

Inspection of Manchester Communication Academy

Silchester Drive, Harpurhey, Manchester M40 8NT

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Susan Watmough. This school is part of the Greater Manchester Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), John Rowlands, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Walker.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging at this vibrant school, which is at the heart of the community. Pupils are encouraged to take active roles of responsibility both in and outside of the school. For example, some train as 'guardian angels' who support their younger peers. Other volunteers pack bags of food to be distributed to local families. This culture of care for others helps most pupils to feel happy in school.

Most pupils strive to live according to the school rule that requires them to 'put learning first'. Classrooms are calm and orderly environments where pupils are typically attentive to their teachers and focus well on their learning activities. In the main, pupils are respectful towards adults and their peers.

Pupils enjoy a raft of opportunities to nurture their existing talents and interests, or to discover new ones. They acquire practical skills, for instance they learn to cook nutritious meals. Pupils unleash their creativity by attending a range of clubs, such as 'write your own TV series' and 'animation drawing'. They are challenged to step outside of their comfort zone to perform in shows or to participate in competitive sports. These experiences help pupils to grow into resilient individuals.

Pupils benefit from the school's relentless determination to address social disadvantage through providing them with a high-quality education. Most pupils successfully meet the ambitious standards that the school sets for their achievement.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school and the trust have worked closely together to provide a highly effective programme of professional development for staff. This has equipped staff to be experts in curriculum design and delivery. Staff value the time that they are given to refine their classroom practice, supported by skilled coaches who act as 'teacher educators'.

The school provides a broad and ambitious curriculum for pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have a strong shared understanding of their subject curriculum. They know precisely what pupils should learn and when this should happen. The school has ensured that the rich diversity of the pupil community is reflected within its curriculum.

Staff provide learning activities that take pupils' different starting points into account. For example, there is a comprehensive programme of support for when pupils who speak English as an additional language join the school. In addition, staff are alert to any additional needs that pupils may have, including those with SEND. There is an appropriate process to identify these needs. Staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively so that pupils with SEND learn well.

Staff frequently check that pupils understand and remember what they have learned. This means that pupils' learning builds securely on what they already know. Across most subjects, pupils achieve highly.

The school swiftly and accurately identifies pupils who struggle with their reading. In key stage 3, carefully targeted support helps these pupils to develop into fluent and confident readers. However, this is not the case for some pupils in key stage 4. A small number of these pupils do not receive the help that they need to read well.

Meticulous thought has gone into developing an exceptional programme that helps pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they need to flourish in modern society. This includes a comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance, which provides pupils with information to make well-informed and aspirational choices regarding their next steps. Pupils are particularly proud of the diversity within their school. They eagerly anticipate opportunities to celebrate their rich cultural heritages, for example during 'culture day'. Pupils learn to embrace and value differences between themselves and others.

In the main, pupils behave well. Most attend school frequently. A small number of pupils struggle to meet the school's high expectations of their behaviour and attendance. The school works tirelessly with these pupils and with their families, first to understand, and then to remove any barriers to their learning. This work is successful.

The school is proud to serve its local community. The trust and the governing body are sharply focused on supporting and challenging the school to provide a high-quality education for the benefit of that community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to identifying and supporting pupils in key stage 4 who are struggling to read is underdeveloped. This means that some older pupils do not get the support that they need to catch up quickly with their reading knowledge. The school should accelerate its plans to ensure that appropriate support is in place for these pupils so that they learn to read well.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136105
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10313438
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	1264
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Walker
CEO of trust	John Rowlands
Headteacher	Susan Watmough
Website	www.manchestercommunicationacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses seven registered and three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school offers a breakfast club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the trust, including the chair of trustees.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and art and design. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. An inspector also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for pupils and for staff.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school’s self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Niamh Howlett	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barker	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024