

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

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105558
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	287265
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Vincent Ashworth 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
Number on roll	
School	1656
6th form	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Masztalerz
Headteacher	Mrs Patsy Kane
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Wilbraham Road Whalley Range Manchester Lancashire M16 8GW
Telephone number	0161 8619727
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Whalley Range High School is larger than most schools. It caters for girls aged 11 to 18 who live in the inner city area of south Manchester. The school is popular and demand for places outstrips the number of places available. The communities served by the school are some of the most economically and socially deprived in the country. A significant proportion of students come from overcrowded households. Around two fifths of the school's intake is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with special educational needs is half the national average. The large majority of students are from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Pakistani origin. Almost all students in the sixth form are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students whose first language is other than English is very high. The three most common languages spoken by students are Urdu, Somali and Arabic. The school has specialist status as a business and enterprise college. Following a second successful bid, the school will become a designated sports college from September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school which is well respected in the communities it serves. It is a tribute to all concerned that the school has successfully come through a period of uncertainty in its leadership and management since November 2004. Not only did those in charge provide stability during this time, they also enabled examination results to improve and the school to succeed in its application for a second specialism. The senior leadership team showed strength and determination in ensuring that the priority of doing what was best for students remained at the top of the school's agenda. Staff welcome, and feel excited by, the clarity of vision and direction which the recently appointed headteacher provides.

As a result of outstanding care, guidance and support and good teaching, students' make good progress. Students' achievements on vocational courses in the sixth form are a strength of the school. The majority of parents have a high regard for the school. A minority feel that students' behaviour is not good enough. A small but significant minority of students have a negative attitude to their learning. This is demonstrated through poor attendance, lack of punctuality, not paying attention in lessons or boisterous behaviour around the school. This sometimes spoils other students' learning and prevents them from enjoying all the wonderful things the school has to offer.

The school has been highly successful in its business and enterprise specialism. The initiative has been at the core of the school's thinking and planning and has had a significant impact on improving standards. Good management has seen its influence extend throughout the school, so that all teachers are encouraged to become more 'enterprising' in their lessons. Targets relating to course uptake and results have been met and exceeded in information and communication technology (ICT) and business studies, but they were not met in mathematics in 2006. Imaginative curriculum provision, such as the possibility of Year 9 GCSE entry, timetabled 'enterprise' lessons for Year 10 students and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses, has raised the status of business and enterprise as well as extending students' opportunities. A significant strength of the school is the variety of links with outside businesses. These enable many students to gain relevant, practical experience. Competitions and projects add a further dimension and encourage skills such as teamwork and creative problem-solving. Thus specialist college status has been a major factor in stimulating students' confidence in looking forward to their future working lives.

The senior leadership team is highly effective and, together with the headteacher, has a secure view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve further. The strong focus on continuous staff development has had a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching across the school. Consequently, standards have improved year-on-year. Students' achievements in mathematics and English, particularly at Key Stage 4, have not improved as consistently as their achievements in other subjects. The school has rightly recognised the need to harness the talents of its very best teachers so that all teachers are able to make their lessons fun and engaging.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Standards and progress are satisfactory in academic subjects and outstanding in vocational courses. The school successfully accommodates

students in the sixth form from a very wide spectrum of prior attainment. This reflects the effective leadership of the sixth form and the commitment to inclusion. Students choose from a wide range of both academic and vocational courses and take an active part in many enrichment activities. Teaching is good and students' work is closely monitored so that most know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There is mutual respect between teachers and students and students say that they appreciate the level of individual support and 'the community feel' of the sixth form. These factors are reflected in the high proportion of students who complete their courses. Although there have been minor improvements in sixth form accommodation, much is still inadequate and of poor quality.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' achievements in mathematics and English at Key Stage 4, so that they are close to national averages.
- Improve the attitude to learning of a small but significant minority of students.
- Ensure that all lessons are as stimulating as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school sets suitably challenging targets to encourage students to aspire to high academic standards. In many cases, students' progress is such that those targets are exceeded. Students enter the school with very low levels of literacy and numeracy. Their results in national tests in Year 9 are below average, but their progress is better than expected. However, the school has worked hard to improve students' skills in literacy and increase their levels of confidence. This means that by the end of Year 9 students have made good progress in English, and their attainment is broadly average. Standards in mathematics improved considerably in 2006, but remain lower than average. Some of the more able students do not achieve as well as they could in science.

Standards in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory and they are improving. The percentage of students who achieve five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations reflects the national picture and is significantly higher than the local authority's average. A success has been the reduction in the number of students who leave school with no qualifications. Students do not perform as well in GCSE English and mathematics as in other subjects. In 2006, standards improved significantly in English and mathematics and students' progress in these subjects was satisfactory. Students' achievements in business and ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education are impressive. This means that, overall, by the time students complete their compulsory education at Whalley Range they have made very good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress made by students from different ethnic backgrounds. Lower-attaining students and those who experience difficulty with their learning make good progress. However, some higher attaining students do not always achieve the higher grades they would be capable of reaching.

Standards in the sixth form are broadly average on academic courses and very high on vocational courses. The high proportion of students who study vocational courses in Years 12 and 13 make outstanding progress, whilst those students on GCSE AS and A-level courses make satisfactory progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is good with some outstanding features. Attendance is satisfactory and initiatives in place for improvement are beginning to impact positively. However, punctuality in arriving at school and to lessons on time is not as good. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory and better in those lessons where students are actively involved and planning matches their individual needs. A small number of students do not show sufficient consideration for others around the school. Most students feel safe and say that the few incidents of bullying and racism are dealt with effectively.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is enriched by a broad range of opportunities. Students understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. They are well-informed on the importance of exercise and factors that have an adverse effect on health, both through the curriculum and through citizenship and life skills lessons as well as the popular Business, Citizenship and Review days. The strong school focus on promoting healthy lifestyles is reflected in the high level of students' involvement in the wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities available to them.

Students take on additional responsibilities and contribute very well to the school, local, and wider community as peer readers, buddies, sports leaders and millennium volunteers and fundraisers. Under the coordination of the business faculty, opportunities to develop work-related skills are outstanding and awareness of business and enterprise matters exemplary, ensuring that students understand the skills necessary for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good in both the main school and sixth form. The school has done much to improve teaching and learning. A robust sequence of accurate lesson observations leads to professional training that embeds good teaching. Planning usually ensures lessons are fast paced, have a strong sense of purpose and fun and build on what the students have already learnt. Students relish those lessons where the learning methods challenge their capabilities to work and think independently. Explicit emphasis on key vocabulary helps students, including those whose first language is not English, to understand new information and concepts well.

In a minority of lessons learning does not reach a good level because planning does not focus effectively on how to engage the students. A significant minority are prone to lose concentration. Their behaviour and the pace of learning decline, often because the teacher talks for too long, the learning methods are dull or the style of questioning does not promote interest and enjoyment. In the sixth form some good independent learning is emerging, but requires further extension.

Teachers' expectations are high, informed by rigorous systems for grade and level target-setting. Good tracking of progress triggers effective action to help those not reaching their targets.

Some teachers are making good use of assessment information to help students understand how to reach their targets but this is not yet fully embedded. Marking is usually, but not always, informative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides its students with a good curriculum throughout the school, including the sixth form. It is kept under constant review and adapted to meet changing circumstances. Courses of study are tailored to meet the wide range of students' individual needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, there is a suitable range of pathways offered to students as they make the transition from one phase of their education to the next. These pathways include a good range of academic and vocational subjects. Effective arrangements are in place to help students who have weaknesses with literacy and numeracy skills. The specialist school status makes a very strong impact on the availability of courses that promote business and enterprise skills. There is good provision for students' personal and social education, including citizenship, and a strong emphasis on work-related learning. The school's innovative Business, Citizenship and Review days underlines the importance and strength of all these aspects of students' education. There is an extensive variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, both in the main school and in the sixth form. A high proportion of students take advantage of this provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. Procedures to ensure health and safety and child protection are thorough and comprehensive. The school is fully inclusive and is effectively working towards the Manchester Inclusion Standard Gold Award. A dedicated team of staff work coherently to identify students who are vulnerable or at risk of not achieving and organise the most appropriate intervention strategies. The care and support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who have English as an additional language and other vulnerable students are outstanding. The school also liaises with an extremely wide variety of external agencies to increase support and widen opportunities, including improved provision such as Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), New Horizons and Transition Challenge. Comprehensive transition arrangements ensure students settle in quickly to Year 7 and enable any concerns to be addressed early. Students receive good support and guidance to make informed decisions about subject choices in Year 9 and post-16 opportunities. Good use of data enables realistic targets to be set and personal and academic progress to be monitored and reviewed with individual students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. In a short space of time the new headteacher has inspired and motivated all connected with the school. As a result, there is a strong sense of community and a growing sense of shared purpose. Teachers are committed to change and improvement and appreciate the involvement they have and the responsibility they are encouraged to take. Communication between middle managers is very good, stimulated by regular analysis of data on students' performance and by informed debates on what works best in classrooms and why. Monitoring is thorough and its outcomes used especially well to plan for improvements.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good, ensuring that students achieve well on courses which suit them. This is a school which knows its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, it is aware of the need for staff to have more consistent expectations of, and strategies for, improving students' positive attitude toward their learning and for an increase in the number of lessons which engage and motivate students. Development planning is ambitious but clear, with a very good balance of aspiration and practical strategy. The governing body is good, relishing the growing role it has to play and having the information and knowledge about the school to be able to support its development and challenge its assumptions. The school's willingness to question its effectiveness, coupled with a strong desire to further develop, gives it good capacity to improve. Some aspects of accommodation remain poor and value for money is satisfactory.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1	

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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 Whalley Range 11-18 High School and Business Enterprise College, Wilbraham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester, Lancashire, M16 8GW

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We found that your school is a good school and that your teachers and school managers work very hard to make sure you have a fulfilling education. We were particularly impressed with how well you do in some of your GCSE subjects and on vocational courses in the sixth form. Although the older students have seen a number of changes in the leadership and management of the school in recent times, the new headteacher has lots of really good ideas on how to build on the school's successes and make things even better. In order for your teachers and the school's managers to achieve their vision for the future, they are going to need your help. In particular we noticed that a small but significant minority of you show a lack of consideration towards other students and your teachers. We noticed this through some poor attendance and punctuality, too much talking in lessons and overly-boisterous behaviour around the school, particularly during break times. This is selfish because it prevents other students from enjoying their learning. Many of you do show responsible attitudes and you clearly demonstrated this through the wonderful work you do in helping others and in music, art, drama and sports which enable you to develop into well-rounded and healthy people.

Your teachers teach you well and support and guide you exceptionally well so that you can make good progress during your time at school. We noticed how well your lessons in business and ICT are equipping you with the skills to succeed in the world of work. To make the school even better we have asked your teachers to ensure that all their lessons are interesting and fun. We have also asked the school to look at ways of helping more of you get higher grades in GCSE English and mathematics. Finally and most importantly we have asked your school to create a climate for learning in which all of you can demonstrate the highest consideration and respect for the whole school community.