

# Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy

4-6 Park Grove, Manchester, M19 3AQ

## Inspection dates

11-12 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders and the advisory board have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. This means that leadership and management require improvement.
- Senior leaders and the advisory board have yet to formalise the arrangements for managing staff performance. Staff have not been given targets so it is harder for them to be held to account for their professional practice, including the quality of their teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders' written self-evaluation and school development plan lacks sufficient detail to enable members of the advisory board to hold senior leaders to account for the school's long-term development.
- Pupils at key stage 3 do not receive impartial careers advice.
- Some pupils do not attend well enough.
- In some lessons pupils are given the same activities to do. Sometimes, more capable pupils find their work too easy and weaker pupils find theirs too hard. This has a detrimental impact on the progress of both groups.
- Teachers' questions are not always sufficiently demanding to make pupils think hard about their learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress are inconsistent because the quality of teaching is variable.
- Senior leaders' analysis of pupils' attainment and progress information is not sharp enough. As a result, staff do not have a clear picture of how well groups of pupils are achieving.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior staff lead by example, setting high expectations for pupils' personal development.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and lessons are well organised.
- Regular feedback from teachers enables pupils to know how well they are doing.
- The school's reading recovery programme is effective in improving pupils' reading skills.
- Pupils' understanding of the underlying values of what it means to be a good British citizen is fostered well in the school.
- Relationships between all members of the school are characteristically warm and friendly. Pupils conduct themselves well.
- The advisory board is very supportive of the school and its staff. They appreciate the work senior leaders are doing to establish the school as a provider of education for vulnerable pupils.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.



## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - reviewing the role and responsibilities of the advisory board, so that it provides a long term-view of the school and is better able to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance
  - ensuring that senior leaders' written self-evaluation and development plan are sufficiently detailed to enable the advisory board to determine how well the school is doing and to hold senior leaders to account for the school's progress
  - making sure that senior leaders formalise the arrangements for staff performance management, ensuring that staff are set targets against which they can be held to account for their professional practice
  - refining senior leaders' analysis of pupils' attainment and progress data so that they have a clearer picture of how well groups of pupils in the school are achieving
  - ensuring that impartial careers advice is part of the curriculum at key stage 3.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils' progress accelerates by:
  - ensuring teachers plan suitably challenging activities for the different ability groups in the class in order to maximise pupils' motivation and engagement with their learning
  - develop teachers' questioning techniques so that pupils are encouraged to think hard about their learning and so deepen their understanding.
- Continue to implement the school's strategies to improve attendance so that it at least reaches the national average.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
  - The proprietor must ensure that the written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, is drawn up and implemented effectively and provides for pupils receiving secondary education to have access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented in an impartial manner (paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(2)(e) and 2(2)(e)(i)).
  - The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught; involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time; shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c) and 3(d)).
  - The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).



## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school require improvement because leaders have not ensured that all the standards for independent schools have been met. Impartial careers advice for pupils at key stage 3 is not in place and the quality of teaching has yet to lead to consistently good progress for pupils. Although none of these omissions are having a detrimental impact on pupils' welfare, health, safety and personal development, the quality of teaching requires improvement so that pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Formal arrangements for staff members' performance management are not in place. The headteacher monitors teachers' professional practice through regular observations of lessons and evaluating the quality of their marking in pupils' books. This monitoring informs staff training needs. However, staff do not have individual written targets against which they can be held to account for the quality of their teaching or for pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders' written self-evaluation and the school development plan are too concise and lack detail. As a result, they provide only brief information to the advisory board about the school's strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement. Neither document reflects senior leaders' accurate evaluation of how well the school is doing, which is supported by inspection evidence. Although the staff, under the leadership of the headteacher, are working effectively to improve the school, the development plan only provides a brief outline to inform their work. Moreover, the success criteria in the plan are not sharp enough. Consequently, there is not enough written information available to members of the advisory board for them to be able to monitor and evaluate the school's progress effectively.
- The school provides careers advice for pupils at key stage 4 through its personal, social, health and economic education programme. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have careers interviews and are taught how to prepare a curriculum vitae.
- The school works well to tackle discrimination. The school staff and pupil body are from a range of cultures, religious beliefs and ethnicities. Everyone is accepted and relationships are harmonious.
- Leaders and managers place the pupils at the heart of their work. Senior leaders communicate high expectations for pupils' personal development and provide the lead for their colleagues to follow. When asked, pupils say that the staff 'never give up on them' and that being a pupil at the school has raised their expectations and increased their motivation.
- Senior leaders ensure that the school is a safe place for pupils. The arrangements for the safe appointment of staff meet the requirements in the latest guidance from the Secretary of State. The proprietor and headteacher have received appropriate training in safeguarding and ensure that members of staff are kept up to date about safeguarding requirements.
- Parents and carers are involved in pupil reviews and senior leaders are available to parents, on an informal basis, at the beginning and end of each day. In these ways, pupils' education is seen as an equal partnership between home and the school, with both having an important contribution to make to pupils' development. These approaches ensure senior staff cultivate productive relationships with parents and carers.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides pupils with a range of experiences to develop their knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics and science. The personal, social, health and economic education programme enables the pupils to consider relevant, contemporary issues and problems, for example knife crime, radicalisation and extremism. This enables the pupils to consider the choices they have when faced with dilemmas such as these and so develops their self-confidence.
- Music and art are features of the curriculum and a local sports facility provides the space for physical education and games. As a result, the curriculum not only develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of a broad range of subjects but also contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Wall displays reinforce the importance to pupils of tolerance, engagement in democracy, the rule of law and free speech. Pupils' achievements are celebrated and a particularly effective poster showing the consequences of an individual's behaviour on the rest of the school community provides evidence for the promotion of fundamental British values.
- Parents who expressed an opinion are very supportive of the school and the positive impact of the work that is being done with their children. They are happy to recommend the school to others.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The advisory board is a small group of well-qualified individuals who have the necessary experience to be responsible for the governance of the school.
  - The advisory board meets once each term. At these meetings the headteacher provides members of the board with information about the work of the school, including the quality of teaching and the progress



made by individual pupils. However, these meetings tend to focus on the day-to-day operation of the school. There is not enough emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of long-term plans for the school's development. Nor is there evidence of the advisory board providing sufficient challenge to the headteacher in order to hold him to account.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and promotes pupils' safety and welfare effectively. Although the school does not have a website, the safeguarding policy is available to parents as part of the school's 'parent pack'.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Teachers often adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to lesson planning. When this happens pupils are given the same activities. Sometimes the work is too hard for weaker pupils and not challenging enough for those who are more capable. Under these circumstances, the progress of both groups slows and they quietly disengage.
- Teachers do not always use questions well enough to make pupils think hard about the subject material and so deepen their grasp of the key ideas. Teachers often ask closed questions, which require short undemanding answers from pupils. When this happens, opportunities for teachers to assess pupils' understanding are missed.
- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and lessons are well organised despite some activities not being well matched to pupils' needs. This ensures that learning time is maximised and little time lost as pupils move from one activity to the next.
- When planning lessons, teachers frame the learning in familiar contexts. This makes learning meaningful for pupils.
- The development of pupils' literacy is a key feature of all lessons. As a result, pupils' knowledge of subject-specific keywords, and how to spell them correctly, is increasingly secure. Pupils are also given opportunities to improve their reading skills in lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and as the school's marking policy sets out. This ensures that pupils are given regular feedback about their work, which lets them know how well they are doing.
- Pupils are formally assessed against their targets once each term and informally more often than this. Senior leaders analyse this information and, as a result, are able to identify those individuals who are falling behind and put in place extra help to get them back on track. However, because pupil numbers are small, senior leaders have not fine-tuned their self-evaluation by analysing pupils' performance information by groups such as girls, boys, pupils who speak English as an additional language and disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders are aware of this gap in their management information and are taking steps to address it.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** requires improvement

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- Staff have undertaken appropriate training in keeping pupils safe and know what to look out for and the action they should take if they feel a pupil is at risk of harm.
- Relationships between the pupils, their teachers and each other are characteristically warm and friendly. Pupils say that they feel cared for by the staff and as a consequence feel welcome when they start at the school. They settle in quickly.
- The pupils who met with the inspector were knowledgeable about the different forms that bullying can take. They understand the negative impact that homophobic, cyber, racist and other types of prejudiced behaviour can have on individuals. However, they said that bullying did not concern them, as it was not a problem at the school. Nevertheless, should it occur they are confident that the staff would quickly sort it out.
- Parents who spoke with the inspector expressed the opinion that their children are well looked after at the school and are safe.
- The school buildings are safe and secure. This contributes to pupils' sense of well-being.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are inconsistent. When the work they are given to do interests them and is appropriately challenging, they engage with the tasks, concentrate and work hard. However, when the



activities do not meet the needs of the pupils they quietly disengage, their concentration wanes and their progress slows.

- Most pupils who enter the school have a history of below-average attendance. Senior leaders work hard to address this and ensure the attendance policy is strictly applied. If a pupil fails to register in the morning, and the school has not been notified in advance of the pupil's absence, parents receive either a telephone call, text message or home visit to determine the reason for the pupil's failure to attend. Senior leaders scrutinise each individual pupil's attendance record. This enables them to identify any patterns in a pupil's absence record and provide support as appropriate. Nevertheless, despite these strategies, attendance at the school remains too low. However, senior leaders are doing all they can to try and improve rates of attendance and minimise the potential risks to pupils who do not turn up to the school.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. Disruptive behaviour in lessons is rare. As a result, the school is a quiet and calm place of learning. One pupil echoed the sentiments of others saying, 'I like it here; the teachers have time for us and listen. My behaviour is better because there are fewer distractions than in my other school and as the classes are small the teacher can help me when I need it. I don't have to wait.'
- The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by the staff. As a result, pupils understand what is expected of them during the working day and the boundaries are clear. For example, all pupils hand in their mobile phones for safe keeping as they arrive in the morning and collect them as they leave at the end of the day. The intention is that pupils focus on their learning by removing the potentially disruptive influence of their mobile devices. This clarity of expectation provides an emotionally safe environment for pupils, enabling them to see the purpose of their education and look to the future with a clear sense of direction.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- The amount of progress different pupils make from their starting points varies.
- Most pupils who start at the school have no prior performance information against which their progress can be measured. To make up for this lack of information, senior leaders establish a baseline for pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This baseline assessment shows that the pupils starting at the school have attainment which is well below that typical for their age. As a result of disruptions to their education in the past, pupils have substantial gaps in their knowledge and understanding and their reading ages are well below their chronological age. As a consequence, many pupils are disillusioned with education when they enter the school. However, for some pupils the fresh start afforded them by joining the school strengthens their resolve and they make rapid progress across the curriculum, particularly in English and mathematics. However, this is not the case for all pupils, particularly where teaching is not matched well enough to their needs.
- Despite the best efforts of senior leaders, the poor attendance of some pupils has an adverse impact on their progress.
- The assessment information for the school's intensive reading programme indicates that all pupils are making progress in this aspect of literacy, narrowing the gap between their reading ages and their chronological age.
- The school provides short-term help and support to pupils who are experiencing difficulties in their mainstream school. The school programme is geared to helping all pupils overcome barriers to learning and improve their behaviour. Accordingly, the school does not identify any pupils who have special educational needs unless they have an education, health and care plan. At the time of the inspection there were no such pupils.
- The cohort of pupils at the school is small and as the school has only been open for two terms there is no information available on pupils' GCSE attainment or how it compares with national figures. However, the very few students in Year 11 who have been entered for GCSE qualifications are predicted to achieve their target grades at the end of this academic year.
- Senior leaders monitor pupils' personal development well. The tracking information shows that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils of different abilities, make rapid progress in their behaviour, confidence and self-esteem. This prepares pupils well for return to their mainstream school. A member of the advisory board, who also represents one of the school's commissioning schools, commented favourably on this aspect of the school's provision.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142224
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012848
<b>DfE registration number</b>	352/6011

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Other
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	24
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ms Mahfuza Aktar
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Mahfuza Aktar
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Shane Mahon
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	Charges vary dependent upon length of placement
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 225 0567
<b>Website</b>	The school does not have a website
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:mahfuzaaktar2014@gmail.com">mahfuzaaktar2014@gmail.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy is an independent day school.
- The school is located in the Levenshulme district of Manchester, about three miles southeast of the city centre.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education as a mixed school to cater for the needs of up to 24 pupils between 11 and 16 years.
- Many pupils have behavioural and emotional needs so the school aims to provide a caring environment where pupils can realise their potential.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- All the pupils in the school have dual registration. This means they are registered with a mainstream school but attend the school on a temporary basis to receive their education.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- All pupils attending the school receive their education on-site.
- The school opened in September 2015. This was its first standard inspection.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a range of activities, including a tour of the school site and a visit to the off-site sports facility, to check that the school complies with the independent school standards.
- The inspector observed teaching across the school and scrutinised the work in pupils' books.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and during their free time.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, who is responsible for child protection and safeguarding, the headteacher and other members of staff. The inspector also had a formal meeting with a group of five pupils and spoke informally with others.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a member of the school's advisory board. The advisory board is responsible for the governance of the school.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, so the inspector contacted parents by telephone to ascertain their views about the school.
- The inspector examined school policies to check that they are compliant with the independent school standards and to provide additional information for the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed the school's records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The inspector also considered the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

## Inspection team

Charles Lowry, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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