

Go to top of the class

A student who couldn't speak English five years ago has come in the nation's top 10 of those who took the subject at GCSE and it points to a huge improvement in schools in two of the city's poorest areas, as **Chris Osuh** found out

A QUIET revolution is under way in Hulme and Moss Side's secondary schools – and Faith Ekwueme and Yahui Zhang are the proof. Aspiring doctor Faith achieved one of the top 10 marks in the country in Health and Social Care – one of a clutch of top GCSE grades she achieved at Trinity C of E High School.

Meanwhile, Yahui achieved 10 A* and one A in her GCSEs, the highest single set of results in the history of Manchester Academy.

On top of this she got one of the top 10 scores in the country in English – a remarkable achievement when just five years ago she couldn't speak the language.

The schools where the high-flying 16-year-olds excelled serve some of Great Britain's poorest communities.

But both Trinity and the Academy are overcoming challenging circumstances to radically improve the chances that black and inner city pupils will leave school with the grades they need to get a good job.

Privately-funded Manchester Academy took over from troubled Ducie High School in 2003.

At the time Ducie, on Denmark Road, was at its lowest ebb. A woeful four per cent of youngsters, who came mainly from Moss Side and Hulme, left school with five A* to C grades and discipline was poor. Fast forward to 2007 and the results have rocketed to 31 per cent.

Yahui, who has won a sixth-form scholarship to Withington Girls' School, said: "I received a lot of support from the teachers, who were always friendly and helpful."

Yahui liked Manchester Academy so much she stayed there after moving from Rusholme to Heaton Mersey. Now a sixth-form pupil at Withington Girls' School, she hopes to do economics at Oxford University.

School principal Kathy August told the MEN the school



STAR PUPIL
Faith Ekwueme

had come from a 'dysfunctional' position but was now on the road to sustainable development, as teachers gained a better understanding of the needs of inner city pupils.

The school specialises in Business and Enterprise as a subject and its Enterprise and Employability courses prepares youngsters for the jobs of the future. The head believes rigorous disciplinary policies and out-of-school activities focused on raising ambition have given pupils a thirst for success.

She said: "The teachers and children are used to having pupils from all over the world so they are very tolerant and supportive. We are very rigorous with the uniform and attendance so children know what to expect and what the consequences are – this makes children feel very safe."

"Just four years ago 25 per cent of all examination results were 'unclassified', so we have had to attack everything. I believe this school can contribute to the regeneration of Moss Side and surrounding areas by raising ambition."

Trinity High School, in Hulme, is the Diocese of Man-



HIGH ACHIEVER Manchester Academy head teacher Kathy August and former pupil Yahui Zhang, who achieved outstanding results in her recent GCSEs

chester's only Church of England school. It takes about 25 per cent of its pupils from inner city south Manchester areas like Moss Side. The Cambridge Street school has long been among Manchester's best. But it continues to improve at such a rate that it is now in the country's top five per cent.

Four years ago the percentage of children leaving the school with five A* to C grades was 45 per cent. But this year 80 per cent of pupils got a

clutch of good results. The number of pupils who left school with Maths and English among their five good GCSEs is at 55 per cent – also comfortably above national averages.

Black pupils at the school are achieving much more than their peers in other schools across the country. Around, 63 per cent of boys, achieved five A* to C grades, compared to the national average of 40 per cent.

But a fantastic 97 per cent of black girls at Trinity got five or

more A* to C grades, outstripping the national average of 57 per cent.

Faith is now a sixth-form pupil at Altrincham Grammar School for Girls and plans to study medicine after A Levels in Biology, Chemistry, Psychology and Maths.

She said: "I worked very hard but was surprised to come in the top ten. Trinity is a friendly and supportive school and I am pleased and proud to have gone there."