



# Walkden High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105975  
**LEA** Salford  
**Inspection number** 277460  
**Inspection dates** 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Stephen Wall CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Birch Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Walkden
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Worsley, Manchester M28 7FJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 7995525
<b>Number on roll</b>	1208	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 7905556
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr A Owen
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elaine Hilton BEd (Hons)

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	5 October 2005 - 6 October 2005	277460

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Walkden High School is a specialist languages college serving the community of Walkden, a small town on the outskirts of the Manchester and Salford conurbations. It is larger than the average secondary school. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils join the school from areas of relatively low levels of economic or social deprivation. The school's population is almost entirely white British, with a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. English is the first language for virtually all pupils. The standards attained by pupils at the time of entry to the school are above average.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. Its work in some areas is outstanding. Results in tests and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) have been consistently above national averages. Leadership and management are strong. The headteacher, most ably supported by senior managers, is very effective in promoting high standards and good achievement. Teaching is good. Although some lessons lack 'sparkle', teaching is well prepared, thorough and focused. It engages the pupils' attention and promotes good learning. Whilst the curriculum meets the needs of the large majority of pupils, the school recognises the need to extend the range of vocational options in Key Stage 4. The personal development and well-being of pupils is at the heart of everything the school does and is outstanding, as is the care, guidance and support offered to them. Pupils speak highly of the school and with affection; an opinion shared by parents. One girl, when asked what was best about the school responded spontaneously: 'Everything, really. I love it'.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the headteacher and senior managers the school has good capacity for further improvement. Test and GCSE results have risen steadily. The specialist language college status is now influential in shaping the work of the school curriculum and pupils value the opportunities it presents to them. The key issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed including improved procedures for financial control, although the school is still short of a clear plan to guide its future developments and expenditure.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve whole school strategic planning to give clearer structure to strategies for improving achievement and future expenditure.
- Develop the range of vocational options offered to pupils to meet some pupils' needs more closely.
- Improve the allocation of time to religious education and the arts to raise levels of achievement even further.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The school evaluates achievement and standards as good and the inspection judgement confirms this. Pupils consistently reach above average standards in Year 9 and Year 11. Standards rose steadily from 2000 to 2004. They improved significantly in 2005 when test and GCSE results were very high. The school sets challenging targets, which are normally met or exceeded. High levels of literacy and numeracy, which the school promote well, support high standards. Nearly all pupils are very articulate and, in Key Stage 4 especially, most of them work and act with maturity beyond their age.

Pupils enter the school with above average standards and maintain these through Years 9 and 11, year on year. The 2004 results data indicated some underachievement,

despite the high standards attained. The school has been quick to identify these pockets of underachievement and has dealt with them rigorously. A range of strategies introduced to support pupils identified as underachieving has brought about improvement, mostly through the exemplary use of data to track and trigger action throughout the school. The school's analysis of results for 2005 show that pupils who entered the school with above average standards, achieved very high standards. This represents good progress and achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make progress as well as other pupils in the school.

All pupils take at least one modern foreign language to GCSE level, the only exception being pupils taking offsite vocational courses in Year 10 and Year 11 who still have the opportunity to take entry level French, and speak enthusiastically about their language studies. Standards achieved by the 'fast track' pupils who take GCSE in French by the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average representing outstanding progress. These same pupils sit advanced subsidiary (AS) levels in Year 11.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The school modestly evaluated this as good but inspectors judge it outstanding. Pupils grow to become responsible and skilled young people, well prepared for the next stages in their lives. The success shows in pupils' good attendance and their respectful and mature attitudes. They are keen to learn and enjoy lessons, for example, confidently sharing ideas in discussions. Pupils show outstanding spiritual and cultural awareness and understanding of their responsibilities as citizens through subjects such as religious education and also in fundraising for charities. Very well established routines ensure pupils' safety in school and on visits. Relationships at every level are particularly strong and underpin excellent individual attention for pupils.

The school very effectively ensures pupils' social and moral development through high expectations, clear rules and good opportunities to work together. The school council, for example, has contributed to the range healthy food and drink choices, although some pupils would welcome further improvements. The merits of regular exercise, discouragement of substance abuse and issues of sexual health are all addressed by the school. Pupils are polite and courteous around the school and behaviour in most lessons is exemplary. Bullying incidents are rare but the school has very good systems to deal with those that arise. Pupils are very confident that any problems will be quickly resolved, 'It only took 15 minutes to sort out!' explained one Year 8 pupil.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice. As a result, pupils enjoy their work and learn well, working with their teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers are very alert to the needs of the most able and often provide additional,

more challenging tasks. Teaching assistants provide effective individual support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most lessons are well planned and well paced, although a very small number are closely controlled by teachers. In the best lessons, teachers frequently check how well students understand the work. However, in some otherwise satisfactory lessons teachers assume that, because a few pupils can answer, the rest of the class also understand. Pupils are assessed regularly and work is marked frequently and, usually, helpfully, so teachers and pupils have a good idea of how well they are doing and what is needed to improve. Homework is suitable, set frequently, and enables pupils to reinforce what they learn in lessons. The school is taking part in a national 'Assessment for Learning' project. This is starting to have a positive impact on learning in most lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school evaluates the curriculum as outstanding. The inspection judgement is that it is good because of some limitations that time and accommodation place on effective learning in a few subject areas. The school offers a good curriculum that has improved since the previous inspection. This is especially the case in information and communications technology (ICT) although it is not included fully in all subjects. There has been some reorganisation of the timetable, supported by increased staffing levels, which have helped to achieve a better balance in the wide range of subjects offered in Key Stage 3. However, the shortfall in the length of the school day and accommodation weaknesses, result in the creative arts receiving slightly less time than normal in these years. The development of key skills is good.

There are a large number of subject combinations within a traditional curriculum available in Key Stage 4 providing suitable progression routes. These are meeting successfully the needs of a large majority of pupils by enabling them to enjoy their learning and achieve well, although religious education has limited time. Provision for vocational education remains restricted, partly as a result of inadequate accommodation. Careers education and work experience prepare pupils effectively for later life. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good in a large number of subjects, including the school's specialism of modern foreign languages. Extra-curricular enrichment supports the progress of all pupils well, and, in the case of music, compensates in part for the shorter time it receives in Key Stage 3. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about the range of extra-curricular activities available to them.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school considers this area of its work is outstanding and inspectors agree. Child protection procedures are in place fully and known by staff. School staff are extremely proactive in dealing with any incidents and very prompt attention is paid to the very few examples of bullying or challenging behaviour.

The roles of the year group leaders, form tutors and a wide range of learning and support staff are key to the success of the school's excellent provision of very inclusive

care and pastoral support. The school provides particularly good support to vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through the wide use of well developed monitoring systems and procedures. Parents are kept very well informed of their child's progress and in some cases invited to meetings to discuss relevant issues and concerns.

The school is very proactive in its continuing development of systems and procedures for the support and guidance of pupils. This includes a wide range of advice from teachers in the classroom as to what pupils need to do to improve. Older pupils have access to a range of advice and support on future careers and in further education. Developing contacts with the local community, industry and commerce adds to the effectiveness of this outstanding provision.

The school receives excellent support from the school based police service, which contributes significantly to the pupils' welfare and safety.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school evaluates leadership and management as outstanding. The inspection judgement is that they are good because of the need for more focused whole school planning and the allocation of too little time to a few subjects. The school is well led, and some features are outstanding. There is a very clear perception by all adults and pupils of the school's vision, and of the part each person plays in establishing the strong ethos for learning. The headteacher and her senior leaders know the school well because they constantly monitor and evaluate the work of colleagues. They are empowering middle managers to do the same. The recent appointment of two new members to the leadership team has meant that departments are now kept under regular review and areas for improvement are quickly identified and acted on. This has contributed to the steady rise in standards since the last inspection. The focus in all the work of the school is on identifying and meeting the personal and academic needs of all students. Meetings and systems are well thought out and documented.

Senior managers respond quickly to needs and changes. For example, some of the results in 2004 were not as good as the school had hoped and, in response, systems of intensive support were set up for identified groups of pupils. The much-improved 2005 results testify to their success.

Planning by departments is thorough and addresses the needs of the school. For example the strategic plan to develop ICT across the school is logical and clear and an effective tool for improvement. There is, however, no corresponding whole-school plan, and this not only fails to add clarity to the school's plans for future developments to raise levels of achievement, but also does not give a strategic framework for future budget expenditure.

The governing body is supportive and, when necessary, critical. In general it holds the leadership team to account effectively. For example, the governing body challenged the initial plans for improving staffing for ICT. While the governing body has a good

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understanding of the school's finances, it too would benefit from clearer strategic planning.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Following our visit to your school on 5-6 October, we should like to thank you all for making us so welcome. You helped us find our way around the school and we were struck by how polite and friendly you all were. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us so openly and enthusiastically. In this letter we should like to tell you what we found out about your school.

You told us that you enjoy being at Walkden High School and that you feel safe and well cared for by your teachers. We agree wholeheartedly with you. Your teachers go to a lot of trouble to prepare lessons, which are interesting and demanding. As a result, we saw how hard you work in your classes. We are not surprised that the school achieves such good results and that you make good progress during your time at the school. We were very impressed with your behaviour around school and in lessons; most of you act in a very grown-up manner and show respect for each other and your teachers. The school is very well led by your headteacher. She and her staff are working very hard to make sure you all do as well as you are able. Walkden High School is a good school with some outstanding features and you are right to be proud of it.

In order to make the school even better than it is now, we have suggested that planning for the future success of the school should be clearer. We have also asked the school to develop a wider range of vocational options for you in Key Stage 4. We have also asked the school to consider how to increase the amount of time allocated to a few subjects.

You have a very important part to play in the continuing success of Walkden High School and we know you will continue to work hard together to make sure you get everything out of the opportunities the school is giving you.

We wish you all the very best for the future.