



# Monks Walk School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117536  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280110  
**Inspection dates** 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Ian Middleton LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Knightsfield
<b>School category</b>	Community		AL8 7NL
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01707322846
<b>Number on roll</b>	1260	<b>Fax number</b>	01707375080
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs.Margarie Otty
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Philip Bunn

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	17 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	280110

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Monk's Walk School is larger than average with 1239 pupils on roll including 186 students in the sixth form. It was awarded Science college status in September 2004. The school is part of the 14-19 Welwyn Garden City consortium consisting of 3 secondary schools and Oaklands College. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than the national average. Almost 90% of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language (EAL) is well below that in most schools. The school serves an area with low deprivation and high stability. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is low but rising. Attendance is average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is an improving school that knows itself well and has high hopes for pupils. Following a period when too many pupils did not fulfil their potential, pupils now make satisfactory progress, achieve standards similar to those achieved nationally and develop very well as young people. Inspectors agree with the school that the overall effectiveness is satisfactory with good features. The strategic leadership of the headteacher has proved a turning point in the school's improvement and aspirations. Senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils are given good opportunities and support to contribute to the changes necessary to sustain improvement. However, the impact of change is not yet consistent; there is too much variation in the quality of teaching, learning and achievement to say that effectiveness or value for money are better than satisfactory overall. Teaching is often thoroughly planned and the purpose clearly communicated to pupils. However, its effectiveness is dependent upon the confidence and creativity of the teacher, their ability to interest and involve pupils in their learning, or skill in analysing pupils' responses in order to modify their plans. Where inadequacies in teaching remain a small proportion of poor behaviour sometimes emerges. Several pupils and parents expressed the view that a few pupils do not behave as well as they should and impede the learning of others, although the vast majority are satisfied with lessons. The care, guidance and support provided are good and contribute to an inclusive ethos. Effective partnerships with parents and support services are established although a significant minority of parents would like more communication. Pupils feel safe and secure and most enjoy lessons and extra curricular opportunities. Academic review involving parents, pupils and teachers has started to focus on pupils' progress across subjects. However, this is not yet underpinned by regular use of pupil tracking and self-reflection across subjects to identify and address the underachievement or inadequate behaviour that remains. This is a school with the capacity for continued improvement. Since last inspected teachers and support staff have improved provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils have improved their attendance. The curriculum has broadened although Religious Education for Year 11 and sixth form will not fulfil statutory requirements until September. Science college status has started to accelerate developments in teaching and learning across the school.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

A good proportion of pupils with wide ranging ability continue into the sixth form. Satisfactory progress is evident and standards overall are broadly average although performance at AS and among girls at A level has slipped. Students' personal development is a strong feature. Inspectors agree with the school that the sixth form contains good features although the performance of students indicates that its effectiveness is satisfactory overall. Students act as very good role models; outstanding leadership skills are developed through the school council, social committees and the organisation of charity work. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Participation in

the local sixth form consortium enables a wide choice of both academic and vocational courses. Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes better. Students are guided and prepared well for their future. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The variation in standards and the progress made by different groups of students is too wide. The cost effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that teaching consistently meets the needs and engages the interest of different learners. - Ensure that underachievement and inadequate behaviour are exposed quickly and addressed effectively.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils join the school with standards typical of their age and continue to make satisfactory progress. At the end of Year 9 pupils reach expected standards in English, mathematics and science. Students perform well in information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, geography and history. Challenging targets are set and standards are rising. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher GCSE grades has improved over the past three years and is now broadly average. In 2005 the proportion achieving English and mathematics as well as higher grades in other subjects was well above average. The proportion achieving five or more graded results also increased, reflecting improvements in teaching and support for the wide ability range of pupils. However, although pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress overall, there is a small minority of pupils who do not reach their target grade, particularly girls with low prior attainment. The gap between the achievement of boys and girls is narrower than most schools; the school has accurately targeted improvements to boys' literacy skills. Pupils build effectively on their earlier strengths and continue to perform well in those subjects. Standards on entry to the sixth form are below average; the retention rate is good. Students overall make satisfactory progress, although in 2005 the pass rate at AS fell and for the past two years the performance of girls at A level was below average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The vast majority of pupils enjoy Monk's Walk School. Good relationships with teachers, support staff and other pupils contribute to a positive ethos that underpins the school's popularity. Many pupils help make the school a community by taking responsibilities seriously; through the school council pupils make decisions that contribute significantly to improvements. In some lessons pupils apply their initiative and show independence although this is inconsistent within and between year groups and subjects. However, pupils of different abilities show particularly enthusiastic attitudes towards learning that involves active participation. Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy life

style and speak with confidence about their own fitness levels and healthy eating habits. They understand and adopt safe practices and are satisfactorily equipped with the skills they need for later life. Attendance has improved and is now average; almost all pupils are punctual. The implementation of the 'behaviour for learning' policy has contributed to a significant drop in exclusions since the last inspection. However, a small but significant minority of pupils continue to behave irresponsibly; parents and pupils expressed concern about their effect on the progress of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Improvements to the personal, social and health education programme are well informed by evaluations of pupil's personal development and well-being. Most pupils show good moral understanding and social skills. Cultural development is sound. Spiritual development has improved following the last inspection although the school recognises that opportunities for pupils to develop and demonstrate self-reflection remain limited. Personal development and well-being are good in the main school and this is an outstanding feature of the sixth form.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and sixth form. Recent monitoring to improve the quality of teaching has raised staff expectations and there is some evidence to indicate that the increased focus on learning is having a positive effect. While there are many examples of good or better practice a high proportion remains satisfactory. Where inadequacies exist, lesson planning does not take enough account of the progress and behaviour of individual pupils. Most pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn, and good relationships are established quickly. Displays contribute to the positive learning environment and celebrate the enjoyment of learning but in the less successful areas they do not show pupils how to aspire to higher standards. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and learning intentions and outcomes are clearly shared with the class. The most effective teaching is challenging, using skilful questioning and a range of practical activities to interest and involve pupils. In the less successful lessons a limited range of strategies is used making teaching inflexible and learning predictable. The school library is an inviting resource that contributes well to learning across subjects. The use of ICT has improved as a tool for learning although its creative use as a teaching resource is not yet widespread. The professional development of new and established teachers and support staff is good although the school recognises the need to address individual weaknesses in marking, use of assessment data and adaptability of work to meet the needs of different abilities.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form. This is lower than the judgement of the school mainly because the legal requirement

to teach Religious Education to all pupils in every year is not met. The curriculum has a number of strengths. The main school provides very good opportunities for all learners, including the gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties, to progress and perform well. The range of courses in years 10 and 11 is well matched to individual needs through a variety of academic and vocational courses. A wide range of advanced level courses is offered through the consortium and the provision of other level courses in the sixth form is planned for September 2006 to provide a variety of suitable progression routes now that a greater proportion of students are staying on at the school. The opportunities for enrichment are varied; they include a good range of out of school clubs, visits and extended trips all of which complement the work of the school and provide very good opportunities for personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

This aspect of the school's work is good; it is an outstanding feature of the sixth form. There are good opportunities for tutors to monitor progress against academic and pastoral targets; this is particularly effective within the special needs/student support centre because of good teamwork between teachers and specialist learning support assistants. The introduction of academic review days for parents, carers, teachers and pupils provides an important opportunity to agree targets and work together to achieve them. This is most effective where departments use peer, teacher and self assessment to inform this process and enable pupils to assume specific responsibilities as an outcome. The school's student support centre supports individual pupils' transition into the school well including vulnerable pupils. Rigorous systems are in place for child protection and all teachers receive regular updated training. The impact of liaison with external agencies is carefully tracked and linked to specialist support in school; it is used effectively to secure pupils' welfare, and ensure all receive good advice on future courses and careers options.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. Pupils, parents, staff and governors recognise the impact of the headteacher on the school's improvement and this is evident in the significantly increased achievements of the school. School self-evaluation is accurate, well-informed and appropriately matched to improvement priorities. The headteacher is well supported by a remodelled senior leadership team with proven effectiveness in key areas. Governors support and challenge the school effectively through a revised structure of responsibilities. A clear view is shared about how the school needs to improve further; staff and pupils increasingly share that vision. Recent action to improve standards through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has proven effective although the school recognises that its reinforcement by middle managers remains variable. However, judicious use of staff training and new

opportunities are making a difference; the purpose of lessons is consistently clear to pupils and the school's designation as a specialist science college has already achieved some impact in promoting creative teaching and investigative learning. The 'environment' theme has provided a unifying factor that teachers and pupils across the school are committed to. Parents and the community are increasingly involved although the school accurately anticipated the views of a significant minority of parents who would like to know more. The senior leadership team rightly evaluates the improvements already made as an indication of the school's capacity for further development and innovation to drive the school's aspirations for 'excellence for all'. Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 is now good following a slow start. However, pupil tracking to identify and address underachievement does not yet make full use of available evidence and data to quicken the pace and widen the impact of improvement. Financial management is good; the school spends its money wisely through the use of best value procedures although the average achievements of pupils indicate satisfactory value for money overall.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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, through quality assurance and self-review	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 are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspectors who visited Monk's Walk School in May, I would like to thank you for introducing us to your school. We enjoyed the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in lessons and through discussions. Many of you helped us find our way around and made us feel welcome by speaking to us politely and enthusiastically on our way to and from lessons. We think that you might like to know our view of the school. What is good about your school: - you look forward to starting at Monk's Walk School and few are disappointed - your school is improving and is moving forwards - you contribute to improvements, for example through the school council - your standards of work and examination results are rising - you get on well with your teachers and most pupils support each other well - you enjoy teaching that makes learning interesting by getting you involved - you get good support if you have problems or work becomes too difficult - you appreciate activities after school and opportunities to revise with teachers. What we have asked your school to do now: - help more teachers use the approaches that help you progress best - help pupils who do not behave well enough to show more respect for others - help you to achieve the best you can by spotting and sorting problems quickly - help you to aim for even better results than those achieved before. We know that your headteacher has made a big difference to the school and that other staff work very hard to make it a school that everyone can look forward to coming to as an adult or pupil. The school has very high hopes for the future but it will need you to play your part if it is to justify the new motto 'Excellence for All'.