



# Walton High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124416  
**LEA** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 281718  
**Inspection dates** 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Sue Harrison HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	The Rise
<b>School category</b>	Community		Walton-on-the-Hill
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 0JN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 356300
<b>Number on roll</b>	1368	<b>Fax number</b>	01785 356339
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Colin C Davis
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S J Kirkham

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281718
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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**

Walton High School is a larger than average 11-19 comprehensive school, which gained specialist status in science in 2004. Levels of social deprivation in the area are low, although unemployment rates are increasing. The school has few students from minority ethnic groups and a low number whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average. The school is part of the Stafford Collegiate Partnership, which aims to provide wider curriculum opportunities for students aged 14-19. The school is a provider of adult and community education. The headteacher is on secondment and the senior deputy is currently acting headteacher.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judged that the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. It provides good value for money, and provision in the sixth form is good. The school judged its overall effectiveness to be good. In discussions, the acting headteacher and senior leadership team showed good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, although some of the latter were not clearly identified in the formal self-evaluation document, prepared before the inspection.

The strengths of the school include the achievement of above average standards in national examinations, a good curriculum and additional activities programme and good sixth form provision. Additional resources associated with specialist status have been well used to improve the learning environment in the school and work with partner schools, colleges and universities is outstanding.

Student progress, when measured against their prior attainment, is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Student progress at Key Stage 4 improved to slightly above average in 2005 but progress in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 showed a significant drop. Students' personal development and behaviour are good and attendance is above average. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall with some good features and there is good guidance and support in the sixth form. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form; in the best lessons there is careful planning to meet the needs of all students but this good practice is not shared sufficiently across the whole school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school has made progress in addressing weaknesses in quality assurance, which were identified at the last inspection. In particular, it has succeeded in reducing the disparity of achievement between different subjects, although some inconsistency remains in how rigorously departments evaluate their work. There is good capacity to improve further.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agreed with the school that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Standards reached by the students are above average and have improved steadily since the time of the last inspection. For most students this represents good progress. The school is part of a collegiate arrangement, which provides an extremely wide range of academic and vocational options, although most students who stay on in the school follow AS and A-level GCE courses. Almost all students complete their courses. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The support and guidance of students is effective and well organised, and results are analysed in detail to improve standards. Potential sixth form students are given detailed and impartial advice on the best pathways to follow and there is clear consultation with tutors and parents to select the best courses for the student. They are supported very well as they continue their studies and are expected to work hard. Students appreciate the advice they are given and feel there is a strong 'family' atmosphere. Teaching is good

but some lessons do not provide enough opportunities for independent learning. Students develop leadership skills through organising events within the school. Opportunities for employment, training and higher education are explored well and the proportion of students going on to university is very high.

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

- Ensure students reach their full potential in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3.
- Share good practice in lesson planning so that all lessons engage students' interest and cater for the full range of abilities within the group.
- Continue to increase the consistency across departments in terms of the rigour with which they monitor and evaluate their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Student achievement is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Students enter the school with above average levels of attainment. The rate of progress made by students in Year 11 improved in 2005 to slightly better than predicted against their previous achievement at Key Stage 2. The standards reached in public examinations are above the national average. GCSE results in 2005 showed 75% of students achieved five A\* to C grades. The positive impact of the school's science specialism was evident in the significantly above average results in that subject. The results of the Key Stage 3 tests at the end of Year 9 are also above the national average although performance dropped in 2005, especially in English and mathematics, where students' progress was not as good as predicted from their previous attainment. The school has analysed the reasons for this, appropriate action is being taken and there is evidence that this is leading to improvement. The performance of boys has improved in recent years and now matches that of girls. Students make good progress in the sixth form and results at advanced level are good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress during their time at the school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is above average and has been steadily rising over the last three years as a result of effective monitoring procedures. Students' attitudes to lessons are generally good. Most respond positively and enjoy their learning, particularly when teachers involve them fully in the lessons. Learners are developing good moral, social and cultural awareness through the personal and social curriculum, year group assemblies and workshops using external expertise. Spiritual development is satisfactory.

Behaviour is good and exclusions are rare. The school has recently involved students in a review of the implementation of its behaviour policy and has introduced a structured system of merits and sanctions. Most students feel safe at school and are

comfortable about approaching staff if they have any concerns. They value the student support centre where they can seek help for personal problems. A minority of parents express concerns about behaviour and bullying but, where incidents do occur, they are generally dealt with effectively.

Students are benefiting from measures introduced by the school to promote healthy lifestyles, including work within the curriculum, promotion of sports and changes to canteen menus. However, further work is needed to encourage all students to adopt a healthier diet and ensure more students in Years 10 and 11 engage in regular exercise. Students contribute well to the school community through the student council and engagement in extra-curricular activities. They show concern for others through their involvement with charities and their participation in community service in the local area, including environmental projects such as tree planting. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being through work experience and through the strong links with Connexions, although some older students feel that they could have had more information about future options earlier in their programmes.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and students' learning is satisfactory. It is good in the sixth form. Teaching in almost all lessons helps students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, to make at least satisfactory progress. In some lessons teaching is challenging and lively with very good use of interesting resources, including imaginative use of information technology. In these lessons, students are keen to learn, give their opinions with confidence and work well together. However, in other lessons, teaching lacks variety or fails to engage students actively. In these lessons, teachers sometimes talk for too long or set tasks that do not inspire students to think creatively.

In science and some other subjects, planning for lessons is very good at taking into account the learning styles of different students but this good practice is not sufficiently shared across the whole school. The relationship between students and teachers is usually good-natured and full of humour and students behave well in most lessons. Teachers assess students' work regularly and many give them helpful feedback on what they need to do to improve further but this is not consistent in all classes. Homework is well organised to give students opportunities to consolidate learning or carry out further research. However, it is not always sufficiently well adapted for those with learning difficulties.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

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

The school offers a good, broad and balanced curriculum that fully meets all national requirements and has been developed in response to the varying needs of students. A successful alternative curriculum is provided for Year 11 students who benefit from more vocationally based courses and work based experience. Aspects of the school's citizenship programme have been recognised as an example of good practice at national level. The programme is enhanced by talks from private and public employers and local politicians. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to gain skills in literacy and numeracy. There are wide ranging and extensive enrichment activities, which are popular with students. In the sixth form students have an extremely good choice of academic courses and have access to a number of vocational courses offered across the Stafford Collegiate. They also benefit from access to the adult community programme run in the school.

The science specialist status has had a positive influence in school. The accommodation and resources for science and mathematics have improved significantly. Enhanced ICT facilities are used in some subjects to support teaching and learning. The collaborative work of the school is excellent and has benefited partner schools and the wider community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of students are satisfactory in the main school with some good features, and good in the sixth form. Induction arrangements are well planned, so that students start school confidently. Younger students speak warmly of the Year 10 'buddies' who had helped them settle in. Students have access to good personal support from specialist advisors in the school and through the school's close links with external agencies. Systems for child protection are in place, but not all staff have yet received training. There are regular health and safety checks and risk assessments for all trips and extra-curricular activities. The school should, however, ensure that risk assessments are carried out in all subject areas. Academic support is satisfactory and improving. All students negotiate targets based on prior achievement and targets are generally set at an appropriate level. There are good systems in some departments to guide students' progress but this is not consistent. Parents are involved in these arrangements but the school is looking at how it can further develop communication with parents. Appropriate guidance is given to support the choice of GCSE options, but some students would appreciate this being available earlier. Students in Year 11 receive good help in choosing future courses. Advice on higher education and careers is good in the sixth form.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The acting headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school, and are aware of the areas for improvement. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Partnership working is a particular strength of the school; it has very good links with other schools and uses its specialist status well to support them where appropriate. It also has good links with local colleges, which enhance its curriculum, and it offers placements to several teacher training providers.

There is effective planning. The school development plan gives a good overview of school priorities, and departments have individual plans with clear objectives for improvement. There has been significant investment in training for teaching and non-teaching staff. One positive outcome of this is that staff have been well equipped to take on senior leadership and management responsibilities during the secondment of the headteacher. In addition, training provided through the science specialism, particularly in ICT, is beginning to have a positive effect on the teaching methods used in some subject areas.

The governors play a strong role in school as 'critical friends'. They are well informed and supportive, working particularly well to improve accommodation and ensure that the school budget is properly managed.

The school has made progress in addressing issues since the last inspection and the strategies identified by the senior leadership team to improve progress are beginning to have some effect at Key Stage 4. Self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory and are becoming more rigorous. Since the last inspection middle managers have been given greater responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments. This has reduced the disparities in the achievement of students across subjects, although some inconsistency remains. There has been an increase in consultation with students, for example a student council has been formed, which is valued by the students. Parents are generally positive about the school and the school is oversubscribed. The school is carrying out further work to develop its systems of consultation with parents. Based on the leadership team's clear awareness of issues to address, and the plans in place to achieve this, the school has good capacity to improve further.



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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
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	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	2

<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>	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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	Yes

<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**

As you know a group of inspectors recently visited your school. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us and for helping us to find our way around and giving us your views about the school. I am writing now to tell you about our findings.

We think the school provides a satisfactory quality of education overall and good provision in the sixth form. Most of you enter the school with above average results from your Key Stage 2 tests and make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11. The school achieves above average results in tests at the end of year 9 and in GCSE examinations. We think some of you could do even better, especially in English and mathematics. Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve well. You enjoy many of your lessons but we think you could be more actively involved in some of them. You are developing good personal skills and we were impressed by the politeness and good manners many of you displayed. Behaviour is generally good (even in the snow!) and most of you feel bullying does not happen often and is well dealt with. The school has developed a good curriculum that meets the needs of different students and you benefit from a wide range of activities you can join outside lessons. The adults in school give you good personal support. Your work is generally marked regularly but some of you need more help in knowing how to improve it further. Your parents are generally very supportive of the school but some feel communication could be improved; the school is aware of this and is reviewing its system. The leadership team of the school is clear about what it does well and what it can do to improve further.

We wish you every success for the future.