

# Walkden High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105975
<b>Local Authority</b>	Salford
<b>Inspection number</b>	324309
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr A Owen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elaine Hilton BEd (Hons)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Birch Road Walkden Worsley Manchester Lancashire M28 7FJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9758000
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 9758079

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Walkden High School is a specialist language college serving the community of Walkden, a small town on the outskirts of the Manchester and Salford conurbations. It is a larger than average secondary school. Most students join the school from areas of relatively low economic and social disadvantage. The number of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The school's population is almost entirely from White British heritage. English is the first language of virtually all students. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has held Healthy School status for more than five years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Walkden High School is a good school where students reach standards that are above the national average. Students make good progress. The curriculum is outstanding because it gives all students, including those interested in work-related learning, an opportunity to succeed. The school's specialist language status has a significant impact on many aspects of the school's work. It allows the more able students to achieve qualifications early in their school careers and it ensures that students develop an excellent understanding of the global community.

At the time of the last inspection in 2005, the school achieved its best ever record of success in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. In 2006 and 2007, the pass rate and students' rate of progress dipped in a few subjects. School leaders were quick to identify this worrying trend and put effective strategies in place to bring about improvement. In 2008, provisional GCSE results returned to their previously high level and school data shows that students' progress is much improved. The biggest impact has been in Key Stage 4; the school recognises that further improvement in students' progress is necessary in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Students' personal development and well-being are good, as illustrated in the way they behave in lessons and around the school. Attendance rates are very high, although too many students arrive late disrupting a significant number of lessons. A new electronic register system introduced this term is beginning to have an impact on this issue. The majority of parents and carers expressed great satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school.

Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, teachers make sure that all students are challenged by their work and the pace is brisk. In a small proportion of lessons, progress is slower because students spend too long listening to teachers and not enough time working independently at a level that suits them.

The school provides good pastoral support and students feel safe. Procedures for safeguarding students meet current government requirements. Bullying is rare but when it happens, it is dealt with very effectively. Behaviour policies vary in effectiveness between departments because there are some inconsistencies in the way teachers reinforce good behaviour. There is a zero tolerance attitude to any form of racial harassment. Boys and girls reach equally high standards as do students from minority ethnic groups. The school collects a great deal of information about the progress of students. However, not all teachers use this information consistently. In some lessons, students do not know how well they are achieving or what they need to do to improve. The targets of some vulnerable students are not reviewed frequently enough, to make sure they are appropriate to their needs. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Students understand the principles of good citizenship and the school-based police officer has a very positive impact on the way students' responsible behaviour is carried over into the community.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior leaders understand the strengths of the school and know what needs to be improved. The revised school development plan sets challenging targets. The observation of teaching and learning provides an accurate overview of the quality of the school's work. On a few occasions leaders' evaluation is overgenerous in assessing the impact teaching has on progress. The school's track record proves it has a good capacity to improve. The response to the last inspection report was good. Staff development and appraisal leads to improvements in teaching and learning. The school has sound finances

and provides good value for money. It is looking forward to a significant redevelopment of its buildings. Governors are very supportive of the school and are in a good position to measure its effectiveness.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Accelerate the progress made by students, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Make sure targets for progress and behaviour are applied consistently so that students know what is expected of them.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the school having attained standards that are slightly above average, although attainment on entry has declined in recent years. By the end of Years 9 and 11, students reach standards that are above average. At the time of the last inspection in 2005, 74% of students gained five or more high grades at GCSE. This represented the school's best ever results. This proportion fell slightly in 2006 and 2007 but unvalidated school's data indicate an improvement to 73% this year. In 2008, 73% of students gained an A\* to C grade in English, 65% in mathematics and 57% in both. Boys and girls attain similar results at GCSE. Students make good progress overall. They make better progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The small proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals make slower progress than their peers and generally reach lower standards in GCSE examinations. Most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Students make better progress in English than in mathematics. Students who enter the school with high academic standards make particularly good progress. The standards reached by the 'fast track' students who take GCSE languages early or take Advanced Subsidiary (AS) examinations are very high.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students enjoy coming to school. One Year 9 student said that the school 'is a building full of opportunities; you come out with more than you go in.' Relationships between staff and students are built on mutual respect. Students behave well in lessons and around school. The great majority of parents are happy with the school, although some felt that students should have more attention paid to their views, especially in relation to the timing of the lunch break. Attendance is above the national average, although poor punctuality has a negative impact in a significant number of lessons. Bullying is rare and students know how to seek support. They are confident staff will solve problems quickly. Students respond well to spiritual and moral issues, helped by an effective citizenship programme. Assembly time is limited to 10 minutes and this restricts its value considerably. Students feel safe in school and understand the importance of eating healthily. They know the dangers of smoking. Students make an excellent contribution to the community through their work with charities and community groups. They make particularly good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and literacy. Almost all students progress to further education or training.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and improving. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since 2006, as is evident in rising achievement especially in Key Stage 4. The school's development plan sets ambitious targets to iron out the few inconsistencies that remain. A Year 10 student encapsulated the views of many students when he said, 'Lessons are better now than when we first came. They're more challenging'. Students enjoy their lessons and rise to the high expectations their teachers have of them. They collaborate well in group situations and are keen to participate in question and answer sessions. Consequently, they make good progress. Teachers recognise that some students have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities and do their best to support them. Students' work is marked frequently, although there is inconsistency in the usefulness of some comments in exercise books. A minority of teaching, usually in Key Stage 3, is less effective because there are too many whole group activities and a few students lose concentration because of the slow pace.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding and contributes to students' good achievement. A significant number of students sit French GCSE early, enabling them to succeed in AS levels in Year 11. The introduction of a wide range of vocational subjects for students of all abilities, including Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) in physical education, diplomas in media and creative arts and ICT is raising levels of achievement. The school's specialist language college status is used very effectively to provide interesting and imaginative cross-curricular project work. 'What the Romans called their pets' is a good example of this. Students' self-esteem is boosted well through events such as the celebration of European culture, where the drama group were seen performing confidently. The 'Learning outside the classroom' initiative gives students the chance to meet and work with young people from other European countries. The school has not quite met its specialist targets in French and German, both at Key Stages 3 and 4, for the past three years, but has taken recent action to improve this. There are good opportunities for students to extend their learning, in areas such as philosophy and astronomy. The wealth of extra-curricular activities enriches the lives of students. They talk enthusiastically of the many clubs on offer, including sports, drama, music and chess, and say, 'it's great. There's just so much choice'. There are excellent links with local colleges and businesses, which help students to develop a good understanding of the world of work.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Staff are highly committed to the care and welfare of their students and the school has an effective welfare system. There are secure arrangements to ensure the safety of students, including robust child protection systems. There is a useful range of support available for students with differing learning needs. Although academic guidance and tracking of students' progress has improved, there are inconsistencies in the application of these systems. There are effective partnerships with local schools that ensure smooth transition arrangements when students join and leave the school. Parents of Year 7 students are particularly pleased with the way their children settle in to school life.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide good leadership with a strong focus on raising standards and improving students' achievement. School self-evaluation is effective but a few judgements are too generous. Challenging targets are set for each department and there is a pattern of rising standards and progress. Sensible changes to the tracking systems to analyse students' progress have been made, however, they are not applied consistently in all departments. The school has made particularly good progress since its last inspection in developing the curriculum. Equality of opportunity is promoted extremely well and the school's specialist status provides good impetus for many areas of its work. The school seeks the views of its students and their parents so that it has a clear understanding of its own community.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

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

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Walkden High School, Walkden, M28 7FJ

The inspection team would like to thank you for all your help last week when we inspected your school. Our meetings with you provided useful evidence to make sure our judgements were fair. We agree with you that Walkden High School is a good school. You reach standards that are above the national average and you make good progress. You behave well in lessons and around the school. Teaching is good, as is the way the school is led and managed. The curriculum you are offered is outstanding because of the way it has been matched to meet your needs. The new work related courses offer a useful alternative to the more academic courses and the language specialism has an excellent impact on many areas of school life. You receive good support from staff and feel safe in school. We were pleased to hear you say that bullying is rare and when it happens is dealt with effectively. You obviously enjoy school as reflected in the excellent attendance figures.

When we inspect schools, we always try to help them improve by suggesting areas for them to work on. In the case of your school they are:

- accelerate the progress you make in Key Stage 3
- make sure teachers are more consistent in explaining what is expected of you and how you can improve

The headteacher and senior leaders understand what needs to be done and have already begun work to make sure Walkden High goes from strength to strength.