

Inspection of The Macclesfield Academy

Park Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 8JR

Inspection dates: 25 February–11 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils feel happy and safe in the 'tight-knit' community of this small school. Most of the pupils with whom we spoke said that teachers help them when they need it.

Leaders ensure that differences between people are celebrated. Pupils said that bullying does not happen very often. They are confident that when it does occur, teachers will deal with it effectively. Pupils value the work of the anti-bullying ambassadors.

Corridors and social spaces are calm and well supervised. Pupils are mostly polite and respectful of adults and of each other. Most pupils behave sensibly and safely. They generally behave well in lessons.

Currently, the curriculum lacks ambition for pupils. Some teachers have lower expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Although improving, pupils' achievement has been limited by a flawed curriculum. In recent years, pupils in key stage 4 have not achieved as well as they should.

The school's wider curriculum helps to develop pupils' confidence, resilience and independence. Many pupils greatly appreciate the vast opportunities offered, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and taking part in school productions.

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

For many years, leaders have provided a curriculum that is not in the best educational interests of the pupils at The Macclesfield Academy. The curriculum that pupils have experienced has not been well planned. Over time, it has led to a fluctuation in how well pupils achieve.

Despite the issues with the curriculum, some pupils attain well in some subjects in their GCSE examinations. Also, the progress that pupils made between key stages 2 and 4 in 2019 was an improvement on the previous year. However, the flaws in the curriculum design at both key stages 3 and 4 mean that pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the full range of subjects.

The curriculum at both key stages 3 and 4 lacks sufficient depth and ambition for all pupils. For example, in subjects such as English, pupils do not study a full novel at key stage 3. The curriculum is insufficiently rich. This affects disadvantaged pupils in particular. The headteacher has a clear understanding of how to strengthen the curriculum. However, several leaders, including some governors, need further support to understand the rationale for curriculum change.

That said, under the direction of the headteacher, leaders are in the process of broadening the curriculum offer so that all pupils study a wider range of subjects in

Year 9. Added to this, the number of pupils following the English BaccaLaureate suite of subjects is increasing. However, not all pupils have the option to study a modern foreign language at key stage 4. Many of these pupils are disadvantaged. Some pupils with whom we spoke said that they find this unfair.

Weaknesses in the curriculum have hampered leaders' understanding of how to build pupils' knowledge of subjects systematically. In many subjects, leaders have not thought carefully enough about the content that they want pupils to learn and the order in which pupils should learn it. This is hindering pupils' ability to build their knowledge over time. In subjects such as history, pupils at key stage 4 have experienced significant gaps in their learning. Consequently, their ability to recall prior learning is weak.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use the information that they have about pupils with SEND effectively. This ensures that these pupils have access to the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND are supported well with their learning.

Leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance. All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, attend regularly. Much is done to keep pupils' attendance high. Similarly, leaders' expectations of behaviour are high. Despite the reservations of some pupils about behaviour in lessons, inspectors observed positive attitudes towards learning.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' wider development. By devoting weekly curriculum time to enrichment activities, leaders have made sure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from an array of vibrant opportunities. For example, pupils can choose from a diverse range of clubs such as Japanese language and film, and drama in the community.

The headteacher has the support of staff, parents, carers and the wider community. He has the best interests of the pupils at heart. Staff appreciate support for their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff take pupils' welfare seriously. They meet regularly to discuss strategies to keep vulnerable pupils safe. Staff know pupils well and are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders work well with external agencies. They take appropriate action to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils have a good understanding of the different risks that they face. They know how to keep safe when using the internet and particularly on social networking sites.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- For too long, leaders and governors have not acknowledged that the current curriculum model lacks sufficient ambition for pupils. Decisions about the curriculum have not always been taken in pupils' best educational interests. Some pupils are precluded from taking a modern foreign language as a GCSE. Leaders are in the process of reviewing and changing the curriculum offer for September 2020. They should ensure that this new curriculum model is sufficiently ambitious for all pupils. Leaders must ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects at key stage 4, including modern foreign languages.
- Weaknesses in curriculum design mean that leaders at all levels do not understand the curriculum as the way of measuring pupils' progress. In many subjects, the sequencing of the curriculum is weak. Pupils are unable to recall prior learning. Consequently, too many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum across all subjects is coherently planned and sequenced so that pupils can build sufficiently on prior learning.
- Flaws in the curriculum structure mean that in many subjects, leaders have not carefully considered the key knowledge that pupils need to embed into their long-term memory. This means that pupils are not remembering important information over time. Leaders must ensure that they are clear about what they want pupils to learn, the order in which they will learn it and how they will help pupils to remember this knowledge long term.

How can I feed back my views?

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

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137064
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10121989
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	563
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Alistair Sutcliffe
Headteacher	Richard Hedge
Website	http://www.macclesfieldacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Cheshire Alternative Provision School, Fermain Academy, Cre8 and Project Inc.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Due to concerns about COVID-19 (coronavirus), following the return of a school trip to Italy, the inspection was paused on 25 February 2020. It was then completed on 10 and 11 March 2020 in agreement with school leaders.
- During the inspection, we met with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and a wide range of teaching and support staff. We also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors. We also met with the school improvement partner.
- We met with pupils from key stage 3 and key stage 4 to discuss their views about school life.
- We reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, subject leaders' curriculum plans, attendance

and behaviour records, bullying logs and the procedures in place to keep pupils safe. We checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.

- We considered the 75 responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire and the 28 responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff. We also checked the views of the 143 parents who responded to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, including the comments received via the free-text facility.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science and history. We met with subject leaders for each of these subjects, visited lessons, looked at pupils’ work and spoke with pupils and teachers. We also considered other subjects during the inspection.

Inspection team

Rachel Goodwin, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
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Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Ashley	Ofsted Inspector

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