

Walkden High School

211 Old Clough Lane, Worsley, Manchester, M28 7JB

Inspection dates

1–2 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' progress is not yet consistently good. In the past they have not made the rapid progress that they should.
- Their standards are above the national averages but overall achievement is not yet good because they are capable of achieving much more.
- The proportion of students making more than expected progress is still below average.
- Teaching is not consistently good. It does not always challenge and extend the most-able students because teacher aspirations and expectations are not always sufficiently high.
- Some teachers use of questioning is not as effective as it could be in both developing understanding and in checking what students have learnt.
- Some teaching focuses too much on students doing activities rather than developing understanding; planning to ensure that students make good progress is not always sufficiently sharp.

The school has the following strengths

- Students are making better progress than previously as is seen in the improved 2013 examinations results and a higher proportion is now making expected progress.
- The achievement gaps for students eligible for the pupil premium have reduced rapidly from above to below those typically found.
- Students' understanding of their work in all subjects is regularly checked to ensure that they are making appropriate progress.
- Students say they feel 'very safe' in school.
- Students' behaviour is good and their attitudes to learning are very positive.
- Senior leaders are committed to accelerating students' progress to raise achievement through holding teachers to account for their students' performance with regular checks on students' progress.
- Senior leaders are very effectively improving the quality of teaching through their strong commitment to training and regular review.
- This is a school that is improving.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 teachers and 48 lessons, five of which were joint observations with the headteacher or members of the leadership team.
- Discussion were held with senior staff, subject leaders, teaching staff, members of the governing body, the Assistant Director of Salford Universal Services, and the headteacher of a local school who has been providing support for the school.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the student council and other groups of students, listened to students read and spoke to students in lessons, at break-time and during lunchtimes.
- Inspectors checked work in students' books and looked at a range of documents relating to students' progress over time, the school's view of its own performance, improvement planning and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of the 202 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 49 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Michael Blaylock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Johan MacKinnon	Additional Inspector
Robert Jones	Additional Inspector
Sally Lane	Additional Inspector
Paul Copping	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Walkden High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school
- In September 2011 the school moved into its new purpose-built campus
- The curriculum is taught in three 100-minute sessions throughout the school day.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority, is slightly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is lower than that typically found.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- In September 2013 the school opened a specialist enhanced resource unit for a small number of Year 7 and 8 students in the school with moderate learning difficulties. The plans are for this unit to grow annually by seven students in each year's intake to address the needs of these students across all year groups in due course.
- The school accesses additional vocational education for a small number of its Year 10 and Year 11 students through alternative provision at Salford College.
- The school has received support from the headteacher of St Patrick's school, a nearby teaching school.
- The school has met the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it becomes consistently good or better and hence raise achievement and increase the proportions of students making more than expected progress and students achieving the highest GCSE grades of A and A* by:
 - sharper planning for progression in learning throughout each lesson that is consistent with the highest aspirations and expectations to challenge all students, with particular attention to stretching the most able
 - making more effective use of questioning to: increase interaction, both between students as well as between teacher and students; enhance students' engagement with learning; and probe and develop students' understanding
 - providing greater opportunity for students to work independently and reflect more meaningfully on the details of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because the proportions of students making expected or more than expected progress from their different starting points in both English and mathematics, while improving, still does not compare favourably with those typically found. Also there are not enough students reaching the highest GCSE grades of A and A* across a range of subjects.
- The achievement of students is improving from earlier low levels with students now making better progress throughout the school in most subjects.
- Students arrive in the school in Year 7 having achieved standards at the end of their primary schools that are much higher than those seen in most schools.
- The performance in the 2012 GCSE examinations was poor with unexpectedly low results in English resulting in only 50% of students achieving five GCSE grades at C or above, including English and mathematics. This was well below the national average and the analysis of results showed that students' overall progress was significantly below national averages in all the main subjects of English, mathematics, science, languages and humanities.
- However, strong leadership has moved the school forward since then to achieve better results in 2013 with improvements in English and continued improvement in mathematics and other areas. This clearly shows that students had made better progress than the previous year group.
- The school's detailed analysis for the current Year 11, comparing their progress with the previous cohort, provides compelling evidence that the progress students make continues to improve. They are on track to secure further improvement in the school's examination results in 2014.
- The 2013 results and the analysis of the performance of students currently in the school show that the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium funding has improved. Their progress is now similar to other students in the school and consequently attainment gaps have closed to the equivalent of half of one GCSE grade on average.
- Students supported at school action plus and those with disabilities or a statement of special educational needs make at least similar progress to other students and some achieve well.
- Studying Level 1 vocational courses at Salford College for one day a week is proving successful both in motivating the students involved and in keeping them engaged with their education. These students make similar progress to other students in the school.
- Literacy skills are well developed although there is some variation in practice across subjects and opportunities for extended writing are limited.
- Approximately half of the year group, mostly more-able students, are entered early for GCSE mathematics in Year 11. Many of these students progress to secure high grades in GCSE Statistics.
- Over 80% of parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that their child makes good progress at this school. Inspectors found that this is increasingly so.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because although it is improving it is not yet consistently good in its impact on students' achievement over time. The improved progress of students indicates that teaching is increasingly effective. This improvement was also evident during the inspection, when just over three-quarters of the teaching observed was at least good. A minority of teaching still requires improvement.
- In lessons where teaching required improvement, often an answer from one student to a question was taken as indicating that the whole class had understood the particular point in the lesson as the teacher moved swiftly on. Additionally, the most-able students were not always sufficiently challenged in their work and, as a result, they did not achieve as well as they could.

- In the more effective teaching seen there was good pace and a range of well structured activities throughout the lesson that engaged students and enabled them to develop their understanding. In these lessons questioning was used effectively to both make students think about what they were trying to learn and how well they were learning. This was not the case where teaching was less effective.
- Asking students to check their own understanding of their learning is well-established practice in the school but sometimes it is not as effective as it could be because the reflection is insufficiently focused on the details of what students have been learning and, as a result, they do not achieve as well as they could.
- The school's recently introduced marking policy is consistently applied and gives students a sharper awareness of the level they are achieving in their class-work and homework as well as opportunity for reflection on their work and a responsive dialogue with their teachers.
- Literacy is well developed, as was seen in the teaching of technical aspects of language within English and in students' collaborative working that was informed by their advanced vocabulary. Appropriate support for literacy was evident in marking in history and computing. A reading support programme ensures that students who arrive in Year 7 with reading scores below their age make rapid improvement to quickly catch up.
- In some mathematics teaching an emphasis on rules does not encourage students to develop mathematical reasoning to understand, for example, why expanding brackets and index notation work the way they do. Consequently, many students are dependent on the teacher to know whether their work is right or wrong rather than being able to confidently check their answers for themselves.
- Students with disabilities or special educational needs are supported well. Close support from teaching assistants helps them make good progress in lessons. The specialist resource base for students with Moderate Learning Difficulties is well integrated within the school and provides good additional support.
- Students recognise that teaching has improved although some feel that the work is sometimes too easy. Just over three-quarters of parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that 'my child is taught well at this school'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good and in some aspects outstanding. They show respect both for their peers, teachers and environment and are very positive about the design and facilities in their new school. Students say that they feel behaviour has improved with a 'fresh start' in the new school building.
- Students show very positive attitudes to learning across all subjects, years and classes. They know both their minimum and challenging targets in all subjects and appreciate the importance of achieving them.
- Students, staff and parents all agree that the school is a safe place. Bullying in all its forms is understood but is rare and dealt with effectively. Students have a very well-developed sense of e-safety and how to stay safe online. This has been addressed through assemblies with external providers as well as within the curriculum and has proved very effective in tackling discrimination and fostering good relationships.
- The school's rewards and sanctions have proved effective in improving behaviour. The house structure with tutor groups of students from all years contributes well to positive student attitudes. Personalised care and support helps students appreciate the importance of attendance, behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- Further good support comes from the school's prefect system involving over 70 Year 11 students who receive training on how to challenge inappropriate language, safeguarding and making amends.
- Attendance has continued to be in line with national averages and proportionately lower persistent absence than is typical. The school was able to analyse the attendance of pupils

eligible for pupil premium funding but there is scope for sharper analysis by student groups of attendance and behaviour data.

- Virtually all staff and the large majority of parents agree that behaviour is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders are ambitious for their school to secure the necessary improvements to become good. They are all committed to raising achievement through improved teaching, holding teachers to account for both the quality of their teaching and the performance of their students. The impact of their work is seen in the rapid gains in improving achievement and teaching and clearly shows that this is an improving school.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Although it is not yet good, a strong commitment to providing help, support and training is proving highly effective in improving the quality of teaching.
- The implementation of regular check points throughout the year and the rigorous analysis of this data along with external examination results ensure that students' progress is tracked well. This analysis includes the performance of different groups of students and has enabled the school to see the positive impact of its use of pupil premium funding.
- Systems to manage the performance of teachers and their progression through the pay scales are robust and well understood. Any underperformance is tackled immediately through support programmes using the school's best teachers.
- The curriculum meets the needs of most students well and includes a good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits. Level 1 vocational courses at Salford College are well integrated into the school-based curriculum. There is mapping of spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements throughout the curriculum and these values, including equal opportunities, are promoted well.
- The local authority has given good quality support to the school, brokered from a local outstanding school. This has helped to strengthen accountability and the quality of teaching.
- The school's website is attractive, but has not been kept fully up to date. The school recognises the need to address this.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding students are fully in place including for those students accessing off-site provision
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide a range of expertise to benefit the school. They are highly ambitious for the school, are committed to it and want to see it succeed. The headteacher works well with governors in a constructive partnership characterised by mutual respect, openness and trust. Governors know the school well and are actively involved through governing body subgroups and curriculum links. They are aware of the need for the school to improve and are well informed of recent improvements in students' achievement and the quality of teaching. They have also been informed of how pupil premium funding is spent and on its overall impact. Initiatives includes an additional teacher, small group support in English and mathematics, a high-level teaching assistant to support work in literacy, and tuition provided through a programme involving local higher education students.
 - A recent external review of governance has identified areas to develop governors' skills and understanding to better challenge and support the school's work. This includes training to develop further their understanding of their responsibilities in the management of teacher performance and the ways in which the school's performance data is presented.

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	105975
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	426180

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	1,330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aled Owen
Headteacher	Simon Lennox
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2011
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