

# Walton Girls' High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	136624
<b>Local authority</b>	Not applicable
<b>Inspection number</b>	395339
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Martin Cragg 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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Independent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	750
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Buttery
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Horrocks (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Harlaxton Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01476 563251
<b>Fax number</b>	01476 593243
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@waltongirls.com

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	18–19 April 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	395339



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kate Moore

Additional inspector

Aune Turkson-Jones

Additional inspector

Andrew Lagden

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 32 lessons involving 32 teachers and made six brief visits to other lessons. They met with groups of students, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessment information, improvement plan, evidence from the monitoring of provision, and the governing body's policies and minutes. They reviewed questionnaire responses from 352 parents and carers, 103 students and 43 staff.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school. The sixth form opened in 2008 and is smaller than average. Around 30% of students locally are selected by ability to attend grammar schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A smaller proportion of students than average is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs. Most students are from White British backgrounds.

The school obtained academy status in April 2011. It has specialisms in performing arts, applied learning and languages. The new principal took up post in January 2012. The school has achieved many awards including the Artsmark Gold award and Healthy Schools status.

The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. Students have excellent attitudes to learning and behave very well. They benefit from the very wide range of experiences and opportunities provided, developing impressive confidence and skills. The school is not outstanding because some features of teaching are inconsistent. Not all teachers match work closely enough to students' differing needs and students' achievement in English and mathematics, although improving, is not as strong as in many other subjects.
- Students' achievement is good. Their attainment is above average overall. They make good progress, especially in the school's specialist subjects. Different groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, also make good progress. Students concentrate impressively, respond enthusiastically to challenges, collaborate very productively and try hard at all times.
- Teaching is good and improving because of very effective training and support for teachers, who set clear objectives and use a good range of activities to engage students' interest. The excellent relationships in lessons promote effective learning. However, teachers do not always use questions well enough to develop ideas, or provide helpful guidance on how to improve work.
- Students respect each other and thrive in a calm and very purposeful learning environment. They say that they feel safe and that incidents of bullying are rare. Students willingly take on leadership roles and make a very positive contribution to the school.
- Senior leaders set a very clear vision for the school focused on raising achievement. They review the school's performance rigorously and know its strengths and areas to develop. They set high expectations which promote students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is broad and meets students' needs, with strengths in the arts,

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languages and applied learning.

- The sixth form is satisfactory, having opened relatively recently. Teaching is increasingly good. Students' achievement is broadly average and improving.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by ensuring that:
  - teachers support and extend students' key skills in literacy and numeracy consistently well across all subjects
  - all teachers provide students with clear guidance on exactly how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
  - match work closely to students' differing needs
  - use a full range of questions to develop and challenge students' opinions and understanding.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students enter Year 7 with attainment which is below average. By the end of Year 11, their attainment is above average overall. Attainment in English and mathematics is in line with national averages. Current Year 11 students have already achieved GCSE grades which indicate that they are on target to improve on 2011 results, especially in English. Students use their basic skills confidently across subjects, reading work aloud fluently, presenting clearly to the class and writing with accuracy. In the sixth form, students' attainment was broadly average in 2011 and the school's assessment information indicates that current students are on track to improve on this.

Students make good progress from their starting points. In 2011, Year 11 students performed better than similar groups and all students nationally. Progress in mathematics was above average but in English it was just below average. The school has taken effective steps to address this, increasing curriculum time for English and improving support for students who are not on track to reach their targets. As a result, based on grades already achieved, their attainment and progress are on track to improve in 2012. Different groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, also make good progress because expectations for them are high and they work extremely hard in lessons.

Students have very positive attitudes to learning. In lessons observed they made generally good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. They concentrate very well

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and follow instructions promptly. As a result, almost no time for learning is lost. Students engage with activities enthusiastically. They work together very productively, using discussion time to extend their understanding and enjoying challenges. For example, in an outstanding French lesson, students worked in pairs purposefully sharing their knowledge to select appropriate verbs in correct tenses to complete a passage. In the sixth form particularly, and elsewhere when given the opportunity, students take responsibility for their learning, researching information independently and structuring their responses. Students contribute willingly in lessons. They are keen to answer teachers' questions and usually offer an extended response. They listen carefully and discuss ideas well when challenged to do so by teachers' effective supplementary questions. Students of all abilities persevere when work is difficult. They naturally help each other and often refer, without prompting, to earlier work to check details or seek answers.

### Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. This is endorsed in questionnaire responses by parents, carers and students. An increasing proportion is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers set very high expectations and give students the confidence to achieve their targets. In a food technology lesson, students knew exactly what they had to do to improve their work and implemented these skills in their independent practical work. In dance, the teacher ensured accurate understanding and insisted on correct use of subject terms by all students when they evaluated each other's work. In French, the teacher challenged students to discuss vocabulary with each other, ensuring that they not only made correct choices but understood why, so that they could explain to the class later.

Teachers set clear objectives for lessons and have good subject knowledge. They use a good range of activities, including modern technology, to engage students' interest. They establish high expectations for behaviour and effort, and students respond well. As a result, they listen closely to each other and share ideas with maturity, also enjoying moments of humour or spontaneously applauding others for good work, as when presenting their writing to their tutor group. Teachers use regular paired or small group talk to ensure that students explore issues thoroughly. In the best lessons, teachers then use a full range of challenging questions to probe their understanding and extend their ideas. However, some teachers accept students' first answer without seeking more detail. Although teachers usually make clear different objectives for students aiming for different levels or grades, they do not always then adapt tasks to match students' differing abilities. Teachers' marking is generally thorough, but in some cases the guidance provided is not specific enough to help students know exactly what they have to do to improve their work.

Teachers often provide opportunities for students to practise their basic skills in other subjects, for example reading aloud or summarising discussions for others. However, teachers do not always emphasise how these skills should be used or consolidate key aspects of students' literacy or numeracy knowledge. Senior staff are aware of this and have made it a priority for improvement. Teachers have high expectations of

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disabled students and those with special educational needs. They receive effective support from other adults in class to help them make good progress. In one lesson, the teacher consciously gave a student more time to compose her thoughts so that she could answer a question correctly and in depth.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students behave very well around the school and show excellent attitudes to learning in lessons. They move around the school extremely calmly and are very polite and sensitive in their dealings with each other. They manage their behaviour exceptionally well in the busy corridors and dining area. In discussions, students were positive about behaviour and raised very few issues about it over time. The school's records indicate a low level of referrals from classes related to behaviour, and there have been no exclusions since the last inspection. Students have a mature understanding of their responsibilities and enjoy learning independently and collaboratively. They are very supportive of each other and, as a result, most are confident in speaking or presenting to their peers. A small number of parents and carers expressed concerns over disruption to lessons but inspectors found no sign of this in discussions with students, school records or observations. On occasions where students made only satisfactory progress in a lesson, their behaviour was not a contributory factor. Indeed, students often tried hard even when objectives were not clear enough or work was pitched at the wrong level. Students' attendance is high and they are punctual to school and lessons.

Students say that they feel safe and a high proportion of those parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed. Students show a good understanding of different types of bullying and say that there are few incidents. They are very clear on the difference between friendship issues and bullying. They are confident that any problems which they raise will be treated seriously by adults and resolved promptly. Several gave examples where this had been the case and one attributed her increased confidence to attendance at a group selected to help students improve their social skills and self-esteem. Relationships throughout the school, between students and with staff, are strong and positive. In lessons, it is clear that students trust adults and they often attempt work or answer questions knowing that they do not have complete understanding but are confident that teachers welcome their effort and respect their willingness to try.

### **Leadership and management**

Under the new principal, the school has a clear vision which builds on its traditional strengths while stating strongly where improvements are needed. Staff have responded positively to this new impetus and morale is high. Senior staff, with governors, evaluate performance rigorously, including students' progress against targets, and use this analysis well to identify priorities for action. Thus, a strong focus on improving achievement in English, based on increased curriculum time and a sharp focus on support and provision for students who are underachieving, has brought about better results. Since the last inspection, the number of students who

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are persistently absent has fallen well below the levels seen nationally, the sixth form has opened, achievement is improving, more teaching is outstanding, and systems for reviewing teaching are more rigorous. Advanced skills teachers are used effectively to support and train staff. All these strengths show that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of a wide range of students. The specialist subjects provide excellent opportunities for students to excel and make a strong contribution to raising standards, driving the school's improving achievement. Other subjects, including those with practical or vocational emphasis, provide good choice and opportunity for success to those students whose skills are less academic. The school provides a rich variety of experiences which extend students' spiritual, cultural and personal development, including charity work in Namibia and trips to the Holocaust centre, World War battlefields and a French restaurant. Students who are gifted or talented, disabled students and those who have special educational needs benefit from individual support and, in some cases, personalised programmes. The curriculum in the sixth form offers good choice considering its small size.

The school is very inclusive and ensures that students with a wide range of needs are equally valued and successful. Students from a range of different backgrounds get on very well together. Those who speak English as an additional language often make exceptional progress. The school is rigorous in ensuring students' safety and promotes safe behaviour through important topics in the curriculum, themed days and widespread information displayed in the school.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



20 April 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Walton Girls' High School, Grantham, NG31 7JR**

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you in lessons, meetings and at breaks. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. Your views helped us find out about the school.

Yours is a good school. Your behaviour is outstanding, and your very positive attitudes to learning help you to achieve standards that are mostly above average and to make good progress. Achievement in the sixth form is broadly average and improving. Most of the teaching you receive is good and some is outstanding. Teachers set high expectations for you and you respond well. They engage your interest and encourage you to work collaboratively and take responsibility for your learning. You benefit from a wide choice of courses in Key Stage 4, with particular strengths in the school's specialist subjects. You told us that you feel safe in school, understand what bullying is, and feel that any incidents are promptly resolved. Senior staff set a very clear direction for your school which shows in the very strong emphasis on learning and treating each other with respect.

We asked the school to improve some areas of its work. These were to:

- ensure you know exactly what you need to improve in your work and get help to improve your basic skills in all subjects
- improve the consistency with which teachers match work to your different abilities and use questions to develop your understanding.

You can help by making sure that you take note of the advice teachers give on how to improve, and try to use the guidance you receive in English and mathematics lessons to improve your work in other subjects where literacy and numeracy are involved.

We enjoyed our visit to your school and wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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