

Walkden High School

211 Old Clough Lane, Worsley, Manchester M28 7JB

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although leaders and governors have a clear and ambitious vision, they have not acted swiftly enough to bring about the necessary improvements, particularly in pupils' achievement.
- Too many pupils do not make good enough progress throughout their time in school. This is particularly the case for the most able.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is not closing quickly enough.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Too many disadvantaged pupils do not attend school regularly.
- Since the last inspection, governors have not challenged leaders effectively enough to bring about rapid improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' attainment in 2015 improved. The proportion of pupils attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics was above the national average.
- The headteacher has taken decisive action to eradicate inadequate teaching. The quality of teaching across the school has improved since the last inspection.
- Appointments made since the last inspection have strengthened leadership across the school.
- Pupils behave well around the school. They are polite and friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils respect the school environment and look very smart in their uniforms.
- The work that the school does to prepare its pupils for post-16 progression is exemplary. Effective careers education, information, advice and guidance are a very high priority.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils further, by:
 - ensuring all pupils make at least good progress in all subjects relative to their starting points
 - building on the improvements secured so far to make certain that gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are closed quickly
 - raising the attainment of the most-able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by making sure that all teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - challenge the most-able pupils in order for them to attain the highest possible grades.
- Improve the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils and reduce the number who are persistently absent.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders and governors systematically evaluate the impact of their actions in order to accelerate the pace of improvement.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- There is no doubt that the headteacher and his leadership team have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. However, in the period of time since the last inspection, their actions have not secured the required improvements at a quick enough pace to realise this vision. While there has been some improvement in the quality of teaching, this has not had enough impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is over-generous. Planning and evaluation have not been sufficiently robust to drive forward a rise in standards at a fast enough rate. Senior leaders have not systematically evaluated the impact of their actions effectively enough.
- Many of the actions that leaders are taking to bring about improvements have only commenced during the autumn term and, as such, are at a very early stage of development. Senior leaders did not take enough action or respond with sufficient urgency in the two years following the last inspection.
- Over the last two years, the headteacher has focused on eradicating inadequate teaching. This, coupled with the increased challenge to staff, has resulted in a considerable staff turnover. This means that pupils are more likely to benefit from high-quality teaching. However, this period of turbulence has been detrimental to some pupils who told inspectors that in some subjects they have been taught for considerable periods by supply teachers. The situation is much more settled now and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school is being led. In the online questionnaire, many of them said they were proud to work at the school.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are robust. The headteacher and governors have been prepared to take decisive action when teachers do not meet the required standards. Equally, they have used the system effectively to reward teachers for exceptional performance.
- An overwhelming majority of the parents who responded to the online Parent View survey said they would recommend the school to others. While the majority of their responses were positive, a number expressed some concerns about the following areas: the progress their child was making, how this was reported to them and how targets were set; the number of supply teachers; and poor home-school communication.
- Leaders are taking a range of actions to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. These include providing Key Stage 3 pupils with home tuition and all teachers mentoring a small group of pupils. However, these actions, along with the creation of a new pupil premium plan and the appointment of a member of staff to lead on raising the achievement of these pupils, have only happened during the autumn term. Prior to this, improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils had not been a high enough priority. Information provided by the school indicates that the progress and attainment gaps that existed in 2015 are set to narrow. Indeed, the expected progress gap for Year 11 pupils in English is predicted to close completely.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils effectively. For the very small number of Key Stage 4 pupils where this is not the case, personalised alternative provision is being delivered through Salford Open Learning. The school receives weekly updates from the provider, but the procedures for communicating with the school about the attendance of these pupils is not sufficiently robust.
- Personal, social, health and economic education is delivered through Learning for Life in Key Stage 3 and Enrichment in Key Stage 4. These lessons include religious education, citizenship and preparation for life in modern Britain. There are some concerns about how effectively these aspects of the curriculum are being taught as they are delivered by teachers who are not specialists in these areas and they lack the depth of subject knowledge. Of particular concern is that a number of pupils spoken to during the inspection reported that the only sex and relationships education they had received was in science lessons.
- The school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural programme is delivered through assemblies and form time. Again, there are some concerns about how effectively these aspects are being developed in all form groups. In the groups visited during the inspection, the pupils' attitudes to form activities were not positive and there were several other administrative tasks taking place. That said, the school provides many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outside of lessons. These include working with charities, such as The Prince's Trust, and involvement with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The prefect system is well-developed and pupils are keen to take on this responsibility. A rigorous selection procedure exists for this role and there is a shadowing programme for those aspiring to the position.
- Senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning, although experienced, are new to this role in the school. They are in the process of amending previous procedures and policies and the system for monitoring the quality of teaching is robust. Staff who are not teaching as well as expected are challenged and supported to improve their practice. There is a wide range of training which is evaluated very positively by

staff. Subject leaders are fully involved in the quality assurance process and have benefited from training to help them carry out this role effectively. Newly qualified teachers are very positive about the support they are receiving.

- The headteacher values the strong relationship the school has with the local authority. He knows that support is there when required. The local authority has brokered a relationship with the nearby teaching school. The executive headteacher provided a robust review of the most recent plan for the spending of the additional government funding known as pupil premium. Specialist leaders in education from the teaching school have been involved in developing leadership capacity in the mathematics, science, English and languages departments.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The work the school does to keep its pupils safe is of a high quality. Staff engage effectively and appropriately with parents, carers and other stakeholders to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe. Procedures to ensure all staff receive relevant training are robust, as are the protocols and practices for record-keeping. Staff have received a range of training on potential areas of risk for young people. All staff have completed online training on radicalisation and extremism and the school is keen to organise further face-to-face training in this area.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are actively involved in the life of the school; for example, through links to subject areas and attending parents' evenings. However, they have not provided sufficient challenge to senior leaders to ensure that their actions were having impact and improving outcomes for pupils with the urgency required. There is evidence that, over recent months, governors have begun to ask more searching questions of senior leaders and they are holding them to account more robustly. Governors have worked closely with the headteacher to ensure that setting targets for teachers to improve is holding teachers to account effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and pupils are benefiting from some good and outstanding teaching. However, this is not consistent across the whole school and some pupils are not getting enough access to this high-quality learning in their lessons. Teaching has not been good enough over time to ensure that pupils make good progress, particularly in maths, science and languages.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented on the variability of the quality of teaching. They recounted how their learning experiences differed considerably depending on which teacher they had. Pupils in Key Stage 4 felt that being taught by a number of supply teachers had been detrimental to their progress. Some pupils say that learning is more likely to be disrupted in low-ability groups.
- Although the quality of teaching has improved, there remain some lessons where teachers still do not have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve. The most-able pupils are not always being challenged to attain the best possible grades. For example, in one lesson observed pupils who had grasped a mathematical concept simply waited for others to catch up rather than being given another task to challenge them further.
- Some teaching in mathematics does not develop pupils' ability to apply their skills effectively. In these cases, pupils are not being challenged to think and reason mathematically for themselves. In some of the Key Stage 4 lessons observed, pupils were not being encouraged to use appropriate mathematical terminology at all times.
- In science, inaccuracies in some pupils' work are left unchecked. Exercise books indicate that some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' recording, evaluation and analysis skills. In some of the lessons observed in this subject, investigative skills were not being developed effectively. Inspectors observed some laboratory organisation and expectations which did not promote the highest standards of safety.
- Pupils' books show further evidence of variability of expectations. Where these are high, pupils produce high-quality work and teachers' feedback helps them to make good progress. However, inspectors saw examples of teaching which allowed standards in presentation and the quality of work to deteriorate. Not all teachers are correcting the misspelling of key terms.
- Pupils value the positive relationships they have with many of their teachers which, clearly, make a contribution to the quality of learning. In many lessons, teachers use their expertise and passion for the subject, coupled with their knowledge of their pupils, to enthuse and involve them in their learning. They

use questioning skilfully to check and extend pupils' understanding. In these lessons, teachers assess their pupils' progress effectively and use this information to plan the next stage of their learning. In some English lessons, inspectors observed individual pupils being given appropriate tasks to challenge them further. Inspectors observed pupils benefiting from high-quality teaching in design technology and physical education.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and are cared for well by the staff. However, too many disadvantaged pupils have poor attendance and, consequently, are missing out on this high quality care. Leaders are, quite rightly, focusing their actions on reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent now, but it is too early to see any impact. Procedures for checking the attendance of the small number of pupils accessing alternative provision are not robust enough.
- The Learning for Life and Enrichment programmes are delivered by a range of non-specialist teachers. Inspection evidence indicates that there are concerns about whether the important aspects covered in these programmes are being delivered to a consistently high standard to all pupils. High-quality sex and relationship education is not being delivered to all pupils.
- Inspection evidence indicates that most pupils think any incidents of bullying are usually dealt with effectively. However, others say that this is not always the case and the problem can continue. Pupils say they know which members of staff to go to if they want issues resolving. It is of concern that pupils who spend time in The Hive (a specialist resource unit) are subjected to name-calling by their peers sometimes.
- Pupils feel that the school is a safe and accepting place to be open about one's sexuality and that people are respected for who they are. However, pupils report also that the use of the word 'gay' is heard around school as a term of abuse or used in a derogatory manner. When asked if staff tackle this, some pupils say this depends on which teacher hears it. Behaviour and welfare staff have received training in this area recently and there are plans to roll this out across the school.
- The work that the school does to prepare its pupils for progression after Year 11 is exemplary. The school sees effective careers education, information, advice and guidance as very high priorities. Leadership of this area is very strong. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to develop their skills, alongside clear information and guidance to help them make the right choices. Disadvantaged pupils are given particular attention with each one benefiting from an annual one-to-one interview from Year 7 onwards.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and behave well around the school. They wear their uniform smartly and have pride in their school community. During break and lunchtime, and when moving between lessons, pupils' behaviour is mature and calm.
- In most lessons, pupils show respect to their teachers and each other which creates a positive atmosphere for learning. However, in a small number of lessons, particularly in low-ability sets, this is not always the case and the behaviour of some pupils prevents them, and others in class, from making progress.
- Leaders employ a range of strategies to improve the behaviour of the small proportion of pupils where this is not yet good. The fact that no pupil has received a fixed-term exclusion since October half term is evidence of the success of these actions.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Too many pupils do not make enough good progress throughout their time in school. Unvalidated published data show that in 2015, the overall value added score was significantly below the national average and pupils did not make enough progress in mathematics, science and languages. Although in-school data predicts some improvement in outcomes in 2016, inspection evidence indicates that pupils in school currently are still not making consistently good progress in these subjects.
- Attainment and progress gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are not closing quickly enough. This is particularly the case for the most-able disadvantaged pupils. This is a high priority for leaders now and information provided by the school indicates that these gaps are set to narrow. Actions taken in English have had particular success and the Year 11 progress gap is predicted to close completely in 2016.

- As was the case at the time of the previous inspection, not enough pupils attain the highest possible GCSE grades at the end of Year 11. Throughout their time in school, too few pupils, particularly the most able, make better than expected progress. Despite this being an area for improvement in the last inspection report, not all teachers are challenging the most able to reach their potential.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make, broadly, the same progress as their peers. A small number of Key Stage 3 pupils access personalised, flexible provision in The Hive. Teaching in this unit is calm and purposeful and pupils value the time they spend there, either in class or in one-to-one discussions with staff. Class teachers, across the school, are provided with detailed information about the pupils who have special educational needs. The special educational needs coordinator surveys staff on how they are using this information to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils' attainment improved in 2015. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was above the national average. Pupils attained good grades in GCSE graphic products, textiles, religious education and information technology.
- The majority of pupils supported by the government's additional funding, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, make accelerated progress during the early stages of their secondary education.
- For the very small number of Key Stage 4 pupils who access alternative provision there is weekly communication about their progress between the school and the provider. The smaller classes in the alternative provision are meeting the needs of these pupils more effectively.
- The present literacy coordinator has been in place since November 2015; already, her actions have had significant impact on those pupils who joined the school with low levels of literacy. Strategies to improve literacy across the curriculum are in the early stages of development and training for all staff has been arranged for later this term. Pupils benefit from a well-stocked library where the librarian reports a significant increase in the number of books borrowed since 2014.
- Year 11 destination information indicates that pupils are being very effectively prepared to progress to further education, training or to enter full-time employment. The high-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance that pupils receive contribute to a 100% progression rate. The number of pupils progressing to apprenticeships is twice the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	105975
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10002209

This inspection 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	1340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aled Owen
Headteacher	Simon Lennox
Telephone number	0161 9758000
Website	www.walkden.uk.com
Email address	info.walkden@salford.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 October 2013

Information about this school

- Walkden High School is a larger than average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore supported by the pupil premium is slightly lower than the national average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and for looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.
- A very small number of pupils in Year 10 and 11 access alternative education provided through Salford Open learning.
- The school has a specialist resource unit, known as The Hive, for a small number of Key Stage 3 pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The school receives support from a national leader of education who is the executive headteacher of St Patrick's school, a nearby teaching school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, of which a small number were joint observations with senior leaders. They carried out a work scrutiny jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with five groups of pupils and talked to others, informally, during break and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including newly qualified and experienced teachers, senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with six members of the governing body and a telephone call took place with one other governor.
- Inspectors took account of the 241 responses to the online Parent View survey, the 61 online questionnaires completed by staff and the 36 online questionnaires completed by pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included information on the school's own view of its performance, its improvement plan, performance information, and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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