectively tailored to individual students. Mixed-age classes and early entry to examinations to provide an appropriate and timely challenge for students, as well as extra help for students joining the academy in Year 7 with low literacy levels, exemplify this commitment. The wide range of extra-curricular activities provided successfully broadens students' experience and interests and, for example in astronomy, has led to the provision of GCSE courses because of the interest generated amongst students.
- Partnership with the main sponsor, Macclesfield College, helps to provide a good range of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 as well as access to the sixth form. This encourages more students to stay in education.

- Parents are kept well- informed about the academy’s work and how best to support their children. Achievements are recognised and celebrated, promoting a good sense of community.
- Staff who responded to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about the way the academy is led and managed. Robust systems of performance management set teachers appropriate targets, including students’ progress, identify training needs and are linked to pay scales.
- Systems for checking the academy’s performance are rigorous and based on the close monitoring of students’ progress. The academy’s own evaluation of its work is accurate, identifying clearly and concisely what needs to be done to improve further.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the academy and what could be improved. They hold the headteacher to account through a rigorous performance management process and provide a good level of support and challenge to the senior leadership team. They are well- informed about students’ progress and are able to ask searching questions. Financial management and monitoring, including the use of pupil premium funding and teachers’ pay, is strong and the impact of this is regularly checked.

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	137064
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	432150

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Wilson
Headteacher	Richard Hedge
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2013
Telephone number	01625 383100
Fax number	01625 668635
Email address	Head@macclesfieldacademy.org

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