

Manchester Communications Primary Academy

49 Parkstead Drive, Harpurhey, Manchester M9 5QN

Inspection dates

10–11 October 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and her team have built a caring and inclusive school.
- The senior and middle leadership teams are dynamic, innovative, enthusiastic and sharply focused on pupils' progress.
- A formidable group of governors takes a 'no-nonsense' approach to get the very best for the pupils.
- A strong track record of achievement, accurate self-evaluation and a sharp improvement plan indicate a good capacity to improve further.
- Pupils behave well, look smart in their uniforms, and are rightly proud of their school. There are well-established and effective systems in place to safeguard pupils and to engage with agencies to support families in need.
- All pupils make good progress overall, although disadvantaged pupils make better progress than their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and sometimes rapid progress.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics, reading, phonics and a range of other subjects. Progress in writing is more varied because there is not enough focus on the accuracy of writing and handwriting.
- In the Nursery and Reception class pupils make good progress. They benefit from a stimulating and creative learning environment. Reading and mathematics are taught well; opportunities for mark-making and early writing are less developed.
- Pupils are taught well. Expectations are high and most teaching captures pupils' interest. However, the least able pupils do not make consistently good progress because in some lessons the work is too difficult for them.
- Historically, boys have not made the same good progress as girls. Leaders have successfully adapted the curriculum to better engage boys. This has led to much-improved progress but there remains inconsistency, especially in writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching for the least able pupils and boys by:
 - further adapting the curriculum for those who are well below age-related expectations
 - ensuring that the best practice in engaging boys is shared more widely.
- Improve progress in writing by:
 - ensuring that there is more focus upon pencil grip and correct letter formation in the Reception class
 - checking that pupils regularly practise handwriting
 - ensuring that spelling and grammar errors are consistently identified and corrected in line with the school's marking policy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has created a school with a 'heart'; a kind, caring and supportive community. There are 25 different languages spoken in the school, yet every pupil is treated as a member of the same family.
- Parents are full of praise for the school. One parent commented: 'I am very proud of the school. The teachers have been resourceful and have nurtured my child to become more confident in herself and her ability.'
- Teachers speak highly of their continual professional development, notably the high-quality support for newly qualified teachers. The principal's leadership of the local school-centred initial teacher training is of great benefit to the teachers.
- Performance management is well organised. Teachers' targets help to improve pupils' progress because they link clearly to the school's detailed self-evaluation and incisive improvement plan.
- The curriculum is rightly focussed upon helping pupils who have little or no grasp of English to speak English and to read. There has been significant investment in making the curriculum more engaging for boys. Although boys' progress is still slightly below that of girls, differences are diminishing.
- There are many educational visits to consolidate pupils' learning. Year 3 pupils were excited to tell inspectors about their imminent visit to Chester Zoo to see the animals they have learned about.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain due to the school's values, expectations and routines. They are exposed to many different aspects of British life in their visits to the beach, the National Children's Museum, a church and a synagogue.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is promoted well through physical education, English and drama, art and music.
- Pupil premium funding is used well and disadvantaged pupils, who are eligible for this funding, make better progress than their peers. The school also assists many pupils who are disadvantaged by their circumstances but, because they are new to the country, do not qualify for pupil premium funding.
- The physical education and sport premium is used to provide specialist coaching for pupils in ball skills and team sports to improve fitness, coordination and confidence.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has a positive impact. The special educational needs co-ordinator sets challenging targets for each pupil and rigorously monitors and tracks pupils' progress.

Governance of the school

- The school has secured a highly skilled and authoritative governing body. They bring a range of essential professional expertise which allows them to challenge and support the school on all matters from the quality of teaching to financial planning.

- Governors are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They have high expectations of the standards pupils achieve.
- Governors have challenged senior leaders to good effect. For example, they questioned why pupils' progress in phonics was historically below average. This led to a review and implementation of a new phonics scheme.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record meets requirements. All staff have regular child protection training. Child protection records are kept securely. Records of child protection concerns are very detailed and thorough. The school involves many different agencies to work with pupils and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those who are known to be at risk. All welfare requirements are met in the Reception and Nursery classes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good for middle-ability pupils and the most able. Pupils with low prior attainment or those new to the school with no prior attainment make less progress because work is sometimes too difficult for them.
- Pupils make the best progress when they are highly engaged in their learning. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson, boys were reading an extract from 'George's marvellous medicine'. They had great fun while they practised their reading and comprehension skills and acted out a scene from the story.
- Similarly, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils made good progress in understanding division. The teacher re-taught pupils what they had not quite grasped the day before. His clear explanation of the methodology pupils should use, coupled with some counting apparatus to help the least able pupils, meant that everyone made good progress.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows some good-quality extended writing. Many pupils are able to write accurately and enrich their writing with all sorts of literary devices. This is evident in topic books as well as in English and writing books.
- However, a minority of books and work in lessons shows that some pupils struggle to form letters correctly, to write with technical accuracy and to spell correctly. While these issues are addressed well in some classes, it is not consistent across the school.
- Marking is generally in accordance with the school's policy but there are occasions when it is not and spelling and grammar errors are not identified.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- The overwhelming majority of parents spoken to by inspectors or who responded to Parent View feel that their children are safe in school; they have no concerns about behaviour or bullying.
- Inspectors found that there were effective procedures for pupils and parents to report bullying. Pupils can make a note of any concerns and post them into a robot's mouth.
- Pupils are clear about kind and unkind behaviour and this is clearly reinforced by staff in lessons and at break- and lunchtimes.
- A lot of support, including English language classes, is provided to families who are newly arrived into the country or whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There were no permanent or fixed-term exclusions in the last academic year. Behaviour is well managed by teachers, supported by senior leaders.
- There are well-established conventions to ensure safe and sensible movement around the school. Pupils line up smartly to walk out to playtime and stand in silence with their teachers before they come back in.
- Break- and lunchtimes are well organised and well supervised. Pupils show good manners and respect to members of staff and each other.
- Attendance is below the national average but it is securely improving. Persistent absence has been significantly reduced due to a highly strategic approach from senior leaders. Pupil premium funding is used well to improve attendance and support families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children enter the nursery with typically below average abilities for their age. However, a significant number of pupils join the school throughout the year, with a wide range of abilities.
- Historical published data does not fully represent the progress pupils make, due to the school's rapid growth from 10 pupils in 2014 to 247 in 2017.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading and writing were close to national averages. Standards were above average in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress than their peers due to the positive impact of pupil premium funding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to improvements in teaching and meticulous tracking and target-setting.
- There has been a strong focus upon the teaching of reading. A much more engaging curriculum has led to better progress, particularly for boys. A new phonics scheme has been introduced, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils now make good progress.

- Inspectors listened to pupils read. Pupils say that they enjoy reading, their books are appropriate for their abilities and they are engaging.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. The large majority of pupils achieved a good level of development this year.
- Children's progress in reading and writing is not as strong as it is in mathematics, personal development or art. There is not enough emphasis on early writing, including letter formation and pencil grip. The progress of disadvantaged children and boys is slightly below that of their peers.
- Children benefit from very effective teaching. The school's new approach to teaching phonics is having a positive impact. Children rapidly grasped new letters and sounds and behaved well because they were engaged in their learning.
- In the Nursery, children enjoyed counting in a story about Goldilocks and the three bears. They were successfully taught how to say and write numbers up to five.
- As a result of engaging teaching, rewards and praise, children behave well. They share and cooperate well in class and at social times. Safeguarding is effective and statutory requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	140482
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10022808

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sue Webster
Principal	Sue Farrimond
Telephone number	0161 202 8989
Website	www.mcpacademy.co.uk
Email address	sue.farrimond@mca.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on the website.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school is part of a Multi-Academy Trust with Manchester Communications Academy
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also above average.

- The school has no Year 5 or 6 pupils so there is no end of key stage 2 data to assess whether the school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The principal also leads a school-centred initial teacher training programme.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, school policies, records relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation information and a range of other documentation.
- Sixteen responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and eight free-text responses were considered. Inspectors spoke with many parents in the school playground before school.
- There were 17 responses to the staff questionnaire and no response to the pupil questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to many pupils during lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body. Meetings were also held with senior and middle leaders and representatives from the trust.

Inspection team

Sally Kenyon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Ofsted Inspector

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