

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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James Eldon  
Headteacher  
Manchester Academy  
Moss Lane East  
Moss Side  
Manchester  
M14 4PX

Dear Mr Eldon

### **Additional, monitoring inspection of Manchester Academy**

Following my inspection with Nasim Butt, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Jonathan Smart (HMI), Alyson Middlemass (HMI) and Rachel Goodwin (HMI), of your school on 18 and 19 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

The first day of this monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. However, the inspection moved on site on 19 March due to concerns regarding the complexity of safeguarding issues being managed by the school.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.**

**Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- strengthen pupils' knowledge and accurate use of subject specific vocabulary.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, a number of new leadership appointments have been made. These include: four assistant vice principals; a special educational needs coordinator; and new subject leaders for geography, history, science, and music. In addition, a new chair of the governing body took up post in February 2021.
- When the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions at the start of the spring term, the majority of pupils were educated at home. Approximately one half of those pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan were attending on site. In addition, approximately one third of vulnerable pupils were also being educated on the school site.
- At the time of this inspection, nearly all pupils were being educated on site.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) funded by the local authority. One provision caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend have an EHC plan. The other provision caters for pupils with a hearing impairment. These pupils either have an EHC plan or meet the criteria for admission.

### **Main findings**

- You have united the school community behind your efforts to provide pupils with an education in the current circumstances. Your actions and those of your team have enabled all pupils to continue their learning throughout periods when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. This included the introduction of a comprehensive remote education offer incorporating live teaching in pupils' usual subjects. The small proportion of pupils who currently need to learn from home continue to benefit from this offer. Pupils told us that they appreciated the support that leaders are providing.
- You and other leaders have secured a strong culture of safeguarding at Manchester Academy. More recently, leaders across the school have worked effectively to tackle some complex issues that have unsettled the wider school community. You have responded to these issues by providing a well-thought-out programme of personal development for pupils. This programme does not shy away from the issues at hand. For example, it addresses the impact of knife crime. Alongside trustees and the school's community liaison officer, you have worked well with local faith leaders, elders and families to tackle these

issues head on. Your work to galvanise a diverse community, in order to keep pupils safe, is striking.

- The safeguarding leaders ensure that staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including those risks magnified by the pandemic. Staff were unreservedly positive about how the school promotes the safety and well-being of pupils. Staff know the high standards of conduct and behaviour that you expect of them. Pupils place great value on the level of care and pastoral support that you provide to safeguard and protect them. Some pupils said that Manchester Academy is their 'sanctuary'. Leaders, including governors and trustees, have a strong oversight of the effectiveness of their arrangements to safeguard pupils. They work well with other agencies and they make timely decisions to safeguard and protect pupils.
- Before the pandemic, leaders reviewed curriculum plans for all subjects. They spent time considering when to introduce new knowledge to pupils, as well as how subject content should be taught and assessed. The training that teachers have received has helped them to deliver curriculum plans as you intended. The routines that you have to help pupils practise and remember what they have learned remained in place throughout the recent period of remote education. This continuity has helped to ease pupils' return to learning on site.
- Leaders continually review and audit subject curriculum plans. Currently, this work helps to overcome the impact of the pandemic on pupils' learning. Following the full reopening of the school, subject leaders have adapted curriculum plans further to build in more time for practical work within some subjects. This is because pupils found it more difficult to complete practical activities at home.
- Leaders and teachers are spending time checking what pupils have remembered of their prior learning. Teachers are using this information to adapt curriculum planning so that pupils have the opportunity to go over essential learning again. For example, in mathematics, teachers prompt pupils to remember previously taught content in lessons. In addition, tutoring opportunities support individual pupils who have gaps in their science and mathematical knowledge.
- Curriculum leaders have also adapted subject plans for pupils in Year 11 to ensure that pupils remember key content from the curriculum. Pupils have extra time in the school day to work with subject teachers, when this is needed. Leaders made sure that Year 11 pupils received appropriate advice and guidance to help them plan their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders check that pupils act on advice. For instance, they liaise with local colleges regarding the progress of pupils' applications.

- Reading for pleasure is prioritised within the school. Opportunities for pupils to read widely and often have been maintained throughout the pandemic. For example, pupils were able to attend an online book club. However, leaders identified that some pupils were not using subject specific language as accurately as they could be. Consequently, leaders are building in increased opportunities for pupils to read academic texts in some subjects. This work emphasises the importance of pupils using subject specific vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- Pupils who attend the specially resourced provisions benefit from individual plans so that they can access their education. During periods when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions, leaders worked with external agencies so that pupils could continue to access external support, for example speech and language therapy. Extra support is also provided for vulnerable pupils in school. For example, pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language receive small-group support to help them to access the curriculum alongside their peers. Pupils with SEND receive individual support for their learning in class and if they are learning from home.
- Governors are now taking an increasingly more active role in curriculum developments. You and other leaders provide governors with useful information about curriculum changes, particularly with remote education. Governors have a clear understanding of the priorities of the school. They know that work on developing rich vocabulary and reading remains a priority. Governors keep the well-being of staff and pupils at the forefront of their discussions and plans.
- The trust provides appropriate challenge and support to leaders. For example, the trust's subject advisers work with subject leaders to develop the curriculum. Subject leaders have opportunities to learn from and contribute to current academic research.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was initially conducted remotely but moved to an on-site visit due to concerns about safeguarding. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the regional director of the United Learning multi-academy trust, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and representatives from the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

While on site, we met with pupils in Years 7 to 11, including pupils with SEND. We also met with members of pastoral staff, the safeguarding leaders and the leaders for behaviour and attendance. We reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and pupils' attendance. We also met with the safeguarding leader from the trust and held a telephone call with the designated officer for safeguarding from the local authority. We also observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and other

parts of the school. We looked at 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 91 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the United Learning multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Bruce  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**