

Whalley Range 11-18 High School

Address: Wilbraham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M16 8GW

Unique reference number (URN): 141264

Inspection report: 8 September 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils progress through the curriculum consistently well. They secure a deep body of knowledge over time, as exemplified in their written work and in their explanations of challenging concepts. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers to learning. Pupils typically achieve significantly higher outcomes than their peers in national examinations at key stage 4.

Students in the sixth form who have progressed through the Whalley Range curriculum, as well as those studying applied general courses, largely achieve results above their peers in national examinations. Those who join the sixth form in Year 12 from other schools largely make positive progress from their starting points.

Leaders ensure that pupils and students who struggle with their reading, writing fluency or confidence with numbers get the help that they need quickly. As a result, pupils rapidly close gaps in these skills.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders track patterns of attendance carefully. Where pupils struggle to attend, leaders are highly proactive in putting in place tailored help to ensure that barriers to attendance, such as anxiety, are reduced. This helps pupils to attend school regularly. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other barriers to learning, are rarely absent and achieve attendance significantly above their peers nationally. Pupils have maintained these highly positive patterns of attendance over a significant period, demonstrating that the importance of regular attendance is deeply embedded in the school's culture.

Leaders effectively model the school's values of 'excellence, care and respect', and pupils consistently live these out in their daily conduct. In lessons and at social times, pupils conduct themselves with the highest standards of integrity. They cooperate consistently well and are respectful of each other's differences. Routines are well embedded. Pupils understand what is expected of them and behave extremely well independently. They require very little supervision. Pupils who may have challenges managing their emotions and behaviours benefit from breakout areas and time for self-regulation. If unwelcome behaviour occurs, including bullying, leaders deal with it quickly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is highly ambitious. It is systematically reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other barriers to learning. Leaders make astute decisions about the teaching strategies that best meet pupils' needs. As a result, teaching is highly effective.

Staff receive tailored professional learning opportunities that enable them to implement adaptations for pupils with barriers to learning consistently well in classrooms. Teachers

identify and address misconceptions quickly and effectively. Leaders ensure that teachers have the autonomy to implement the strategies in their 'framework for excellence in teaching'. This empowers teachers to shape learning to meet the needs of their own subject areas.

Leaders quickly identify pupils who lack confidence or skills in reading, writing or the use of numbers. These pupils receive the specific support that they need to catch up quickly. This is true for pupils joining the school mid-year and those students new to the sixth form. In lessons, there is a clear and consistent focus on language development and reading competency.

Pupils and students in the sixth form are engaged in their learning and articulate this using subject-specific vocabulary.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Staff receive highly effective professional learning to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who face other challenges in their lives. Teachers adapt lessons well so that these pupils learn successfully alongside their peers. Leaders meticulously monitor patterns in attendance, behaviour and learning that may indicate a pupil is struggling. This ensures that they put help in place swiftly. For example, where pupils struggle with their emotions, leaders engage educational psychologists and wellbeing counsellors. As a result, all pupils, including those known to social care and those with SEND, receive effective support. These pupils attain significantly above the national average in examinations. Pupils with SEND attend school very well, consistently exceeding the national average for attendance.

Leaders use additional funding purposefully, including harnessing support from an emotional health and wellbeing nurse and access to art therapy and counselling. This gives pupils who are struggling to manage their emotions the help that they need.

Leaders use alternative provision thoughtfully, ensuring that the provision meets pupils' needs. However, leaders' oversight of attendance for pupils in alternative provisions lacks precision. This means that they are not consistently assured that pupils accessing these pathways benefit from the interventions that they receive.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders have a detailed and accurate view of the school's areas of strength and priorities for improvement. They are unrelenting in their ambitions for the pupils in their care. Leaders use published research to inform school improvement priorities and how they implement change.

Those responsible for governance are well placed to provide challenge and support to school leaders. They ask important questions and do not rely solely on leaders' views. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities, including monitoring staff recruitment procedures. There are clear lines of communication between the school's local governing body and the trust board.

Leaders carefully consider staff wellbeing and workload. They review staff feedback and act on it, for example, by ensuring staff have additional protected planning time during key periods. Leaders carefully design professional learning opportunities for staff at all stages of their careers. This supports teachers to follow bespoke learning routes that strengthen their expertise as subject specialists.

Leaders work closely with families to maintain strong relationships. For example, the school welcomes families to an 'open to all' parent and carer forum to gather views on key issues, and they invite the community into school to celebrate Iftar. Leaders also support families who speak English as an additional language through translation functions on the school's website.

Leaders work in a culture of mutual support and challenge with other schools. Staff benefit from opportunities to lead on trust-wide professional learning communities. Outside the trust, leaders participate in cross-city networks and have also led training for other local authorities on literacy.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's programme of personal, social, health and economic education is well designed and thoughtfully tailored to pupils' needs and ages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing other challenges access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Pupils have a secure and detailed knowledge of fundamental British values. They talk respectfully about protected characteristics, recognising their foundation in law. Pupils recognise early signs and risks of extremism and radicalisation. They can speak with confidence about democracy and the parliamentary process. All these factors prepare pupils very well for life in modern Britain.

The careers education programme is well developed and highly effective. Leaders thoughtfully adapt and make highly effective adjustments for pupils who may need greater help. Pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from meaningful encounters with local and national employers. Pupils in Year 10 and students in Year 12 experience a work placement. These experiences help pupils make informed decisions about their next steps. Leaders have established an alumni network. This inspires pupils to succeed on similarly ambitious career pathways. As a result of these factors, destinations are highly positive, with many pupils choosing to pursue further and higher education. A significant majority of students move on successfully to university after their time in the sixth form.

Pastoral support is highly effective. Leaders invest thoughtfully into ensuring the right help is available for pupils. They are future-focused and proactive in ensuring that pupils get the correct support as their needs change.

Pupils benefit from a plethora of opportunities that help them flourish such as 'history detectives' club, which develops pupils' curiosity, and British Sign Language club, which widens pupils' communication skills.

The post-16 curriculum is highly ambitious. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Teaching is highly effective. Leaders ensure that teachers benefit from professional learning to further strengthen their subject expertise at key stage 5.

Students' work demonstrates that they secure deep and detailed knowledge of the subjects they study. They have a secure understanding of important and complex concepts. Students are confident and articulate. They use subject-specific language fluently to explain their learning.

Students in the sixth form progress well from their starting points. Students who have progressed through 5 years of the school's curriculum prior to entering the sixth form achieve positive outcomes in national examinations. This includes students with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those with other barriers to learning. Students who study applied general courses achieve outcomes that are significantly above their peers nationally. Students who study A levels make progress in line with their peers nationally.

Students are ambitious for their futures, and they understand what they need to achieve to be successful in their chosen pathways. Students are very well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training. The number of students who are successful in gaining places at university after leaving the sixth form is well above the national average.

Students benefit from opportunities to broaden their experiences, including work experience, which develops their employment-related skills, and the Duke of Edinburgh's gold award, which strengthens their independence and leadership skills.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils at Whalley Range are immersed in their learning. They progress through the highly ambitious curriculum very well, outperforming their peers in national examinations. Similarly, students in the sixth form benefit from highly effective teaching and make very good progress from their starting points. Staff support pupils who face additional barriers to learning effectively. As a result, pupils who face additional barriers also outperform their peers in national examinations. Pupils and students are very well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils develop broader knowledge and skills through a wide range of enrichment opportunities. For example, cadets club equips pupils with the skills that they need to be successful in undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. A number of pupils are successful in gaining bronze and silver awards in school and the gold award in the sixth form. Such experiences enable pupils to develop greater independence and leadership skills. Pupils relish clubs such as 'Marvel Movie Club' and 'Woolly Rangers' where they explore other interests and develop their creative skills.

Pupils benefit from highly positive relationships with staff. There is a warm and welcoming climate of mutual respect and support, underpinned by the trust and school's values of excellence, care and respect. Pupils know how to report any unkind behaviour or personal

worries, and they feel confident that staff will be supportive and effective in dealing with any concerns quickly. This helps pupils feel safe.

Pupils and students demonstrate exemplary behaviour both in lessons and during social times. They behave with integrity and do not need to be reminded of the school's high expectations. They attend school regularly, consistently achieving attendance above that of their peers nationally. They take pride in their work and are ambitious for their futures. Many students in the sixth form secure places on competitive university courses.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed and sustain improvements to the curriculum and teaching so that pupils achieve highly across all key stages in all subject areas, including at grades 7 to 9.
 - Leaders should further strengthen their oversight and procedures for monitoring pupils in alternative provision so that they can be assured that these pupils are benefiting fully from their education.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Greater Manchester Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Damian Owen, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Suzannah Reeves.

This inspection took place on 8 and 9 September 2026.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, governors, trustees and the headteacher of the virtual school during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 6 alternative provisions, all of which are registered.

Headteacher: Michael Lea

Lead inspector:

Lisa Corrigan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Stephen Ruddy, Ofsted Inspector

Alan Hammersley, Ofsted Inspector

Karen Lynskey, Ofsted Inspector

Thomas Martell, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 8 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,712

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,063

School capacity

1,650

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

58.91%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 30.4%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.34%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.66%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 14.0%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	46.5%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	49.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	46.2%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	52.1	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	51.9	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	50.0	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.79	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.36	-0.03	Above
2021/22 (final)	0.69	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	37.6%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	43.8%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	34.1%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	49.4	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	49.5	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	44.3	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.69	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.02	-0.57	Above
2021/22 (final)	0.55	-0.55	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	37.6%	53.1%	-15.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	43.8%	53.1%	-9.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	34.1%	52.4%	-18.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	49.4	50.4	-1.0

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	49.5	50.0	-0.5
2022/23 (final)	44.3	50.3	-6.0

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	0.69	0.16	0.53
2022/23 (final)	0.02	0.17	-0.15
2021/22 (final)	0.55	0.15	0.40

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	94%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	29.02	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	31.72	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	26.96	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	0.0	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.1%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.7%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.5%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	19.0%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	18.8%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	21.6%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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