

Manchester Communication Academy

Silchester Drive, Harpurhey, Manchester M40 8NT

Inspection dates

24–25 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders, including governors, bring to life their vision that social disadvantage should never be a barrier to learning.
- High-quality personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education helps pupils to keep themselves safe and prepares them to be valued members of Britain's multicultural society.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching have ensured that pupils are making greater rates of progress. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils.
- Despite the improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects. In addition, a small proportion of teachers do not have high enough expectations of students, particularly boys.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have not made as much progress as other pupils in the past. There are signs of improvement, but it is too soon to see if these are sustained.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders personalise the curriculum to meet the needs of individual pupils when necessary. The curriculum is supplemented with high-quality extra-curricular activities. These activities help pupils to broaden their experiences and knowledge base.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They value their education and the support that they receive from teachers. They demonstrate this through positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- Attendance has improved steadily over recent years. It is now broadly in line with national averages for all groups of pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who do not attend school regularly has reduced considerably over the last three years. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who are regularly absent from school, remains higher than the national average for all pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period remains high. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff work towards creating a safe and caring environment for all the pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that improvements in teaching bring about greater gains in learning by:
 - effectively meeting the clearly identified needs of pupils with SEND
 - providing activities that challenge pupils to achieve at the highest possible standard, particularly in mathematics
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations of pupils' work, especially that of boys.
- Ensure that pupils participate fully in their learning by:
 - reducing the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND
 - helping pupils to self-regulate their behaviour so that fewer pupils are excluded from school for a fixed period, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes to the leadership of the school. The headteacher has gathered together a dynamic senior leadership team who are keen to bring about improvement. Leaders at all levels support the headteacher's vision that social disadvantage should not be a hindrance to any child's education. Leaders and staff strive to mitigate the barriers that can cause some disadvantaged pupils to underachieve.
- Leaders have brought about considerable improvement since the last inspection. Improvements in the quality of teaching have ensured that pupils are making greater gains in their learning. In published examination results there has been a steady increase in the progress that pupils make, and for the last two years pupils have made progress that is above the national average across a range of subjects. This trend of improvement is continuing for current pupils.
- Leaders' effective and imaginative use of additional funding is helping disadvantaged pupils to make strong gains in their learning. In particular the development of the 'Family Zone' has helped to reduce significantly the impact of the barriers to learning experienced by pupils. Consequently, pupils are able to focus more effectively on their learning. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is now in line with the progress of other pupils in the school and above that of other pupils nationally.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that leaders know the strengths and areas for improvement of their teachers well. Personalised professional development is used well to support staff at all stages of their careers. Where teaching is not as strong, leaders tailor support to help teachers to improve. As a result, teaching and learning have improved considerably over the last few years.
- Subject leaders value the training they receive. They feel that they are supported in their role. They know their departments well and are bringing about improvements in pupils' outcomes. Departmental time is used effectively to support teachers to improve their practice. As a result, in most subjects pupils are making stronger progress in their learning.
- Leaders have high expectations of staff. They are aware that bringing about improvement can place extra pressure on staff. They therefore consider workload when making decisions. Leaders use flexible working arrangements to help staff who are facing difficulties. Staff are very supportive of leaders and are proud to work at the school. They know that they are making a difference in the lives of their pupils.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders at all levels work hard to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners. The formal curriculum is augmented by a range of extra-curricular activities, such as Sport Leaders and Duke of Edinburgh's awards, that provide pupils with valuable opportunities for enrichment. Leaders realise the importance of these opportunities and provide financial support to disadvantaged pupils who want to participate.
- Leaders use PSHE lessons and extra-curricular activities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils are also expected to attend various clubs in

their period five study support session. These clubs are used to provide pupils with opportunities to widen their experience and help them to consider new ideas and points of view. For example, in the debate club, pupils were considering the growth of the 'me too' culture and the effect that it has had on society.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees share the school's vision. The trust board meets regularly with the chair of the governing body and the headteacher so that information flows freely across the two bodies. Consequently, governors and trustees know the school well and understand where the strengths are and where it needs further improvement.
- Governors, under the agreement of the trustees, have responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school. The members of the governing body have a range of skills that enable them to discharge this effectively. Governors hold leaders to account and ensure that pupil premium funding is spent effectively.
- Governors work closely with school leaders to ensure that the processes in place to keep children safe are effective. Governors have all received appropriate, up-to-date training on safeguarding and the key issues that face their pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding processes and systems are fit for purpose. Leaders have created a culture of vigilance across the school. They have developed good relationships with outside agencies to ensure that pupils get the most appropriate help in a timely manner.
- Leaders know the local area well. They ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe when they are not in school. They work with local primary schools to ensure that pupils have safe areas in which to play.
- All staff receive frequent training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff know the signs of abuse and are diligent in ensuring that any concerns are swiftly reported.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They could talk knowledgeably about the dangers they face online and what they should do to keep themselves safe. They said that bullying happened sometimes but that teachers deal with it effectively. Pupils said that there was always somebody to talk to if they needed help.
- Leaders have worked closely with the alternative providers who are used to support pupils. Leaders monitor the progress of pupils who attend alternative provision and ensure that all policies and practices are in place to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the last inspection the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably. Pupils benefit from good teaching across a range of subjects, but particularly in English, where pupils are consistently making strong progress.

- Leaders work closely with a range of training providers to ensure that teachers have access to a wide variety of opportunities to improve their teaching practice. Teachers engage in collaborative planning and share good practice to help each other to improve. Where teachers are struggling, a planned programme of support is produced to meet the teacher's individual needs. Teachers value this support and are engaged and enthused. As a result, teaching and learning are improving rapidly.
- Teachers develop strong relationships with their pupils and have high expectations of the work that their pupils can produce. Pupils value the help and support that their teachers give them and work hard for them as a result. However, there is still a minority of teachers who do not have such high expectations of pupils. This is leading to work that is less than good from a minority of pupils, particularly boys.
- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is at its best, questioning is used highly effectively to engage pupils and address common misconceptions. Teachers systematically check pupils' understanding and allow pupils time to embed their knowledge. Where this is the case, pupils make good progress.
- Although most teaching is routinely good, a small proportion is not as effective. Where this is the case, teaching does not challenge pupils appropriately, particularly the most able. Leaders have support plans in place to help these teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have developed a culture where pupils' welfare is at the heart of every decision. Leaders go 'above and beyond' to ensure that pupils are well cared for both at school and at home. They understand that pupils cannot feel secure unless they know that their whole family is safe and happy.
- The 'Family Zone' is made up of the groups that leaders use to facilitate support for pupils and their families. Through the Family Zone, leaders run the local food bank and the local Christmas toy appeal. Leaders have developed strong links with most primary schools in the area to ensure that pupils and their siblings are cared for effectively.
- Leaders promote the need to eat healthily and keep safe through the health and well-being curriculum. For example, during physical education, pupils complete cycling proficiency lessons on bicycles provided by the school so that they can keep themselves safe on the roads. Pupils are also taught how to prepare healthy and affordable meals during their food lessons, where all ingredients are provided for them.
- Leaders are aware of the many dangers that pupils face in the local area. They provide a comprehensive PSHE curriculum to help pupils understand these dangers and how to keep themselves safe. They have developed links with many community agencies that provide information and advice for pupils on where and how to get help when needed.
- The school is a vibrant multicultural community, and pupils learn to value diversity as a result. This dimension of the school gives pupils real experience of life in modern Britain. The significant cohort of asylum seekers and international new arrivals who

attend the school help pupils to appreciate the importance of democracy and the rule of law. Leaders ensure that pupils are being prepared to be well-rounded citizens.

- The school is a real community hub at the end of the school day. Many local groups use the school facilities to provide adult education or enrichment activities for local people. Currently, leaders are developing ideas on how to use these facilities to provide support for their pupils who are living in temporary accommodation.
- Through this considered and effective work, leaders have built strong relationships with pupils and their families. The local community trusts and values leaders. Pupils understand that teachers want the best for them. Consequently, they work hard for their teachers and value their education as well as the support that leaders provide. Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour both in and out of classrooms has improved considerably. However, there is still a minority of pupils who have difficulty in moderating their behaviour. The proportion of pupils temporarily excluded from school is higher than the national average. Leaders are in the process of developing a purpose-built support centre to help pupils to moderate their behaviour and so reduce the need for temporary exclusions. However, currently the proportion of pupils who are temporarily excluded is not improving.
- Punctuality to school and to lessons is good. Pupils hurry through the corridors to ensure that they are at their lessons on time and ready to work. Overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average, and most pupils attend school regularly.
- Despite the improvement in attendance rates, too many pupils are regularly absent from school. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is higher than the national average, and this is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Leaders' work to improve attendance for these pupils is beginning to have some impact. However, despite this improvement, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who are regularly absent from school remains high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- For the last three years, published information shows that overall progress for pupils has increased steadily and, for the last two years, it has been above the national average. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils' progress has been above the progress of other pupils nationally for the last two years.
- However, despite these high rates of progress, some subjects and some groups of pupils do not make such strong progress. The progress that pupils make in mathematics has been below the national average for the last three years. Additionally, the progress made by pupils with SEND has been well below that of pupils nationally for the last three years and shows a steady decline.
- The performance of current pupils is showing some green shoots in those areas where progress has not been as good. Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are

leading to pupils making greater gains in their learning. Appropriate intervention is helping pupils who have fallen behind to catch up. As a result, the proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are making good progress is starting to increase.

- Leaders have started to work with teachers to help them to meet the needs of pupils with SEND more effectively. These pupils are beginning to find it easier to access the curriculum and their progress is starting to increase.
- Leaders are driving an increasing focus on the development of literacy skills. This is becoming embedded across the curriculum, with all teachers beginning to take responsibility for improving pupils' reading, writing and communication skills. A variety of activities are in place to ensure that pupils read daily. Pupils told inspectors that their vocabulary has improved considerably as a result.
- Leaders deliver high-quality careers education and effective independent careers advice. This, together with improving results, has led to a greater proportion of pupils moving on to appropriate destinations after school. The proportion of pupils who move into further education, training or employment has increased steadily over the last few years and is now above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	136105
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10057939

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1126
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Robin Lawler
Principal	John Rowlands
Telephone number	0161 20 20161
Website	www.manchestercommunicationacademy.com/
Email address	j.rowlands@mca.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 September 2016

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 a member of the Greater Manchester Trust. The trustees are responsible for the core governance functions of setting the school's direction, holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity. The scheme of delegation sets out clearly which powers have been delegated to the local governing body and executive officers.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is very high.
- The proportion of pupils identified as needing support for SEND is below average. The number of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below average.

- The school uses three alternative provisions: Harpurhey Alternative Provision Centre, The Lighthouse Group Centre and the local authority's pupil referral unit. There are currently 29 pupils educated at alternative provision.
- The school works with Cheadle Hulme Teaching School to provide support 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. 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects, including joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 across a range of subjects alongside school leaders.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with a group of curriculum leaders and a group of teachers.
- Inspectors met formally with five groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally during social times.
- Inspectors spoke with three members of the local governing body. An inspector also spoke with the chair of the trust board, a representative of the lead academy sponsor and the executive director of the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the 41 responses to the pupil survey, the 78 responses to the online staff questionnaire, 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and five written responses from parents and carers.

Inspection team

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