

Walkden High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105975
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	377336
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Owen
Headteacher	Mrs E Hilton
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 42 lessons, observing 41 teachers. Inspectors also undertook short visits or learning walks, to a range of curriculum zones, to assess the learning and progress students made. They also held meetings with staff, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. Documentation was scrutinised including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation; minutes from meetings of the governing body and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 152 parental questionnaires were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether strategies to improve students' attainment and progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been effective and are sustainable.
- Whether teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote and sustain even better outcomes for students.
- Whether the monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels are sufficiently well embedded to drive and sustain improvement.

Information about the school

Walkden High School is a specialist language college serving the community of Walkden. It is a larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has a lower than average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, although this percentage has increased over the last two years. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school holds Healthy School status. The school moved to a new purpose-built campus in September 2011. The present headteacher retires at the end of December 2011 and a new one takes up post in January 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. The school has coped well with a period of rapid change during the last year which has included the move to a new campus and significant changes to curriculum and pastoral structures. In 2010, key results at Key Stage 4 declined but recovered in 2011. Attainment is now above national averages for five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Some underperformance persists in the key areas of mathematics and modern foreign languages. Results over time have not demonstrated significant and sustained acceleration. Given above average attainment on entry, not all students make the progress that they are capable of by the end of Key Stage 4. Strategies are in place to tackle this but currently are not making sufficient impact.

Students are well behaved and feel safe. They are proud of their new school campus. Relationships across the school are good. Too much teaching remains satisfactory and fails to challenge students sufficiently over the 100-minute lesson periods. Some marking fails to indicate to students what they need to do to improve. The school's lesson observation planning does not place sufficient weight on how well students progress. Transition arrangements are well planned and there is good progression to further education. Good care, support and guidance enable students to enjoy school and attain well. Good partnerships enhance the curriculum and the care, support and guidance provided for students.

The headteacher has provided strong leadership in planning the transition to the new school campus. New appointments to senior leadership within the last two years have strengthened the school, particularly in the use of data to track and monitor provision. Safeguarding is good. Equality of opportunities for all is well promoted. Parents are generally supportive of the school and its ethos. Governors provide very effective links with the local community and are highly supportive of the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and achievement more rapidly at five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics by:
 - raising and sustaining attainment in mathematics and modern foreign languages so that students make at least good progress in these areas
 - improving the attainment and progress made by students known to be eligible for free school meals so that they match the school average.
- Accelerate the rate of progress made by students by ensuring that more teaching is good or better by:
 - sharing best practice within the school so that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning are tackled and all students have the opportunity to engage in consistently challenging learning.
 - ensuring questioning is used effectively to challenge individual students according to their needs
 - promoting a greater focus on independent and group learning skills
 - ensuring that the pace and variety of activities in lessons enable students to be challenged and progress in their learning
 - ensuring that the evaluation of internal lesson observations has a sufficient focus on the progress that students make.
- Improve assessment to support learning by ensuring:
 - marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve
 - consistency in the use of data for lesson planning across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

When students are given the opportunities to develop their learning skills they respond with enthusiasm and challenge and their progress is good. This was exemplified in consistently good to outstanding student progress in the creative zone. Students took responsibility for the organisation of their learning by engaging in the full range of learning activities and were highly cooperative in challenging each other's understanding of the topics. All exuded a sense of enjoyment and used the creative space well. However, in too many classes students are insufficiently challenged in their learning and progress is only satisfactory. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C is above average. There was a significant decline in five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2010. However, the school recovered in 2011 to 2009 levels. There remains some underperformance in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Students known to be eligible for free school meals do less well than their peers. Given above average attainment on entry, not all students make the progress that they are capable of by the end of Key Stage 4. School tracking records indicate that students are on track for improved performance in examinations in 2012. However, the progress observed by inspectors in too many lessons was only satisfactory.

Behaviour is good. Students conduct themselves purposefully around the new campus. Any minor lapses in behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students understand what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle but a significant minority of them are critical of the lack of healthy food options in the canteen. Many opportunities are offered to students to participate regularly in sporting and cultural activities provided by the school. Exclusions have been reduced and attendance has improved and is now above average. Students feel that the school is a safe place and comment that when incidents of bullying occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. An increasing number contribute to the wider communities through collections for charities and local community work. The percentage of pupils not in employment, education and training (NEET) is significantly below the local average and progression to further education is high. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is, therefore, good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. While there is a significant amount of good teaching, far too much remains satisfactory and lacking in sufficient challenge. In the best lessons, time is well used and planning is good. In these lessons there are many opportunities for students to develop literacy and oracy skills. The best lessons are characterised by good pace, varied activities, student engagement, good target-setting, challenge and high expectations. This was particularly evident within the creative zone where teaching observed was consistently good or better. In the satisfactory lessons, pace is slow and there is too much teacher talk. Students have few opportunities to explain or reflect upon their learning. Questioning is not used to challenge and develop students' participation. In satisfactory lessons, some students struggled where pace was slow and learning activities limited. There is inconsistency in marking across the curriculum. Marking does not give a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve. Data are not always used to plan

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

lessons effectively and to inform the variety of activities that will meet the needs of all students.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. New initiatives at Key Stage 3 are beginning to help students to engage actively in their learning but now need to be more embedded across the curriculum. An extensive range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 provides students with a more suitable range of academic and vocational pathways. There is a wide range of GCSE and BTEC options. The specialism has played a central role in curriculum initiatives. Some students successfully follow the 'blue pathway' which offers vocational courses in collaboration with a local college. Productive links have been established with local colleges, work-based learning providers and employers to widen the curriculum and offer more extensive learning opportunities to students. Relative attainment in literacy and numeracy are good. Progression to further education is high and NEET figures are well below the local average. The application of information and communication technology in the curriculum is good. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered.

Care, guidance and support are good. Transition from primary school is well organised. A good range of intervention strategies and effective monitoring has enabled improved attendance and a reduction in exclusions. The special educational needs coordinator works very effectively to ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support, with a strong emphasis on listening, speaking, literacy and numeracy skills. Students' progress is systematically and regularly monitored. Progression guidance is timely, well considered and effective. Those students at risk of underperforming are clearly identified and monitored. There is good use of external agencies to assist individual pupils to overcome significant barriers to learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has provided strong leadership in planning the transition to the new school campus and in implementing significant changes to curriculum and pastoral organisation over the last year. She has been ably supported by some strong senior leaders. Robust tracking and monitoring systems have been introduced. The collection, presentation and analysis of data to promote improved performance are good at a senior level and are being embedded at a middle management level. However, some students, over time, are not making sufficient progress set against their prior attainment on entry. Some key subject areas continue to underperform. Attainment and progress over time are not accelerating sufficiently. The school's lesson observation planning does not encourage the identification of teaching strengths and areas for improvement sharply enough. It also places insufficient

weight on how well students progress. In questionnaires, a significant minority of staff thought that the school did not support their continuing professional development. Self-evaluation is not fully accurate, particularly with regard to the quality of teaching and learning. Partnerships are good and well promoted. Links with external providers and agencies add to the students' curriculum opportunities and the good quality of care, support and guidance. Communication with parents is satisfactory and improving. Governors offer good links with the local community. Since moving to the new campus they have built productive links with the curriculum zones. They are critical and evaluative in monitoring the school's performance. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity through pastoral programmes and the broad and balanced curriculum. Students say that they are all valued. Strong analysis of the performance of different groups of students has started to have a positive impact on outcomes. For example, well-focused support strategies contributed to raised attainment for boys at Key Stage 4 in 2011. The school is developing its work in community cohesion. Local and international initiatives are being promoted. Safeguarding is good with procedures that meet requirements and which are regularly reviewed. Systems are robust. The school's value for money, set against outcomes, is satisfactory.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

An analysis of responses to the questionnaire indicates that the majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at school and believe that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their children are well prepared for the future. However, a small minority expressed concerns about inadequate help given to them to support their children's learning, on behaviour, the school's approach to promoting healthy lifestyles and how well the school takes account of parental suggestions. Inspectors noted these parental concerns and have asked the school to look at these areas.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Walkden High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 152 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,222 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	39	60	55	6	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	33	69	63	4	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	27	70	64	8	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	31	62	57	11	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	20	78	72	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	17	65	60	19	17	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	14	63	58	22	20	5	5
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	24	70	64	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	19	75	69	9	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	17	65	60	20	18	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	10	69	63	16	15	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	16	15	77	71	10	9	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	26	73	67	6	6	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Walkden High School, Manchester, M28 7JB

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your new school campus and fully understand why you take such pride in it. We would also like to commend you for your good behaviour and your commitment to making the school a harmonious place in which to work. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is a satisfactory school. You are making satisfactory progress throughout your time at Walkden. Your results are improving but now need to be improved at a faster rate. There is much good teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. However, too much teaching remains satisfactory and does not challenge you to achieve to your best. Your curriculum options are good. The teachers and support staff give you good care, guidance and support.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your school could be better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- accelerate and sustain improvements to the percentage of students reaching five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics so that you all reach your full potential
- further increase the percentage of outstanding and good teaching
- improve guidance in lessons and in marked work so that you are all clear of what you need to do next to improve.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence and trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

