

# Manchester Communication Academy

Silchester Drive, Harpurhey, Manchester M40 8NT

## Inspection dates

27–28 September 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have too generous a view of the quality of education the school provides. The specific plans to improve the school further and how that will be achieved are vague.
- The strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils are not robustly checked by leaders and governors.
- The tracking of progress and subsequent interventions for the most able pupils has not been as thorough as it is for other groups.
- Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of pupils, given their starting points, especially for the most able pupils.
- The standards reached by pupils in mathematics, especially for disadvantaged pupils, are not yet good.
- Pupils are not encouraged to read widely outside of their English classes.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, teachers and staff are committed to the pupils in their care.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is good. The school's support for pupils' health and well-being is exemplary.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good.
- The achievement of pupils is improving. Pupils achieve particularly well in English and computer science.
- The school works well with the local community through its outreach programme.

## Full report

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

- Improve the impact of leadership and management, by:
  - improving the tracking and monitoring of the most able pupils
  - evaluating the impact of the pupil premium funding on outcomes for pupils
  - ensuring that school improvement planning is clear and specific on what needs to be done, how it will be done and what success criteria will be used to demonstrate clear improvement.
- Ensure that teaching meets the needs of pupils, given their starting points, especially for the most able pupils so that they achieve well.
- Ensure that the improvements that have begun in mathematics continue and lead to good progress being made, especially for the disadvantaged pupils.
- Promote a culture of reading within the school whereby pupils are encouraged to read widely and beyond their English lessons.
- An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have too generous a view of the quality of education at the school.
- The school's improvement plan does not give a clear steer as to exactly what needs to be done in order to move the school forward and how these actions will have a demonstrable impact on the outcomes for pupils across all year groups. The plan is vague in terms of specific strategies and success criteria.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have not evaluated the impact of the pupil premium funding effectively. Consequently, it is unclear as to which strategies are having the greatest impact on pupils' outcomes and providing value for money.
- Leaders and managers have not been attentive enough to the achievement of the most able pupils within the school.
- Leaders and managers are determined to do their best for the pupils at this school. Leaders acted quickly to address the poor performance of pupils in 2015 and the provisional results for 2016 show marked improvements. This indicates a capacity within leadership to make further improvements.
- Leaders provide teachers with a range of professional development opportunities to improve the quality of their teaching; teachers commented to inspectors that they value these opportunities and that they are making a difference to their practice.
- The curriculum is well thought out. Due to recruitment and retention issues in certain subjects, leaders have had to make decisions that have removed subjects from the curriculum offer. However, leaders do not deny pupils opportunities to study appropriate courses and they source alternative provision if necessary.
- The curriculum is enhanced by many extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities. The uptake by pupils in these areas is high and develops pupils' interest and progress.
- The school is committed to promoting equality and diversity. The policy and practices of the school are fully reflective of the legislative requirement to protect all people on the grounds of race, religion, sex, disability and marital status, for example.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is woven into the curriculum and daily life of the school. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school has particular strength in its outreach work and involves adults and pupils from different social backgrounds in offering employment opportunities. The focus on communication within the school offers occasions to understand the cultural influences that shape British heritage.

### Governance of the school

- Governors share a tangible ambition and passion for the pupils at this school. They are committed and supportive.
- However, the governors do not evaluate with the necessary rigour the impact of the pupil premium funding. Similarly, the school's improvement planning is lacking in precision. It does not indicate to governors precisely what needs to be done and what the impact of this will be with clear, demonstrable evidence on pupils' outcomes.

- Governors take an active role in the performance management of staff. They are not afraid to make tough decisions on staff performance.
- Governors regularly receive updates on safeguarding matters throughout the year and they take their duties seriously.
- At the start of the inspection, the website was not compliant and key policies and documents out of date. This was rectified during the inspection.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school is attentive to ensuring that pupils are kept safe. The recruitment and induction of new staff is robust and all staff are updated on a regular basis through formal training and regular safeguarding bulletins. This includes training relating to extremism and radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and forced marriages. The single central record meets requirements.
- The records that the school keeps are appropriate and the school works well with a range of external agencies as well as parents and carers to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The school is currently in the process of reviewing the safeguarding policy to ensure that it reflects the recent changes to 'Keeping children safe in education'.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent. Pupils are not routinely challenged enough in their learning. During the inspection it was evident that pupils were finding the work either too hard or too easy and that the learning did not consistently match their abilities.
- The pupils spoken to during the inspection were unable to explain what it is they need to do in order to improve their learning. Pupils were unclear as to what their targets are.
- Teachers do not intervene quickly and early enough when most-able pupils fall behind in their learning. Consequently, the most able pupils do not make as rapid progress as they could.
- All of the pupils spoken to commented that they found it difficult to maintain concentration during the two-hour lessons in non-practical subjects. This led to a lack of engagement and pupils' attention waning.
- Parents are informed of how well their children are doing and have the opportunity to discuss progress at face-to-face meetings throughout the year. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that they were given valuable information regarding their children's progress.
- Homework is set in accordance with the school policy and many pupils take the opportunity to complete their homework in the after-school sessions.
- Teachers and middle leaders have benefited from the experience and support of colleagues from other schools in improving their practice.
- The teachers show good subject knowledge and are brimming with energy and enthusiasm. Effective teaching was seen in English and creative subjects.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school has extensive provision for ensuring the personal development of pupils is paramount.
- The work that the school carries out to promote the health and well-being of pupils is exemplary. There is an array of classes, groups, workshops and outside visitors to actively promote healthy lifestyles. This provision is greatly enhanced by the school's own school nurses.
- The multi-cultural dimension of the school gives pupils real experience of life in modern Britain. Leaders ensure that pupils are being prepared to be well-rounded citizens.
- The pupils are given good impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Pupils are appropriately advised and welcome the opportunity to discuss their aspirations and future plans. The pupils are supported through the 'Venture' programme, which consolidates the advice and allows them to broaden their scopes and horizons through enrichment activities.
- The pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and what to do if they have any concerns. They are particularly knowledgeable about e-safety and the dangers of radicalism and extremism.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils educated at alternative provision is monitored closely by school leaders.
- The pupils showed a mature and respectful attitude to questions regarding pupils who identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual and gay. All the pupils said that this would not lead to any name-calling or homophobic bullying.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The behaviour observed by inspectors in and outside of classes was good. The pupils were polite and friendly towards each other, their teachers and visitors.
- The rates of attendance are good and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing.
- The attendance of pupils who attend alternative provision is good. There are strong lines of communication between the school and the providers.
- The school keeps accurate and thorough logs of incidents of poor behaviour. Fixed-term exclusions are used as a last resort and the number of exclusions is reducing.
- The pupils that inspectors spoke with said that when bullying happens it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In 2015, the results in the school were below the government's floor standard and the achievement of pupils was unacceptably low.
- Provisional results for 2016 indicate marked improvements. The standards in English, computer science and art are high. While standards have improved in mathematics, the progress made by pupils from their starting points, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is not good.
- Pupils achieve well in citizenship, health and social care, performing arts and physical education. However, the standards reached in French, geography, graphics and resistant materials are low.
- The most able pupils and most-able disadvantaged pupils do not progress as well as they could from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than in previous years but this is not yet consistently strong across all subjects. It is unclear as to what specific strategies funded by the pupil premium allocation are having the most impact as this has not been carried out with the sufficient rigour.
- Pupils are not encouraged to read widely. The pupils that inspectors spoke with said they only read during their English lessons.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive a significant amount of help and support but the assessment information shows that the progress that these pupils make across year groups and subjects is variable. For example, the progress made in mathematics by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was low. Similarly, the progress that these pupils make at key stage 3 in science was weaker than for other groups of pupils.
- The school has adopted an early entry strategy for Year 10 pupils. All Year 10 pupils are entered for some subjects in Year 10 to allow them to focus on English, mathematics, science and humanities subjects in Year 11. The results achieved by Year 10 in 2016 demonstrate a stronger performance in these subjects than the previous year.
- Pupils who are from minority ethnic groups and/or have English as an additional language achieve well.
- The pupils educated at alternative provision are making the progress that is expected of them.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils who left the school went on to further education or employment.

## School details

Unique reference number	136105
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10021839

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,071
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Blackburn
Principal	Lynne Heath
Telephone number	0161 2020161
Website	<a href="http://www.manchestercommunicationacademy.com">www.manchestercommunicationacademy.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:l.heath@mca.manchester.sch.uk">l.heath@mca.manchester.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2012

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2010. It is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The lead sponsor of the school is British Telecom. The school is co-sponsored by Manchester College and Manchester City Council.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is very high.
- The proportion of pupils identified as needing support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school uses three alternative provisions: Harpurhey House, The Lighthouse Group Centre and the local authority's pupil referral unit. There are currently 15 pupils educated at alternative provision.
- The school received support from Whalley Range High School for sports and Cheadle Hulme Teaching School for mathematics.

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website.
- The school has extensive links with other organisations. Among its accolades it is a STEM Flagship school; part of the National Space Education initiative; a member of the Science Learning Partnership; Lead Health and Well-being School, a Digital House School and a member of the Global Learning Partnership.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across subjects and across all year groups. A learning walk took place with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from both key stages about their experience of school and their learning.
- Inspectors considered 14 responses to Parent View and 15 written submissions on free text online questionnaire for parents. There were no staff responses and no pupil responses to Ofsted’s inspection questionnaires. Inspectors also considered emails that were sent directly to Ofsted during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the members of the governing body. Meetings were also held with the principal, senior and middle leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation including the school’s own self-evaluation and development plan; anonymised performance management documents; school policies and procedures and the school’s own assessment information. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was scrutinised, including behaviour and attendance records and bullying logs.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Cooper	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Merva	Ofsted Inspector

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