

Whalley Range 11-18 High School and Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105558
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	336519
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1656
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Maszalerz
Headteacher	Ms Patsy Kane
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons and held discussions with the chair of governors, staff, groups of students and external partners to the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, safeguarding documents, the school's self-evaluation, records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, school data, questionnaires returned by staff, questionnaires returned by students and 108 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

- the reasons for the variation in the progress of different groups of students
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, particularly for the quality of teaching and learning
- the impact of the school curriculum on the achievements of students
- the effectiveness of the school's leadership in bringing about sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Whalley Range 11–18 High School and Business and Enterprise College is larger than average and provides solely for girls. The school is located in inner-city Manchester. Most students come from a wide variety of minority ethnic origins. In the sixth form almost all students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students join the school from an exceptionally large number of primary schools. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is very high. Nearly half of the students speak a language other than English as their first language. The school has dual specialist status for business and enterprise, and sport. The Amaechi Centre, based at the school, is the largest youth sports centre in England.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Whalley Range is successful in meeting its aim of promoting the emotional, physical and social well-being of the diverse and multicultural student population. This is an inclusive school where students feel safe and well cared for. Their well-being is at the forefront of all the school's work and good use is made of many external agencies and partnerships. Arrangements for safeguarding students are good. As a result, the vast majority of students behave well, show respect to staff and each other and have positive attitudes to learning. Students are successfully encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through the curriculum which includes suitable drugs, sex and relationships education and citizenship. Sport features prominently and physical exercise is regularly timetabled for students; take-up by students is high.

There is too much variation in the progress students make and in their attainment. Overall, since the last inspection, students' attainment has remained broadly average across all subjects. The progress made by students fluctuates between subjects and groups of students. For example, students' progress in English is significantly below average whereas their progress in mathematics is satisfactory. Students with English as their first language make less progress than those for whom it is a second or third language. Students make satisfactory progress overall. This inconsistency is due to variations in the quality of teaching and learning and poor attendance by a very small minority of students. The recent changes to the staffing structure and to the curriculum have not had sufficient time to make an impact on students' attainments. In 2008 national test and examination results show that students' achievements declined and the provisional results for 2009 indicate that this trend is continuing. The leadership team has plans in place to improve this and the current monitoring records, which track students' learning, indicate that standards are rising. Monitoring by the school, confirmed by observations by inspectors, shows that most students are now making satisfactory progress.

The school's view of the quality of teaching and learning is too generous. The school's self-evaluation judges this to be good. Inspectors disagree; it is satisfactory. There is not enough good teaching to ensure that students make consistently good progress. Lessons observed by inspectors ranged from inadequate to good, with most judged as satisfactory. The marking of students' work is poor and does not enable students to know what to do to improve their work. The good range of assessment data held by the school is not used sufficiently well to inform what students should learn in lessons. This results in learning which is not always well matched to the needs of each student.

The school's leaders are improving the monitoring systems used to check on the performance of the school. Most notably, each faculty completes an analysis every half

term regarding the quality of teaching and learning, and the attainment and progress of students. This procedure has been in place for 12 months and is beginning to give senior leaders a more accurate view of performance. The data analysis tracks students' progress in classes, but fails to measure the progress of groups of students, such as by their ethnicity. This is a significant weakness given the variation in the progress of different ethnic groups of students. Improvement plans are in place for the whole school and in each faculty. These correctly identify most of the areas which need developing but they lack a sharp measurable means of judging their impact and do not have sufficient emphasis on academic outcomes. Given the transitional stage of much of the school's drive for improvement and the many developments which have successfully extended the curriculum choices for students, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, especially in English, and improve the rate of students' progress, especially in some ethnic groups, by:
 - - accurately monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
 - - increasing the proportion of good lessons
 - - improving attendance throughout the school
 - - ensuring that assessment effectively informs what students learn in lessons so that they build on their existing skills and knowledge effectively
 - - raising the quality of marking to provide guidance to students about how to improve their work.
- Increase the impact of the leadership team's improvement planning by:
 - - ensuring more accurate and robust self-evaluation
 - - implementing sharp measurable improvement strategies
 - - carrying out regular systematic checks on the progress of these strategies
 - - ensuring that the academic outcomes for students are the most important criteria by which the success of plans are judged.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In classrooms students learn better in some subjects than others. For example, the good pace of learning seen in a physical education lesson was the result of effective teaching which blended vigorous exercise with well-pitched explanations and searching questions to verify students' learning. Unsurprisingly, GCSE results in sports studies are above the national average. In the school's specialist subjects, students attain generally average standards and make good progress. The school meets its targets set for attainment in the specialist subjects. In mathematics and English standards are below average and the provisional results for 2009 GCSE are below the governors' targets. The number of

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students gaining five or more A*to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily in each year since the last inspection. Students of low prior attainment and students of African ethnicity make above average progress. Conversely, students for whom English is their first language make below average progress as do students who join the school with average levels of attainment. The progress made by many students in English is not good enough. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the satisfactory support they receive. Given that most students are now making satisfactory progress, attainment is average and students say they enjoy school, something which was observed consistently by inspectors, their achievement is satisfactory overall.

Most students have good attitudes to learning and behave well; there are good relationships between staff and students. Students feel safe and say bullying is usually dealt with well by the school. They are successfully developing healthy lifestyles and make a good contribution to the community through their sports leader work with primary schools. Extensive funds are raised for charities and a large number of students act as referees in sports competitions. The school hosts English basketball national events and students act as delegates at an international conference on cooperation. The poor attendance of a few students significantly acts as a barrier to their learning and hinders their development of workplace and other skills which they need for future life. The school has a suitable range of strategies in place to improve rates of attendance and the proportion of persistent absentees is reducing.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the lessons seen by inspectors effective use is made of digital projectors to gain students' attention and aid their concentration. Teachers are well prepared for lessons and complete planning sheets which outline the activities which students will do. The planning often lacks detail about what learning is expected to result from these tasks and there is little recognition of the varying needs and abilities of different students in the class. Partly, this is because insufficient use is made of the assessment data showing the extent of students' prior learning. In many lessons this leads to students making satisfactory, rather than good, progress. A small amount of inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection, largely due to students being insufficiently challenged by a slow pace to learning. In the good lessons teachers use effective questioning techniques to extend students' understanding and have high expectations of the amount of progress they should make in the time available.

The curriculum is developing well after a recent review and subsequent changes being made. It is too soon for some of these improvements to raise students' attainment and improve their progress. The provision in Years 7 and 8 for citizenship is developing students' functional English skills and is helping to raise the ability of students to access other parts of the curriculum where these skills are very important. The addition of alternative courses in Key Stage 4, particularly workplace links through the business specialism, is providing a good match to students' needs and helps prepare students for adult life. The curriculum is enriched through many opportunities for students to participate in sport and to gain qualifications. Representative sport is a strong feature of the school and many students are proud to belong to a team such as in basketball, which is played to a high national standard. There is a good range of educational and social visits to theatres, museums and to the local university for an engineering day. During the inspection a dance group from the National Health Service entertained girls in Year 9 and promoted a healthy lifestyle through music and dance. Students joined in energetically and with great enthusiasm showing enjoyment and gaining understanding of the very important messages. A variety of opportunities are provided in music and many students learn to play a musical instrument.

Students speak highly of the support they receive from the staff. In particular, they appreciate the guidance about their options at the end of Year 9 and when entering the sixth form. Prior to pupils leaving primary school, there are good transition arrangements for when they begin in Year 7. The recently introduced house structure, with vertical year groups of students, is providing a positive means of support for students. The most vulnerable students receive good care and support. Staff work

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together well with a range of external agencies to provide intervention strategies and reintegration routes. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection the school's senior and middle leadership has undergone significant changes to staffing. There is a restructured system and the roles and responsibilities of post holders have been redefined and remodelled. These are beginning to provide effective monitoring to inform the headteacher and governors about the school's performance. In addition, leaders have completed a review of the curriculum, resulting in many extra courses and pathways for students. These are providing an improved choice of options which are better matched to students' needs. An inaccurate and over-generous view of the quality of teaching and learning during the course of these changes resulted in leaders being slow to identify that the rate of students' progress slowed. The school has a reasonable view of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision, but has given insufficient emphasis to the variation in students' progress. The large staff team is beginning to galvanise the many changes. The embedding of the school's strategies for improvement is still work in progress and the impact on students' achievement is not yet fully felt.

The governing body ensures that all statutory compliance is met, including good procedures to safeguard students. The governors provide good support to the school and are well led by a knowledgeable chair. The effectiveness of their work and the depth of challenge they provide are restricted by some inaccurate school evaluation, though effective steps to improve this are in place.

The school promotes community cohesion well. Ethnic diversity is appreciated and celebrated. The leadership has a good understanding of the religious characteristics of the local community and responds accordingly by strengthening students' awareness. The school constantly seeks ways of developing deeper engagement with the community at all levels. For example, the school provides free adult learning classes and fitness sessions. Equality and opportunity are strongly provided for in the social life of students but weaknesses in the progress made by different groups mean this is judged only as satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is similar to that in the main school. Students say there are some opportunities for group and independent learning, but much of the lessons are very teacher led. This concurs with the observations made by inspectors. There are good relationships between students and staff. Students appreciate the opportunities provided for them and, in particular, the very good enrichment activities and the wide range of choice available in the curriculum. The sixth form admits students of all abilities and provides courses leading to national qualifications at levels one, two and three. Overall, students make satisfactory but variable progress. For those students who take A2 courses (A levels) attainment is broadly in line with national averages. The school does not analyse sixth form attendance with sufficient rigour. Students say they feel safe in general. Good guidance procedures are in place to help students in their future career choices and progression into higher education. The use of data to set students' targets and monitor their performance is beginning to develop.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

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Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents and carers (108) of students responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses show general satisfaction with the work of the school. The majority of the small numbers of criticisms were offered constructively, focusing on issues with individuals rather than the school as a whole. Parents and carers responded particularly strongly that their children enjoyed school and that the school keeps them safe. Although a small number of parents and carers wrote about their dissatisfaction because they did not know enough about their children's work, the vast majority of responses were positive about this. About one quarter of responses had concerns about the school's management of students' behaviour. The inspection evidence found that procedures are appropriate. The students' views are that behaviour is well managed and inspectors' observations judge that, overall, behaviour is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whalley Range 11-18 High School and Business and Enterprise College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1656 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	30	69	66	4	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	38	36	58	55	6	6	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	42	53	50	5	5	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	28	62	59	8	8	5	5
The teaching is good at this school	22	21	73	70	8	8	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	27	61	58	13	12	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	15	74	70	13	12	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	36	54	51	9	9	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	19	60	57	19	18	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	30	45	43	25	24	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	17	56	53	23	22	8	8
The school is led and managed effectively	23	22	68	65	10	10	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	32	59	56	9	9	3	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

4-5 November 2009

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Whalley Range 11–18 High School and Business and Enterprise College,
Manchester, M16 8GW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and meeting with you and were particularly impressed by your behaviour around the school and in lessons.

These are the main points we liked about your school.

- The school cares for you well and provides good support when you need to make choices, such as which subjects or courses to take in Key Stage 4.
- You have plenty of opportunities to get involved in sport, take exercise and make healthy choices.
- There are many good links with your community and your support for charities is good.
- The school keeps you safe by having good, effective systems to check on people who work at the school and making sure your health and safety are looked after.
- Some of you make good progress in your academic work, especially those of you who choose the specialist subjects available, such as business and sport.

We have asked the headteacher and the school's leaders to:

- raise the standards which students reach, especially in examinations in Key Stage 4, by making sure you have more good lessons
- improve teachers' marking of your work so that you know how to learn more
- improve your attendance, which is something you must work hard at too
- sharpen the school improvement plan so that it improves your opportunities to learn more quickly.

You can do your part to help by ensuring that you always work hard. The team joins me in sending you best wishes for your studies and we hope that you all do very well in the future.

Yours faithfully

John Coleman

HMI

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