

Inspection of Co-op Academy Walkden

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

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Co-op Academy Walkden quickly become part of the school community, and staff encourage them to 'be yourself, always'. This is an inclusive school where pupils share positive and respectful relationships with their peers and teachers. Staff take the time to get to know pupils and their families well. There is a culture of high aspiration.

Leaders set increasingly high expectations for the learning and behaviour of all pupils. They have cultivated a kind and considerate school community where pupils feel safe and happy. Lessons are focused, and pupils rarely disrupt them by off-task behaviour. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), engage enthusiastically in their learning and are well motivated to succeed. Increasingly, they benefit from leaders' raised expectations of what they can achieve academically.

Leaders do not tolerate bullying or discrimination of any kind. They deal with any instances swiftly and effectively. Mostly, pupils are confident that staff will take their concerns seriously.

Leaders have thought creatively about how to help pupils to have access to all that school life has to offer. For example, pupils who struggle to get to school benefit from a bicycle scheme that also teaches them how to maintain and fix the bicycles. Pupils, especially those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), value the array of clubs and activities which leaders organise for them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have ensured that all pupils benefit from a suitably ambitious curriculum. Their changes to the curriculum mean that pupils at the end of Year 9 can now choose to study a wide and varied choice of academic and vocational subjects. Pupils value the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages at key stage 3. An increasing proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects in key stage 4.

Although some pupils who left Year 11 in 2022 did not achieve outcomes in line with their peers nationally in external examinations, these results do not reflect the progress of current pupils through the curriculum.

Subject leaders are clear about the knowledge pupils should acquire. Mostly, they have sequenced the curriculum to make sure that new knowledge builds on prior learning. This helps pupils to remember important learning from previous years and to make links across subjects.

Teachers use their expert knowledge to help pupils to build their understanding of key concepts and ideas over time. They plan regular opportunities to recap and

reinforce pupils' learning. For example, 'do now' activities and teachers' skilful questioning check what pupils know and remember. Teachers are quick to spot any misconceptions, and address them before moving on to new learning. They use assessment methods sufficiently well to pinpoint the precise gaps in pupils' learning. However, in a small number of subjects, there is variability in how well some teachers implement the curriculum. Some do not use agreed teaching methods well. This means that some pupils in these subjects do not learn the curriculum content as well as they should.

Leaders ensure that reading is a focus across the school. Subject leaders prioritise wider subject reading in their curriculums. Pupils benefit from reading authentic texts. This helps them to deepen their understanding of topics and to become more adept at using subject-specific vocabulary. Leaders are quick to identify pupils with gaps in their reading knowledge. They put in place effective programmes of support to help these pupils to catch up with their peers. Pupils take part in library activities, for example as reading ambassadors. They enjoy participating in reading events, such as spelling bees and the Salford Children's Book Award.

Leaders have raised their expectations of pupils with SEND and have prioritised support for them, including for pupils who attend the specially resourced provision. They accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND at the earliest opportunity. Staff make use of the information that they have regarding the learning needs of these pupils to adapt lessons effectively. Pupils with SEND, including those who attend the specially resourced provision, follow the same curriculum as their peers and are fully involved in all aspects of school life.

Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour system. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour has decreased. Leaders ensure that a high number of staff, including support staff, are present on the school site to supervise and engage with pupils. Consequently, behaviour around the school, including between lessons, is calm and orderly. Leaders have made efforts to improve the rate of pupils' attendance, with some success. However, a significant minority of pupils, including pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, still regularly miss school.

Leaders plan the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum to encourage pupils' wider development. However, some teachers do not have the subject expertise to teach this curriculum as effectively as intended. This is also true for the teaching of the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum. This means that some pupils are less informed than they should be about life while growing up in modern Britain. That said, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders ensure that pupils receive helpful advice and guidance about future careers, from Year 7 through to Year 11. Staff teach them about engaging positively with a range of employers, particularly during work experience placements.

Since the school joined the trust, trust leaders, together with the governing council and senior leaders, have brought about significant improvements. They know the school well and know how to improve it further. Leaders consider teachers' workload

and well-being when making decisions. Staff speak favourably of the support that they receive from leaders in the school and the wider trust networks. Most staff are happy and proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive suitable safeguarding training at regular intervals. They are vigilant to the signs of neglect, abuse and radicalisation. They know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. They report any concerns promptly.

Leaders are knowledgeable about the safeguarding risks that pupils may face that are particular to the local context. For instance, these include the possible risk of child criminal exploitation and organised crime groups. Staff and pupils have training so that they know how to manage safely and mitigate these risks.

The leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are tenacious in their approach to identifying pupils who may need support. They are adept at working with a wide range of external services. They are persistent in securing the right support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Through the curriculum, staff teach pupils about healthy relationships, consent and how to report unwanted sexual behaviour. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils said they know whom they can speak to if they are feeling anxious or worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, there is variability in how well teachers implement the curriculum. This is because some teachers do not use agreed teaching methods well. As a result, some pupils do not learn the curriculum content as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers have appropriate training and support to help them to develop their subject pedagogy.
- Some teachers who teach the PSHE and RSE curriculum do not have the subject knowledge and expertise to do this well. This means that some pupils do not acquire the knowledge that they may need for life while growing up in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that all staff teaching the PSHE and RSE programmes are fully trained to implement the curriculum effectively. Leaders should assure themselves that teachers are implementing the programmes as intended.
- Too many pupils, including pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school as often as they should. As a result, pupils miss out on important learning and do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should

increase engagement with these pupils and their families so that their attendance improves.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 146404 |
| Local authority | Salford |
| Inspection number | 10268155 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,505 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Russell Gill |
| Chief executive officer | Chris Tomlinson |
| Principal | Matt Hacker |
| Website | https://walkden.coopacademies.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Co-op Academy Walkden converted to become an academy in December 2018. When its predecessor school, Walkden High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- The school joined the Co-op Academies Trust in December 2018.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND funded by the local authority for pupils who have specific learning difficulties. The enhanced resource provision is for pupils aged 11 to 16 with moderate learning difficulties. The specially resourced provision can cater for 35 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 35 pupils on roll. All of the pupils attending the specially resourced provision have an education, health and care plan.
- Leaders use seven unregistered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. They also spoke with members of the trust, the governing council and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing council meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. They met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, mathematics, art, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Kate Bowker, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Zarina Connolly | Ofsted Inspector |
| Geoff Baker | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sarah Mitchell | Ofsted Inspector |
| Phil Lloyd | Ofsted Inspector |

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