

Inspection of Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy

4-6 Park Grove, Manchester M19 3AQ

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and value the inclusive, friendly atmosphere that leaders have created. This was not the case for many in their previous schools. Pupils are honest about their challenging behaviour in the past. They now know how important it is to behave well. Pupils say that Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy (MVLA) has given them a fresh start and a chance to be successful.

Pupils achieve well in different subjects and in the things that interest them. They know that their teachers have high expectations of them and expect them to 'do their very best at all times'. They know that staff will support them if they find tasks difficult or if they struggle to manage their behaviour. This helps them to understand how to improve their behaviour. Pupils appreciate this support and over time, their behaviour and learning improve. This helps pupils to develop positive attitudes and grow in confidence.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They know that staff will support them if they have a concern. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They are certain that staff will deal with any bullying, should it occur.

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

Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. They make it clear what they want pupils to achieve while they are at the school. Teachers help pupils to re-engage with learning and grow in confidence. They ensure that pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they will need for adult life. Most pupils gain appropriate qualifications, including in English and mathematics. Pupils also develop their skills in vocational subjects, such as construction and horticulture. These qualifications and experiences prepare them well for when they leave the school. In 2019, all Year 11 pupils moved on to college, an apprenticeship or employment.

When pupils join the school, teachers carefully identify any gaps in their knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are soon identified. Extra support is then provided so that their learning needs are met. Teachers plan activities that build on what pupils already know and can do. They also adapt learning well to broaden the curriculum opportunities. For example, in English, older pupils study 'The Merchant of Venice'. Teachers focus on the literary content in preparation for the GCSE examinations. They also use the play to develop pupils' confidence to discuss wider themes of racism, homophobia, love and deceit.

Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's curriculum and know where improvements are needed. Some subject leaders are new to their posts and are reviewing what pupils currently learn. Sometimes the planning does not identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to know, the order in which it should be taught and how best pupils should learn it. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The school places a high priority on preparing pupils for their adult lives. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and how to manage money. During their weekly visits to the Manchester Vocational Training Centre, pupils take part in many sporting activities as well as learning a wide range of vocational skills. These visits enable them to work alongside and socialise with others in the wider community.

Pupils learn about and discuss different values, beliefs, religions and cultures. Pupils understand that they must respect people who are different to them.

Pupils behave well most of the time. This is because staff have high expectations and are skilled at de-escalating situations before tensions run too high.

Pupils learn about different types of careers that may interest them. There are regular visits from external careers advisers. Pupils also visit colleges to help them make decisions about their next steps. Staff support them well as they prepare for interviews.

Leaders ensure that there is a good range of resources to help pupils learn. Staff generally have good subject knowledge. Leaders have put in place good training for new staff and for those given additional responsibilities.

Leaders contact parents and carers regularly to make sure that pupils are coming to school. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and most pupils attend regularly. However, too many pupils still arrive late and miss the start of lessons.

Staff say leaders support them well. Leaders check on staff well-being and do their best to reduce workload.

Parents are positive about the work of the school. They say that they feel included and valued as partners. Many parents commented on improvements to their children's behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. The school complies with section 10 of the Equality Act 2010. All the necessary information is available to parents, including the safeguarding policy, which is online.

The proprietor is passionate about meeting the needs of the pupils. She has recruited the right people to help her run the school well. The highly effective management committee provides appropriate support and challenge to the proprietor. Decisions on examination entries and movement of pupils are always taken in pupils' best interests.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant and well trained about pupils' welfare. They pass on any concerns to senior leaders, who respond quickly. They work closely with parents and external agencies so that pupils receive the support that they need. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding so that they all know how best to support the pupils.

All the right checks are made on new staff's suitability to work with children before they start to work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, the planned curriculum does not make it clear what the most important aspects for pupils to know and remember are. Also, not enough thought has been given to how the learning is sequenced. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they could. Subject leaders must check that plans for the curriculum in their area of responsibility are clear about what they want pupils to know and in what order. This is to ensure that there is a logical and sequential approach to the teaching in all subjects.
- Too many pupils arrive late for school. This means that they miss important aspects of their learning. Leaders must improve pupils' punctuality, so that more pupils benefit fully from the good quality of education that the school provides.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	142224
DfE registration number	352/6011
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10112082
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Proprietor	Mahfuza Aktar
Headteacher	Mahfuza Aktar
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,700
Telephone number	0161 225 0567
Website	www.mvla.co.uk
Email address	m.aktar@mvla.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–7 June 2018

Information about this school

- The proprietor took on the additional role of headteacher in April 2019. She is supported by the previous headteacher who works as an independent consultant.
- Almost all pupils have dual registration. This means that they are registered with a mainstream school but attend Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy on a temporary basis to receive their education.
- Most pupils have behavioural and emotional needs.
- No pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last standard inspection took place on 5–7 June 2018.
- All pupils attending the school receive their education onsite and at the nearby alternative provision, Manchester Vocational Training Centre, which is separately managed.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the proprietor, leaders, teaching and support staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the management committee.
- When considering the quality of education, we carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and citizenship education. This included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents of pupils. He also spoke on the telephone with staff from pupils' referring schools.
- We observed pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection, including during breaks and at the start and finish of the school day.
- We assessed the school's culture of safeguarding throughout the inspection. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies, staff training records, and documentation associated with the school meeting all aspects of the independent school standards. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The proprietor has requested permission for the maximum number of pupils on roll to increase from 24 to 32.
- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- Further information about this part of the inspection is available in the annex of this report.

Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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