

Whalley Range High School and Business and Enterprise College

Wilbraham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester, M16 8GW

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 is outstanding.
- Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. They plan lessons that are interesting and well-matched to the needs of students so that students make good progress.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to the welfare of its students by challenging unsafe practices that they might encounter outside school. As a result, students feel that the school helps them to keep safe.
- School leaders at all levels are unswervingly ambitious to improve the life chances of students. There has been a determined and successful drive to turn the school around since the previous inspection.
- School governors have a sharp grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have succeeded in challenging the school to improve in many areas including supporting the school to eliminate weak teaching.
- Students are polite, courteous and keen to learn. They show great pride in their school and their behaviour is exemplary.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form requires improvement. This is because students' achievement needs to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons and the same number of teachers were seen.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior members of staff, groups of students, and a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also observed groups of students reading.
- Inspectors took account of nine responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) during the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and considered a range of information provided by the school regarding, for example, students’ achievement, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to attendance and behaviour, the school’s self-evaluation of its work, and information on the setting of targets for teachers.

Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Janet Palmer	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Susan Wareing	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Barbara Comiskey	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Peter Mather	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Whalley Range is a single sex school for girls. It is larger than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents in the armed forces and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is almost three times the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much greater than the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- A greater than average proportion of students join the school other than at the start of Year 7 and leave the school other than at the end of Year 11.
- A small number of students attend work-related training away from school with some at a local college of further education.
- The school's recent GCSE examination results met the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement in the sixth form by:
 - developing and introducing a plan to bring about improvements so that courses are tailored to better meet the needs of the wide range of students that join the sixth form
 - applying the strategies that have been so effective in raising standards in the main school to the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 has risen sharply since the previous inspection. In 2011, students taking GCSE examinations had made significantly better progress than other students nationally in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- In 2012, the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improved on previous years to be above the national average. Given that when students arrive at the school in Year 7 they are working significantly below the standards found nationally, this represents outstanding progress.
- All groups of students make progress that is at least as good as other students nationally and often it is better. The school has introduced ideas to provide extra help to students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium and, as a result, these students do exceptionally well. In the past, higher ability students made weaker progress than other students, but this issue has now been tackled and the proportion of students gaining the top grades at GCSE increased substantially in 2012.
- There has been a concerted drive to promote literacy skills across all subjects and this has had a beneficial impact on achievement overall. Extra guidance is available for students with weak literacy skills and this has been a key contributory factor in improving their reading and writing. Students for whom English is an additional language are also supported very effectively and, as a result, they make significantly better progress than this group of students nationally.
- Students who study courses such as construction at the local college of further education achieve well, as do the small numbers who follow work-related training at places away from school. The school monitors the achievement of these students just as carefully as it does that of other students.
- In the sixth form, achievement requires improvement. Students start the sixth form with attainment that is well below the national average and in the past they often enrolled on courses that were not suitable. As a result, they did not make good progress. The school has begun to attend to this by altering the entry requirements for some subjects and by introducing support for students studying science with weaker numeracy skills.
- Results for students who complete A-level courses are broadly in line with the national average, but there is wide variability across subjects. The school has introduced procedures to better track students' progress, but it is too early to say if such systems have had an influence on improving achievement.
- Students who complete work-related courses in the sixth form achieve in line with the national average, but some students do not always finish the course that they originally enrolled on and therefore they make weaker progress than others.
- In lessons observed during the inspection, students' achievement across the school was rarely less than good and often was outstanding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and in a quarter of lessons observed during the inspection it was outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and, as a consequence, students are ambitious to do well. Good teaching over time has been a major factor in improving students' achievement.
- Teachers have a clear idea of what students already know and plan interesting lessons that build on this knowledge. Lessons are brisk and business-like and, as a result, students are eager to learn. Teaching assistants are used well to support students.
- Teachers conduct themselves well and provide good role models for their students. They demonstrate high levels of respect and courtesy to students. As a result, relationships between staff and students are friendly and purposeful.
- Teachers mark work regularly and thoroughly. They give students clear information on the next

steps they need to take to improve their knowledge and skills. Students appreciate and act on this advice, which leads directly to them making good progress. Students take great pride in their work, which is, for the most part, very well presented.

- Teachers set challenging targets and students are keen, not just to meet such targets, but to exceed them. For example, although the school enters students early for some GCSE subjects, this has not had a negative impact on achievement overall as the school encourages students to take the examination again and improve their grade, even if they have met their target.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to deepen students' knowledge. They ask probing questions and students respond well, expressing themselves clearly and coherently. Teachers regularly provide opportunities in lessons for students to practise their skills and apply the things they have learned. For example, in one outstanding Year 7 geography lesson, the teacher had taught students to find places on an Ordnance Survey map. There was a tangible sense of enjoyment as students worked together to complete the task, following the teacher's instructions and exclaiming with sheer delight: 'We've found it! We've found it!'
- Teachers check the progress of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 carefully and put in extra support for students who are falling behind. Such procedures are underdeveloped in the sixth form and action is not taken swiftly enough to ensure that students meet or exceed their targets.
- The school has taken very effective steps to improve the quality of teaching and poor performance has been tackled robustly. Teachers know that they are held to account for students' progress. Training has been used well to ensure that good practice is shared and teachers are keen to learn how to improve.
- In the best lessons, teachers set the learning in an interesting, stimulating context. This helps students to apply their learning to the world outside the school gates. Occasionally, lessons lack imagination and are focused on examination success, which hinders students' ability to see the wider relevance of their studies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is frequently outstanding, although sometimes students' concentration wanes when the teaching is dull. Students are courteous, polite and friendly. They enjoy working together and are keen to learn.
- Students know the consequences if they behave poorly and they understand that such behaviour has a negative impact on their learning. Clear procedures to manage poor behaviour help staff spot problems quickly and take action; therefore lessons proceed productively, with very little disruption. This has led directly to a sharp reduction in the number of exclusions.
- Attendance has improved substantially since the previous inspection and is above the national average. Students are punctual to school and not a single lesson observed during the inspection was disrupted by late arrivals.
- Students say that they feel safe in school, and this is echoed in the responses received from parents to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View'. Students also say that they feel confident that they can talk to a member of staff if they have a problem. The school is keen to listen to students. For example, if they feel unfairly treated, they can discuss this with a member of staff and the matter will be investigated and resolved.
- Students say that the use of racist or homophobic language sometimes occurs, but it is rare. Students are confident that this will be challenged and dealt with successfully by staff.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to helping its students stay safe. It plays a very important role in challenging unsafe practices inside and outside school. Students appreciate very much the fact that they can turn to the school for help when they face problems in their lives.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Governors, senior leaders and teachers responsible for subjects are all united in their determination and ambition to improve the life chances of students. They have successfully shared this vision with all members of the school community. As a result, the school has gone from strength to strength.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have been relentless in their drive to improve teaching. They have a very clear idea of who the best and the weaker teachers are because they visit classrooms frequently and check students' books regularly to make sure that work is suitable and marked thoroughly.
- Governors and the headteacher have been successful in rooting out poor performance. They use information on students' progress and also on the quality of teaching to decide whether teachers should be paid more. The school has put in place a very effective system to share good practice and support staff to help them to improve their teaching.
- The school has concentrated its efforts successfully on improving standards in the main school. Leaders are now turning their attention to the sixth form which has been, and remains, the weakest area of the school's performance.
- In Key Stages 3 and 4 students can choose from a wide range of interesting subjects that prepare them well for their future. As a result, the number of students who do not go on to further education or employment is very low. This has not been the case in the sixth form where there has sometimes been a miss-match between students' abilities and the courses they were following. The school has taken steps to stop this, but it is too early to see the affect on improving students' achievement.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many students enjoy taking part in the wide variety of activities available after school. Trips to museums, art galleries and places of worship broaden students' experience of life and help them to understand things from a different point of view.
- Displays around the school challenge racism and discrimination and this is followed up in lessons. The school prepares students well to take their place in society. For example, the school provides single-sex army cadet training. This helps to promote a sense of citizenship and involvement.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is extremely capable and has been very effective in holding the school to account.
 - Governors have a clear idea of the quality of teaching and have supported the headteacher to challenge weak classroom performance. They regularly visit the school, set challenging targets for the headteacher and have a very clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Governors manage the school budget well and have made sure that additional funds have been spent wisely for the benefit of students' education. For example, governors have agreed to spending money available through the pupil premium on additional staffing, so that students can benefit from intensive support which has led directly to these students making outstanding progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105558
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	400785

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1480
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Masztalerz
Headteacher	Ms Patsy Kane
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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