

Manchester Creative and Media Academy

300 Victoria Avenue East, Blackley, Manchester, M9 7SS

Inspection dates

12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students underachieve in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. Given their starting points, the standards students reach by the end of Year 11 are too low and well below the national standards.
- Although improving, the proportion of students making the expected rate of progress is lower than nationally expected. Most groups of students, including the disadvantaged, disabled students and those with special educational needs, fail to make sufficient progress.
- Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others in the academy and nationally, are closing but still remain too wide. Governors do not hold leaders to account for ensuring the pupil premium is used effectively.
- Students' underachievement reflects inadequate teaching over time. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Work often lacks challenge and fails to interest and engage students in learning. The quality of teaching is improving but remains inconsistent.
- Some students have poor attitudes to learning and ignore teachers' instructions. As a result, learning is disrupted.
- Attendance is low. Too many students are regularly absent and arrive late to lessons.
- Students' safety requires improvement. Some older students have gaps in their understanding of how to stay safe in relationships.
- Some leaders' roles are at an early stage of development; some pastoral and subject leaders require further support and training in order to play a more effective part in improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Leaders have yet to ensure that the academy's policies, aimed at improving the consistency of teaching and promoting good behaviour among students, are adhered to by all staff.
- Sixth-form provision requires improvement. Students make the expected rate of progress in their courses; however, teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure they achieve well.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal has high aspirations. Most staff and governors are clear about what is needed to improve teaching, students' achievement, behaviour and attendance. There is evidence of some improvements in the key areas of teaching and achievement, which demonstrate that the academy has the ability to continue to improve.
- Standards in the current Year 11 are now much higher than in previous years and the proportion of students making expected progress has increased.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a wide range of subjects and year groups between Years 7 to 11; some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also attended assemblies and a number of tutorial sessions.
- All sixth-form students were on study leave during the inspection; however, a few attended the academy in order to speak with inspectors.
- Inspectors held meetings with students, subject leaders, leaders responsible for many different aspects of the academy's work, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the Chief Executive of the Bright Futures Educational Trust.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's evaluations of its own performance, its development plans, records of the academy's checks of the quality of teaching, information about students' progress and attendance, and safeguarding documents. Samples of students' work were reviewed. These included work produced by sixth form students.
- Inspectors considered the views of the responses made by 143 parents to the academy's own survey. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be taken into consideration. Inspectors considered the views of staff through 81 returned staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Pankaj Gulab, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Claire Hollister	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school. It formally became a co-educational school in September 2014 and the number on roll as a result, has increased. Previously, there was a separate boys' and girls' academy on the present site. There are currently more girls than boys on roll.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of students are White British. A higher-than-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest of which are Pakistani and African. A higher-than-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The sponsorship of the academy is in a transitional phase. Current sponsors, Microsoft and Manchester City Council, are in the process of handing over to the Bright Futures Educational Trust.
- The Principal's appointment, taken up in September 2014, is on an interim basis pending confirmation of the trust arrangements. A vice Principal joined the academy in September 2014 and an assistant Principal in January 2015. Several new appointments of middle leaders have been made.
- In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The academy is in the process of closing its sixth-form provision. All remaining students are in Year 13. The sixth-form curriculum comprises four BTEC courses and enables students who enter the sixth form with a GCSE below grade C for English and mathematics to work toward improving their grades.
- A small number of students are educated at Leo Kelly, a hospital school, The Harpurhey Alternative Provision School and Manchester Pupil Referral Unit, where they access a range of vocational courses.
- When Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Girls had its last full inspection, it was judged to require improvement. Manchester Creative and Media Academy for Boys was inspected at the same time and was judged to have serious weaknesses. Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored both academies and judged, in March 2014 and July 2014, that leaders and governors were not taking effective action to secure improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently raise students' achievement, including in English and mathematics, for all groups of students, by improving the quality of teaching so that it is at least good, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of students, including in the sixth form
 - teachers use the information they have about students to plan lessons that help them to engage more effectively in their learning
 - activities provide interest, engage and challenge students so that they are keen to learn, show good attitudes to learning, behave well and make at least good progress
 - the quality of marking improves in all subjects and students respond to teachers' comments on their work
 - teaching assistants are clear as to their roles in supporting students' learning in lessons
 - challenging homework is set regularly so that students take responsibility for their learning
 - students are able to write and speak at length and they use and apply their literacy skills in order to deepen their understanding
 - opportunities to develop and consolidate students' mathematical skills are used well in other subjects.

- Improve students' behaviour, safety and attendance by ensuring that:
 - expectations of students' behaviour are high, communicated clearly and enforced consistently so that students know how they should behave, including by following the instructions given by their teachers
 - the needs of those students with more complex social, emotional, behavioural and mental health issues are identified and effective support is provided for them
 - older students receive sex and relationship guidance, so that they are clear how to stay safe
 - students always arrive to lessons on time and are ready to learn
 - the proportion of students who are regularly absent is reduced so that it is at least in line with the national average
 - the attendance of different groups of students, such as the disadvantaged, and the impact of absence on their learning, is checked more carefully in order to ensure that any identified issues are swiftly addressed.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - further developing the roles of subject and pastoral leaders, including in the sixth form, so that they have the skills needed to effectively improve the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that governors hold academy leaders rigorously to account for making sure that students achieve equally well across the key stages, and that gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others, in the academy and nationally, close quickly
 - making sure all staff consistently adhere to the revised academy policies, particularly those aimed at improving teaching
 - making sure that teachers' assessments of students' knowledge, skills and understanding are accurate and that leaders use this information effectively to evaluate how well students are achieving across the academy.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders have made many changes this academic year in order to address students' underachievement, tackle weak teaching and improve students' behaviour and attendance. Inspection evidence shows that, although serious weaknesses remain, improvements in each of these key areas have been made. For example, current standards in Year 11 are now much higher than previously, particularly for boys, and the proportion of students making expected progress has also increased significantly. Evident improvements demonstrate that the academy's leaders have the capacity to secure better outcomes.
- The academy's evaluation of its own performance is now accurate and more robust; it is reviewed regularly and the identified areas for improvement feed into the academy's development plans. The Principal has high aspirations for the academy. Since her appointment, she has successfully ensured that staff at all levels are clear of both the academy's strengths and of what it needs to do to improve. In her drive to improve the academy, she is setting high expectations for staff and students' performance. Most teachers and support staff share a clear vision for the academy's improvement and have confidence in the academy's leadership to bring this about.
- Several new staff have recently been appointed to middle leadership roles, including subject and pastoral leaders. For some, this has meant a restructuring of roles. New leaders are keen and enthusiastic to support the academy's improvement and, following training, they are now more accountable and focused on students' progress and clearer about their roles. Their effectiveness is starting to strengthen; however, they still require further support in order to play a full part in improving the quality of teaching and raising the achievement of students in their subjects or areas of responsibility.
- The leadership of teaching is steadily improving because the quality of teaching is now checked more thoroughly, including through looking at work in students' books. Revised policies for teaching, including arrangements to ensure that students' skills are more accurately and regularly assessed, are in place. The necessary programmes of support for students are identified more quickly as a result. Similarly, specific training on making sure students' behaviour is well-managed has also taken place. While some staff are applying new policies well, some are not adhering to them fully.
- The academy has made changes to the curriculum in order to better meet the needs of students. Fewer alternative provision places are now used and more support from within the academy is helping students to develop better basic skills, such as in literacy and numeracy. However, leaders are yet to ensure that students' literacy and numeracy skills develop quickly enough. For example, students are not being given sufficient opportunities to write and speak at length and to use and apply their mathematical skills in their work in other curriculum subjects.
- Students receive appropriate advice and careers guidance in helping them make informed choices about their next steps beyond Year 11. They explore career paths, experience mock interviews and prepare application forms through their tutor time. The proportion of students not going on into employment, education or training is lower than the national average.
- Most students appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities that contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A programme to promote students' personal, health and social education, offered during an extended tutor session, and students' participation in the student council, develops their understanding of the fundamental values of democracy, tolerance and respect and prepares them appropriately for their part in life in modern Britain. The academy takes appropriate steps to make sure students, and their parents, are aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Although safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, the academy's work to keep students safe and secure is not yet effective. Leaders do not ensure that older students have a good awareness of how to stay safe within sexual relationships.
- The local authority provides helpful and positive support in reviewing the academy's performance, including evaluating the impact of the various initiatives aimed at bringing about improvement. The Bright Futures Educational Trust provides useful opportunities to strengthen the skills of the academy's leadership and management. Collaboration between individuals and departments with other colleagues in good and outstanding schools is proving beneficial and is improving leadership and the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have strengthened the academy's systems for measuring how well its students and groups of students are learning. Underachievement is being identified more swiftly as a result. This is helping leaders to target extra help for subjects and groups of students more quickly than in the past. Leaders are increasingly focused on ensuring that gaps in the achievement between different groups are tackled and they are starting to make better use of the pupil premium funding. Although leaders are working to ensure that students receive equality of opportunity, students do not achieve equally well across the key stages. Gaps in attainment, such as between disadvantaged students and others in the academy and nationally,

are closing, but still remain too wide.

- The quality of support provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs, remains too variable, and leadership and management of this provision is not effective enough to improve students' achievement quickly. The requirements of those students with more complex social, emotional and mental health needs, are not met.
- The academy's arrangements for placing and ensuring the safety and attendance of students on alternative education provision are well structured. Students' performance is regularly checked. Individuals are successfully supported to make progress that secures some GCSE grades and/or skills to help them into employment, education or training.
- Although the academy tackles any form of discrimination, students' overall inadequate behaviour shows that their efforts to foster good relations are not yet effective. Leaders are bringing about improvements in students' behaviour but are yet to ensure consistently good behaviour.

■ The governance of the school:

- The effectiveness of governance is strengthening; however, it still requires further improvement.
- Following training and a recent external review, governors are now more involved in the work of the academy. By reviewing key academy policies, they are helping to ensure that a clearer structure for improvement is in place for all. They now have higher expectations of both staff and students and check that the targets for both staff and student performance are more challenging. These changes are all beginning to improve the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and their achievement. Governors now check teachers' performance management arrangements and ensure that any pay awards are related to teachers' agreed targets and students' progress.
- Governors ensure that senior leaders provide them with timely reports about the academy's performance, including data that show how well it performs in comparison to other schools. They know that the proportions of students making expected progress in English and mathematics has risen.
- In the past, governors have not challenged the academy well enough about the impact of the pupil premium funding on the achievement of disadvantaged students. They now know how this funding is spent, but still do not check effectively on the impact of this expenditure.
- Governors have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the academy. They know that teaching is steadily improving. Even so, they are yet to fully hold academy leaders to account for making sure that it is consistently good. Some weak teaching persists.
- Arrangements for moving over to the new trust are well underway in order to ensure that there is a smooth transition.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. A significant minority of parents who responded to the academy's own survey raised concerns about students' behaviour, as did many of the staff that completed questionnaires.
- In lessons, some students' poor attitudes disrupt their own learning and that of others. Students say that this happens regularly. Some ignore instructions from their teachers. Teachers' expectations of good behaviour, although rising, are sometimes still too low.
- Too many students display disruptive behaviour that results in them being sent to the inclusion area. The challenging behaviours of a small minority of students, such as those with more complex social, emotional and mental health needs, are not always identified, supported and addressed, to help them to improve.
- The majority of students are courteous and polite and engage with visitors appropriately. They conduct themselves well in open areas supervised by staff. However, a few demonstrate more challenging behaviours, are difficult to manage and are poor role models to other students, particularly the younger ones. They sometimes challenge staff when attempts are made to address their poor behaviour.
- Movement between lessons is too slow. As a result too many students arrive late to lessons. Some do not take pride in wearing their uniform, or in their work, and they arrive at lessons ill-equipped for learning.
- A new behaviour policy is raising expectations of students' behaviour. Students, staff and governors all agree that the behaviour around the academy, including in lessons, has improved a lot this year even though a minority of students have yet to cooperate fully with these higher expectations. The behaviour of the few students attending alternative provision is better, as the provision and support arrangements are designed to meet their specific needs well.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Students in all year groups say they feel safe and know of an adult that they can turn to for support if they have concerns. They acknowledge that some bullying does sometimes take place. Older students are clear that, if reported, bullying would be addressed. Students know how to keep safe. Through lessons and the different topics covered in their tutorial sessions, they learn how to keep safe when using new technologies and the internet. They recognise inappropriate words that may be harmful or hurtful to others. The academy's programme to help students stay safe in relationships has been recently established, but as yet some older students have some gaps in their understanding. This is now being addressed by the academy.
- Attendance is now improving from very low levels in previous years. By introducing a system to ensure absence is reported on the first day, academy staff are now able to check up on the whereabouts and safety of any missing students, particularly those known to be vulnerable. This ensures students are kept safe. However, attendance still remains low. The proportion of students who are regularly absent is reducing steadily, but still remains high. The impact of poor attendance on the achievement of different groups of students is not always checked carefully in order to ensure that any identified issues are swiftly addressed.
- The attendance of students on alternative provision placement is checked daily and their safety is checked though staff visiting their placements before they start.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching over time in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics, in Key Stages 3 and 4 is inadequate and, as a result, students underachieve.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve, as well as their participation in learning, are too low. Teachers do not use the information they have about students' achievement to plan lessons that meet their varying needs and abilities, or engage them effectively in learning. Too often, the same work is provided for students of all abilities. This means that, for some, the work is too hard, while for others it lacks challenge. Students, including the most able, wait too long before undertaking more challenging work. Plans for learning focus too much on what students are expected to do rather than what they are learning.
- Students' progress in lessons is not checked carefully enough. Some students become bored and disengaged from their learning. Teachers spend too much time in lessons addressing students' poor behaviour, and this interrupts the learning of those who do behave well and show good attitudes to learning.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent across the subjects. There are good examples, where marking clearly indicates to students the steps they need to take to improve, such as seen in a Year 8 music lesson about understanding Samba rhythms, and in students' history books. Generally teachers mark students' work regularly; however, students are not always given the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments and, as a result, do not learn from their mistakes.
- The quality of support from teaching assistants is variable. Effective support is evident in the direct working with individuals and small groups of students beyond lessons. Students at the early stages of learning English as an additional language often receive effective support. In classrooms, however, the impact of teaching assistants is not always effective. Teachers do not always ensure teaching assistants are clear as to their roles when they support students in lessons.
- Homework is not set regularly or in a way that helps students to progress well in their learning. When it is set, often it is too easy and lacks challenge. As a result, students fail to develop the skills that are useful in helping them take more responsibility for their learning.
- The quality of teaching is starting to improve. Teachers are beginning to assess students' progress more frequently and with greater accuracy. Weaknesses in students' achievement are therefore, being identified more swiftly. Increasing consideration is now given to planning and providing work that meets students' varying needs and abilities including to ensure that the most able students are challenged. More appropriate programmes of support are being identified and put in place to support disabled students and those with special educational needs, including tailored one-to-one programmes.
- New teaching policies such as those aimed at supporting the development of students' literacy skills, are beginning to have a positive impact on improving teaching and students' achievement. For example, more effective teaching, support and opportunities to read regularly, including alongside adults, are helping to improve the achievement of weaker readers in Key Stage 3. Teachers are increasingly focused on making

sure that key words and vocabulary are consistently well promoted. However, opportunities for students to use and apply their literacy skills in different contexts, such as through writing at length, or speaking, so as to show a deeper understanding, are not yet developed effectively across subjects and year groups.

- In mathematics, staff are now working together more effectively to address the gaps in students' skills and knowledge and to ensure students attempt more challenging questions and activities. Strategies to enable students to know how to reach the correct answers are being successfully taught. However, a deeper understanding of the topics is not yet well promoted and opportunities to develop students' mathematical skills and understanding in other curriculum subjects are still under-developed.
- Some teaching is good. Teachers' energy and enthusiasm for their subject, along with the positive relationships fostered with students and high expectations, support learning well. Students of varying needs and abilities learn well, when teaching is effective, because the work they are given challenges their thinking and lessons are adapted well to meet these students needs.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- From their different starting points, too many students, including both boys and girls, do not make adequate progress over time. Students' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics, has been weak due to inadequate teaching.
- Students enter the academy in Year 7 having attained results which are usually below average. When they leave at the end of Year 11, their standards are well-below average in many subjects, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of students who left the academy in 2014 having achieved five good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, declined and was below the government's minimum standard. Only a very small minority of boys achieved five good GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics. While girls did better, only a minority succeeded in attaining five good grades. These low results were, in part, due to the academy entering both boys and girls early for their GCSE examinations. Although the academy has discontinued early entry, the current Year 11 students had already taken their examination in English literature at the end of Year 10. Progress in this subject is not good enough.
- Inspection evidence from observing lessons and reviewing work in students' files shows that current standards in Year 11 are now much higher than previously attained for both girls and boys, and particularly so for the boys. Even so, the overall proportion on track to reach five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics remains well-below average.
- In Year 11 in 2014, the proportion of students making the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics was well below the proportions that do so nationally. Inspection evidence, along with the work in students' files, shows that the current progress of students through Key Stages 3 and 4 in both English and mathematics is better. The proportion of students making expected progress has increased significantly compared to last year. Although this is now helping to raise standards across the academy, standards, given students' starting points, still remain too low. Most groups of students, therefore, continue to underachieve.
- Disadvantaged students, including boys and girls in their separate academies, performed poorly in 2014. The gaps between their achievement and that of their peers in the academy and nationally widened. Disadvantaged girls in Year 11 in 2014 for example, reached standards in English that were over one-and-a-half grades behind others in the academy and nationally. In mathematics, they were about two grades behind others in the academy and nationally. Disadvantaged boys reached standards in English that were over one grade behind others in the academy and three grades behind others nationally. In mathematics, boys were also over one grade behind others in the academy and two-and-a-half grades behind others nationally. Detailed monitoring of these gaps by academy leaders is now helping to ensure that more appropriate support programmes are put in place to raise achievement. Academy data showing the current progress of disadvantaged students show that these wide gaps are slowly narrowing.
- In the past, the most able students have underachieved. Some of these students are now making better progress in some subjects, including in English and mathematics, because they are completing more challenging A* and A grade questions. Even so, too few students reach the higher levels of attainment. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are still sometimes too low.
- In 2014, the inadequate progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs was reflected in their poor GSCE results. Although there have been some recent improvements, including the introduction of one-to-one support programmes, these students still underachieve because the overall quality of teaching and support for their learning remains too inconsistent.
- Overall, students from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, are doing better than others. They attend school regularly and their good behaviour contributes

positively to their achievements. Those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language receive small-group support that is often effective.

- The few students who attend courses off-site in alternative provision achieve the necessary qualifications and skills to ensure they can move on successfully into employment, education and training when they leave.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- As there is a very small number of students in the sixth form, comparisons with any national averages for success are not helpful or reliable indicators of students' achievement. Academy data, along with inspection evidence shows that there are variations in the success of students on their courses, but all make at least expected progress.
- Typically, students make the expected rate of progress in BTEC courses. Those students who enter the sixth form with a GCSE level that is below grade C in English and mathematics are appropriately supported to improve their grades, and some do well. However, not all students are making the progress needed to improve their grades at a good rate.
- Teaching in the sixth form is better than in other key stages. Work seen in students' folders show that students often receive appropriate feedback from their teachers so that they know the steps they need to take to secure better grades. However, while some teaching is good, overall it requires improvement. Expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough to enable them to do well.
- Students are prepared appropriately for work and future learning. Staff support those students who apply for university or an apprenticeship. Students say they receive appropriate careers guidance to help them make the right choices regarding their next steps.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy, know how to keep safe and are clear about what to do should there be any safety issues.
- Students say that behaviour is typically good. They appreciate opportunities to develop their understanding of real-life issues through discussions during their tutor period.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form requires improvement. Although leaders check carefully students' rate of progress, there remains work to do ensure that a greater emphasis is placed on the standards students reach. Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good.

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	135905
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	462317

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	890
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	MCMA Trust
Chair	Mike Palmer
Principal	Rebecca Smith
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
Telephone number	0161 681 1592
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