



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

MONITORING VISIT

**MC ACADEMY (FORMERLY MANCHESTER CENTRAL SCHOOL OF
ENGLISH)**

(Company Registration Number. 08392893)

Full Name **MC Academy (formerly Manchester Central School of English)**

Address Suite 2 Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3AN

Parent\Company name MC Academic Limited

Telephone Number 0161 236 7575

Email Address dos@themcacademy.co.uk

Website www.themcacademy.co.uk

Principal Mr Abdul Majid Abufares

Proprietor Mr Abdul Majid Abufares

Age Range 12+

Total number of students 288

Numbers by age and type of study

Under 18:	3
18+	285
EFL only:	266
FE only:	22

Inspection date **3 December 2019**

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight Monitoring Visits and Extended Monitoring Visits of private further education colleges and English language schools. The focus of the visit is to confirm that the quality standards reported at the last full inspection are being maintained.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

A monitoring visit is for those colleges found at the last inspection to have met or exceeded the Standards for Educational Oversight. Inspectors will make judgements on progress against any action points and recommendations made at that time. The inspection will not examine all other Standards in detail but will sample to confirm that previous Standards have been maintained and that there are no contrary indicators to those quality judgements.

CONTENTS

Page

- 1 CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT**
 - 2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**
 - 3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS**
 - 4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY**
 - 5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**
 - 6 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
- INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 MC Academy is an English language school established in 2005 and located in the centre of Manchester. In 2019 it changed its name from Manchester Central School of English to MC Academy. Governance is provided by the sole director, who is also the principal. He is supported by a management team, which includes the executive director, the head of development, a director and assistant director of studies. The language school aims to offer courses that are rigorous and engaging and which help students make progress and become confident English speakers.
- 1.2 The school offers a range of general English courses at different levels, as well as academic English and examination preparation classes to those over the age of 16 years. These courses last for different lengths of time and students may enrol for them on a weekly basis. The Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA), which is offered at specific times of the year, has published entry requirements. In the summer, closed groups of students from the age of 12 years are accepted. They are accommodated in homestay families, organised by the school, or in externally-managed residences.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 288 students were enrolled. The vast majority are over the age of 18. There are slightly more male than female students. The majority come from the Middle East and all speak English as an additional language. Four students were identified with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- 1.4 The school was last inspected on 23 October 2018, when it met all Key Standards and the quality of education was judged to meet expectations.
- 1.5 The recommendations from the previous report are:
 - Develop teaching strategies that appropriately challenge and extend learning for the most skilled students in lessons.
 - Ensure all students have good opportunities to develop their extended speaking skills and confidence in lessons.
 - Address the consequences of high staff turnover levels to ensure that all students receive a consistently high-quality learning experience.
 - Ensure that the self-evaluation process makes accurate evidence-based judgements to identify clear priorities for improvement.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The language school meets expectations.** At the previous inspection of 23 October 2018, the language school was found to meet expectations and the quality of education as judged at that time has been maintained.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. The provision meets student needs and effectively supports progress. Courses on offer to Tier 4 students lead to qualifications or outcomes which meet the definition of an approved qualification for Home Office purposes. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. Students are motivated but are not encouraged sufficiently to talk at length. Activities to challenge the stronger students are not included in lessons. Academic support is excellent and targets specific needs. Helpful comments on homework allow students to know what to do to improve. Regular class tests inform students about their progress. Levels of attainment are good.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. Admission and attendance registers are accurate and suitably monitored. Prompt action is taken if a student is absent. This promotes suitable attendance rates. Procedures for contact with the Home Office are appropriate. Pastoral support is excellent. It is easily arranged and effective action is taken for any issues that arise. Students are confident in approaching staff for advice and feel well supported. Induction is not well attended and students have difficulty understanding it. The social programme is effective in offering activities to enhance the students' experience at the school and in Manchester. Safeguarding is highly effective. A detailed safeguarding policy ensures students under the age of 18 are effectively safeguarded. All staff are checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and have undergone appropriate training. Homestay families accommodating students in the summer also undergo DBS checks.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. Communications within the school are frequent and effective. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of developments in the provision. Recent changes in the staffing have reduced the levels of staff turnover, so promoting a stable environment. The continuous development programme (CPD) for teachers is varied and regular, but is too new to determine the impact in the classroom. The absence of CPD activity for administrative staff limits improvements. The self-evaluation is limited in that it does not accurately make evidence-based judgements that identify strengths and areas for development. It does not link to the development plan so limiting continuous improvement. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Student feedback is collated, but it is not analysed, nor used for target setting or action planning to ensure quality improvement. All appropriate checks are in place to confirm the identity and suitability of staff prior to confirmation of appointment.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is good. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 3.2 The recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report are:
- Develop teaching strategies that appropriately challenge and extend learning for the most skilled students in lessons.
 - Ensure all students have good opportunities to develop their extended speaking skills and confidence in lessons.
- 3.3 Unsatisfactory progress has been made against the two recommendations, neither of which has been focused on since the last inspection. This is as a result of recent changes in academic management, put in place to strengthen academic oversight.
- 3.4 The suitability of the provision is good and is successful in promoting progress. It includes a number of new international English language testing system (IELTS) courses at different levels, as well as academic English courses. These meet student needs. Courses on offer to Tier 4 students lead to qualifications or outcomes which meet the definition of an approved qualification for Home Office purposes.
- 3.5 At the time of the inspection four students with physical disabilities were enrolled. Where changes to teaching have been necessary, staff have put in place appropriate measures to ensure the students have maximum opportunities to achieve.
- 3.6 Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan well and use a range of activities to interest students. Teachers demonstrate suitable subject knowledge and show a good understanding of the cultural background of their students. Students are motivated to learn. Questions are used well to check understanding and elicit simple responses. Questioning does not encourage students to talk at length. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of lessons is slow and engagement is reduced, so limiting improvement. Lessons do not incorporate activities to challenge the more able students.
- 3.7 The curriculum is based on up-to-date coursebooks, which teachers supplement, where necessary, to better suit needs. Students benefit from regular homework. Marking is good and the helpful comments given support language development by indicating what to do to improve. Academic support is excellent as it identifies and responds to student needs. For example, an academic clinic is held three times a week in addition to normal classes to offer further support. A new writing workshop is effective in promoting development and encourages students to take responsibility for their educational progress.
- 3.8 Attainment and progress are good. Students are informed of their progress through regular weekly test. Progress observed in lessons and scrutiny of marked work

indicate that students are making good progress. Any students who are underperforming are identified and supported to achieve. Students reach suitable levels of attainment based on their starting points and length of course.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 4.2 Student admission and attendance registers are accurate and are well maintained. Clear and effective procedures are in place to follow up absences. Prompt action is taken if a student is absent. A clear procedure is in place to deal with persistent absence. This supports higher rates of attendance. There are currently six students on Tier 4 visas enrolled. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office, if necessary, are appropriate.
- 4.3 Levels of pastoral support are good and students feel extremely well supported. Students have ready access to support. They know who to go to if they have a problem. The vast majority of students are Arabic speakers and support is provided in Arabic if necessary. Any issues that arise are dealt with promptly and effectively. Consequently, standards of pastoral and personal support are high.
- 4.4 Induction is satisfactory. The induction that takes place is not well attended. The language levels of students make it difficult for them to understand, so reducing opportunities to support their settling quickly. However, students are given an informative student handbook which is effective in preparing them for their new life. Further, the regular interactions between staff and individual students help them settle.
- 4.5 A varied social programme, tailored to student needs, is well attended. It is developed with suggestions from the students, so enhancing their learning experience. Standards of advice and guidance given are good and support students to make informed choices about future courses.
- 4.6 Arrangements for safeguarding students under the age of 18 are excellent. The school has a thorough and detailed safeguarding policy in place, which is implemented effectively. All staff understand their obligations in relation to safeguarding and are suitably trained to ensure they can fulfil their responsibilities well. They have all been trained to be aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. All staff and homestay families accommodating students under 18 years have been suitably checked through the DBS. These measures promote the safety of students.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is satisfactory. All Key Standards continue to be met.
- 5.2 The recommendations in this area from the previous inspection report are:
- Address the consequences of high staff turnover levels to ensure that all students receive a consistently high-quality learning experience.
 - Ensure that the self-evaluation process makes accurate evidence-based judgements to identify clear priorities for improvement.
- 5.3 Good progress has been made against the first recommendation. Reasons why staff were leaving were investigated and then various actions were taken: an expanded programme of professional development activity has been put in place for teachers; salaries have been increased and more full-time teachers have been employed. Teaching and non-teaching staff, speak positively about these changes. Since the summer, staffing has been stable, so promoting a consistent high-quality learning experience.
- 5.4 Unsatisfactory progress has been made against the second recommendation. As a result of recent staff changes, this recommendation was overlooked.
- 5.5 Relationships between the proprietor and senior members of staff are good. Regular communications effectively keep staff up to date with developments. In the last five months, the proprietor has been successful in securing, supporting and developing high quality staff. New managers have been put in place to provide leadership to the different teams. Staff confirm that this has had a positive impact on the provision. The teachers now have a regular and varied CPD programme, but it is too early to know the impact on teaching and learning. The non-teaching staff do not attend CPD activities, so reducing improvements to benefit the individual and the school.
- 5.6 A range of policies is in place. These are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure their relevance.
- 5.7 Self-evaluation is underdeveloped. The self-evaluation document does not provide meaningful detail on strengths and areas for improvement. The development plan, which identifies priorities for improvement, does not link to the self-evaluation document. Consequently, on-going improvements are reduced.
- 5.8 Quality assurance is satisfactory. Student feedback is collected regularly to allow the school to know student views on the provision. Results are collated, but the absence of analysis, action planning and target setting of the feedback limits opportunities for driving up standards of the provision.

- 5.9 A suitable complaints procedure is made known to students at induction and can be found in the student handbook and on the website. An external body is identified in the case of complaints that cannot be resolved. Written records of complaints are suitably kept.
- 5.10 Arrangements for staff and volunteer recruitment are good. A systematic approach to carrying out checks prior to employment ensures that staff files and the single central register contain all necessary information, including identity, background checks, proof of right to work in the UK and references.
- 5.11 The school provided all information required by the inspectors in a timely fashion.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The language school has maintained the good quality found at the last inspection.

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the good quality provided, the language school should:

- Strengthen the use of student feedback by analysing feedback data to inform target setting and action planning in order to secure continuous improvement.
- Develop the self-evaluation process to ensure an accurate reflection of strengths and areas for development, and link this to the development plan, to promote continuous improvement.
- Ensure all students attend a meaningful induction to help them settle quickly into their new life.
- Implement a professional development programme for non-teaching staff to raise standards.
- Develop teaching strategies that appropriately challenge and extend learning for the most skilled students in lessons.
- Ensure all students have good opportunities to develop their extended speaking skills and confidence in lessons.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the language school.

Inspectors

Ms Nicole la Hausse de Lalouvière	Lead Inspector
Ms Gillian Wilkinson	Team Inspector