



# Walton High

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131396  
**LEA** Milton Keynes LEA  
**Inspection number** 282204  
**Inspection dates** 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Janet Mercer HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Fyfield Barrow
<b>School category</b>	Community		Walnut Tree
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Milton Keynes MK7 7WH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 677954
<b>Number on roll</b>	1297	<b>Fax number</b>	01908 677191
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Marilyn Moffat
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Michelle Currie

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 282204
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Walton High is a larger than average comprehensive school. Established in 1999, it has grown in size each year. Sixth form students joined in 2003 and Year 7 students attended for the first time in September 2005. Student numbers have increased from 791 in 2003-2004 to 1297 in 2005-2006. The school has specialist status in business and enterprise. Approximately 20 per cent of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the average, as is the proportion of those with special learning difficulties or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Walton High is an outstanding school which provides excellent care, support and guidance for its students and enables them to achieve high academic standards. Leadership and management have been highly effective in managing a period of significant growth and change. Self evaluation procedures are rigorous and managers and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the school's judgments on the quality of provision and the school's effectiveness. The very minor issues raised at the last inspection have been dealt with and the school improvement plan identifies clearly focussed priorities for improvement with detailed action plans for each area. Resources are deployed effectively and value for money is good. The school is the lead school in the Leading Edge partnership, working with other local schools to share good practice and raise achievement. Students' achievements are outstanding at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teaching is good overall, attendance is very good and most students behave well. The school is reviewing the curriculum to ensure that the range of courses available meets the needs and interests of all students and enables them to achieve as well as they can. Vocational and work related learning opportunities are good in business but underdeveloped in other areas. Students are very well supported with effective arrangements to help those joining the school settle in quickly. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, and are pleased with the education and support for their children. However a minority of parents have expressed concerns about the effectiveness of communications between the school and parents.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The first group of sixth form students completed their studies in 2005. The school evaluated the effectiveness of the sixth form as good, but inspectors judged that the standards reached at this early stage are satisfactory. This is because pass rates on advanced level courses were close to national averages and students made the progress expected, relative to their prior attainment. Management of the sixth form is good. Managers are effective in keeping progress and provision under review and have good capacity to ensure further improvement. As student numbers grow the range of courses has increased and plans are in place to build a new post-16 centre which will improve facilities. In the formative stage the sixth form has suffered from staffing difficulties, impacting on student achievement in some subjects. The school recognises the need to strengthen cover arrangements for absent teachers, particularly in specialist subject areas. Sixth form students speak highly of their experiences at the school and take advantage of a range of opportunities which build their skills and self confidence, including supporting younger students. They are well prepared for progression to higher education and the majority have successfully moved on to higher education, employment or training.

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

\* raise standards and achievement in the sixth form by keeping progress under review\* review the curriculum at key stage 4 to ensure that all students' needs are met and they achieve as much as they can\* increase parental involvement and strengthen two way communications between the school and parents.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement and standards in Key Stage 3 and 4 are outstanding, as indicated in the school's self evaluation. Students start school with broadly average prior attainment and achieve very well at Key Stage 3 and 4. Test results in all core subjects at Key Stage 3 have been consistently higher than the national average for the last 3 years. Students' progress between Key Stage 2 and 3 is significantly better than predicted from their prior attainment. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\*- C grades at GCSE has been well above that seen nationally for the last three years. A significantly higher than average proportion of students also gain five or more A\*-C grades, including English and maths. The majority of students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make good progress and meet challenging targets. The first group of sixth form students completed their advanced level studies in 2005. Pass rates in advanced level courses were broadly in line with national averages and students made the progress expected relative to their prior attainment. While the proportion of students achieving high grades was lower than that seen nationally, 22 per cent of students gained higher than average point scores.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students enjoy their education and work well with their teachers, as their very good attendance and punctuality indicate. They are confident and polite. Their behaviour is good overall, although in a minority of lessons it requires constant management by teachers. The proportion of students who stay in education beyond Year 11, and of those who complete their courses, is good. The majority of sixth form students progressed to higher education, employment or training. Students understand extremely well the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. A large proportion cycle or walk to school and participate in sporting activities. Healthy eating habits are promoted through consultation with students and very good canteen provision. Students report that they feel safe and that any concerns they have are dealt with effectively. They make positive contributions to the school and the wider community. The school council involves them in important decisions, including allocating a budget, and they are often involved in charitable fundraising, competitions and links with partner schools. Older students help younger ones in some lessons and through their tutor-groups. Some act as peer mediators, helping others with relationships and other concerns. The school

encourages and enables students to take on responsibilities. As one Year 11 student put it: 'We learn to lead'.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The school's own evaluation teaching is accurate and correctly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. In the best lessons teachers engage and motivate students through good subject knowledge and well planned, interesting activities. These are designed to meet the needs of all students and enable them to make a full contribution. Working relations are productive and teachers use a wide range of teaching methods giving guidance, praise and encouragement to develop students' confidence. In a minority of lessons strategies to motivate and engage students are less successful and in some, poor behaviour limits learning for the whole class. Some teachers have yet to develop a wide enough range of strategies to ensure that challenging behaviour does not impede learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used in many subject areas. The school has excellent ICT resources, including laptop computers which are often booked out by subject teachers and used in all classrooms. Students have developed appropriate skills to work in the independent learning area productively and the facility is valued by students. It is well used both within school time and after school hours. However sixth formers do not have sufficient quiet study facilities, especially those who are taking vocational courses with a heavy emphasis on course work. The whole school assessment policy ensures students' progress is monitored closely and realistic and challenging targets are set. The comments on marked work in most subjects encourage high standards and give clear guidance on targets for improvement. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. A good range of support and teaching strategies helps them to progress and individual educational learning plans are reviewed each term.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of the great majority of students throughout the school. Since it started, the school has developed a curriculum based on the idea that it should promote both 'fun and fundamentals'. It has remained true to this vision, especially through its very good range of enrichment activities. Students speak highly of the advanced learning days and the short courses pursued on Wednesday afternoons, which they enjoy. They develop good literacy and numeracy skills. A particular strength is the opportunity for older students to lead courses themselves, teaching and coaching younger ones. In this and other ways, the school encourages students to develop leadership, enterprise and business-oriented skills, laying the foundation for a successful future. A few students in Years 10 and 11 gain valuable experience out of school, by following a Fast Forward course at the local college of further education for one day

a week. However, the school does not yet provide an ideal curriculum for others who would benefit from a less academic orientation. The school is reviewing its curriculum this year and recognises that it needs to provide more vocational options for students in Years 10 and 11. The sixth form, which opened in September 2003, provides academic and vocational courses at level 3 for students with a broad ability range. The range of courses has increased as student numbers grow.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Staff provide outstanding care for students through their high level of commitment and expert guidance. Attendance and punctuality are maintained at high levels through very effective monitoring procedures. The introduction of mixed-age tutorial groups has enabled younger students to learn very well from those who are older. The arrangements for safeguarding students and assessing risks are thorough and regularly reviewed. Health and safety is promoted well throughout the school and in lessons. Students are well informed about courses in school and university choices. Careers guidance is very good, and students benefit from good opportunities for work experience in Year 10. Procedures to deal with any incidents of bullying and harassment are good and students know where they can get help and support if they need it. The school has trained 45 peer mediators who are effective in their support of other students. There is excellent pastoral support for those with difficulties, including strong arrangements for liaising with parents or carers and very good support through student services. In addition, the school liaises extremely well with outside agencies to ensure the well-being of vulnerable and challenging young people. Provision for the reintegration of students who have been out of school is good. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported through the use of teaching assistants in the classroom and alternative courses for some in Years 10 and 11.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's assessment that leadership and management are outstanding. The principal, governors and senior managers provide outstanding leadership. This has enabled students to achieve very well through a period of continuing change and expansion. Managers, governors and members of staff successfully share a vision of a school which is at the heart of the community and where every student may flourish. The priorities outlined in the school improvement plan provide a realistic list of areas for development based on a very accurate self assessment of standards. For example, the careful analysis of GCSE results has helped set priorities aimed to improve individual student's progress from KS3 to KS4. Governors meet their legal responsibilities well. They are very well informed and take on new responsibilities and initiatives with a planned approach where the needs of members

of staff and students are valued highly. The resulting excellent teamwork from all members of staff has a major impact on the excellent support, care and guidance given to all students. Thorough recruitment and induction procedures and ongoing support ensures that the many, inexperienced teachers new to the school are deployed effectively. The school is fully inclusive. Financial resources are planned well and used effectively to help the school successfully meet its aims. Accommodation has been improved well especially in relation to the library and independent learning area. It has been used imaginatively to meet increasing numbers although facilities for sixth form students, performing arts and sport in wet weather are inadequate. Resources are used effectively with the school providing good value for money. The school is popular with prospective parents. The school works hard to find out about and act on students' and parents' views. The negative perceptions of a small minority of parents are reflected in the plans to further develop opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school.



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

### 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	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
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>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	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>	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
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	1	
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**

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed visiting your school on the 7th and 8th of December. Thank you for making us feel welcome, and for talking to us, both in some of your lessons and in other groups. Many of you told us that you enjoy school and the many different activities which you take part in. Some of your parents or carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and we also took their views and concerns into account when making our judgements. We encourage you to read the report as it will let you know in more detail what your school does well and how you can help your school to be even better.

What inspectors liked about your school: \* good teaching \* excellent results in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations \* the very good progress you make in your work \* good relationships between students and between staff and students \* a good range of short courses which many of you enjoy \* excellent support from staff to help you achieve as much as you can \* outstanding leadership and management by the Principal and senior staff.

To make your school even better the school should: \* raise standards and achievement in the sixth form \* increase the range of vocational options for year 10 and 11 students \* make sure that communications between the school and your parents are effective, and \* you need to make sure that you always behave well in class so that everyone can learn as well as they can.