

# Walton-le-Dale Arts College and High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119743
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	291529
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Angela M Headon 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	605
<b>School</b>	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Geoff Woods
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tony Hill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	Brindle Road Bamber Bridge Preston Lancashire PR5 6RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 335726
<b>Fax number</b>	01772 339494

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Walton-le-Dale High School is a smaller than average sized secondary school, situated to the south-east of Preston. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is above the national average, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The majority of students are White British. The school was awarded specialist status in the arts in 2006. The school has achieved the Artsmark Silver Award and has Investors in People status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to overall achievement and standards.

At present, students enter the school with broadly average attainment and they leave with exceptionally low standards. This represents inadequate progress. The GCSE examination results in 2006 were particularly poor, following a previous decline in standards in 2005. Standards in mathematics are exceptionally low, and they are significantly below average in English. At Key Stage 3, however, there is a different picture, with an improving trend of examination success. Standards are rising with levels of attainment in mathematics and science above national figures. Between Years 7 and 9, students are now making satisfactory progress, as are all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is using a range of strategies to challenge underachievement in both key stages and the school's current data on students' attainment indicates that the challenging targets set for 2007 will be met.

In lessons the teaching was at least satisfactory. Relationships between students and staff are good and students particularly enjoy those lessons with high levels of expectation and challenge. Generally students' achievements are well assessed, but the effective marking of books and the use of homework to develop learning are inconsistent. The school's curriculum is continuing to develop, with well-considered personalised learning programmes and extended provision and opportunities through the specialist arts school status.

Students' personal development is satisfactory and they are effectively cared for and supported. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in behaviour; this is now good both in lessons and at social times. Proper procedures are in place to ensure students' safety, and students are encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle. However, despite the school's efforts, attendance is still unsatisfactory.

Leadership at all levels is now focused on raising standards and improving the outcomes for students, after a period of staffing instability. Although some staffing issues remain at middle leadership level, the headteacher and the senior team have high aspirations and are taking a wide range of actions to secure improvements. They are aware of the school's strengths and where it needs to do better. There is already evidence of success in relation to behaviour and in the improving trend of attainment at Key Stage 3. Consequently the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly at Key Stage 4, with a focus on mathematics and English.
- Improve the attendance of all learners, particularly girls in Years 10 and 11.
- Make sure that all teaching and learning is consistently good or better.
- Ensure that all senior and middle leaders are focused on coherent improvement strategies which are well coordinated and which lead to rapid improvement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Students enter the school having achieved broadly average results in their primary schools and they leave with exceptionally low standards. In 2006 levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 declined; only around a third of students gained five or more GCSE grades at C or above. Similarly fewer students than in previous years achieved five or more A\* to G pass grades. The number of students who gained one or more grades at G or above increased. Standards in mathematics are exceptionally low and they are significantly below average in English. Overall during their time at the school, students make inadequate progress.

At Key Stage 3 there is an improving trend of attainment in all core subjects. The school exceeded its targets in 2006 and students are now making satisfactory progress. Standards are rising and are now similar to national figures at Key Stage 3. Strategies to combat underachievement are in place although it is too soon to see the real impact of these.

The school is aware of these shortcomings and is using focused strategies to raise achievement levels. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's own assessment data indicates that the progress made by most students is now improving. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, make satisfactory progress and achieve well.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The majority of parents who responded to a survey reported that their children enjoy school, feel safe and are well cared for. Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and is now good in classrooms and around the school generally. This is underpinned by the good relationships between teachers and students. Exclusions have also fallen during the same period.

Students say that there are relatively few incidents of bullying and the school resolves them well. They particularly appreciate the work of the school mediator who provides support and training for the well-regarded peer mentoring and mediation programme. Membership of the effective school council also enables students to exercise responsibility on behalf of others. There is a strong commitment to charitable activity through support for a range of good causes. Consequently students' moral and social development is good.

Arts college status has also had a positive impact by raising self-confidence and self-esteem, not least through the opportunities provided to take part in public performances. Good numbers of students enjoy taking part in these activities, as well as in the wide range of extra-curricular sport which the school offers.

Students make satisfactory progress in their spiritual and cultural development and understand what is needed to sustain a healthy lifestyle.

Many students appreciate and take advantage of the opportunities provided for independent working and research in the 'personalised learning centre'. This, together with experiences gained through vocational programmes, prepares them for their future and the world of work.

Although the school has worked hard to improve attendance figures, they are still unsatisfactory. Improving attendance, particularly for girls in Key Stage 4, remains a challenge for the school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgements that overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school has put considerable effort into improving the quality of teaching, through whole-school initiatives and training and the use of expertise within the school. The impact of this approach is reflected in the improved Key Stage 3 test results. Inspection evidence also indicates strengths in Years 10 and 11.

Teachers have access to clear guidelines which set out expectations for good teaching and the school has adopted a standardised format for lesson planning. Consequently, the best lessons are characterised by high expectations, challenging tasks and incisive questioning, used to generate discussion and enjoyment. This enables students to make progress and understand their level of achievement.

However, there are some aspects of teaching and learning that are not fully developed. The wealth of assessment data is not consistently used to plan lessons which are well matched to students' abilities, particularly the higher attainers. There are also too few opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and to work independently. As a result, the school is left with a core of satisfactory teaching, elements of which are mundane.

Good relationships exist in almost all lessons, with encouragement and praise making a significant contribution to students' confidence and self-esteem. Students are motivated and well behaved and they are aware of their target levels or grades. There are examples of some outstanding marking of written work but this is not consistent across the school. The setting of homework to consolidate and extend learning is similarly inconsistent.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school provides its students with a satisfactory curriculum. It is enhanced by opportunities made available across the age range by the school's recent achievement of specialist arts college status. For example, all students in Years 7 to 9 are able to study dance and drama as well as the full range of National Curriculum subjects. At the same time, the school has embarked on an ambitious and innovative personalised learning programme. This includes the 'opening minds' project for a targeted group of average attaining students in Year 7 and the 'study plus' programme at Key Stage 4, focusing on raising attainment in English and mathematics. Recent monitoring of the effectiveness of vocational provision at Key Stage 4 has also resulted in changes which ensure that courses are better matched to the individual needs and aspirations of students.

A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided, notably in the performing arts and sport. This is appreciated by the students and attendance is good. A well-devised enrichment programme, providing opportunities for students to take part in performing arts and for some to be involved in environmental projects, also contributes to the overall quality of the curriculum. The school recognises that it needs to do more to improve citizenship, including extending opportunities for students to become more involved in the local community.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. The school knows its students well. The school is particularly effective in the support it provides for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and its most vulnerable students, particularly those in the care of the local authority. This is enhanced by the effectiveness of its working relationships with outside agencies and the quality of professional training provided for staff. The school has satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding students and child protection procedures are thorough and well understood.

In liaison with primary feeder schools, students are well prepared for transition into Year 7. They are also given advice when choosing option subjects, college courses or employment, although students feel that this could be more sharply focused.

Procedures for setting academic targets and checking students' progress are in use. Students, particularly those in Key Stage 4, appreciate the increased rigour of the relatively new arrangements which identify underachievement, leading to prompt intervention.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is establishing a sense of purpose and direction after a period of instability and considerable change due to the long-term absence of key senior and core subject leaders. With restructuring, senior leaders have lost much of their responsibility for administration and are better able to lead the drive to raise standards through improvements in teaching and learning, curriculum and student support. Good use has also been made of external support and school expertise to address whole-school issues and prepare staff for challenging new roles. Middle leaders accept that they are accountable for performance in their areas and understand the process of self-evaluation. They feel empowered and well supported in fulfilling their role. Governors are positive, committed and well informed; they understand how the school operates and provide a suitable balance of support and challenge.

Within this context, there have been improvements in Key Stage 3 examination results, students' attitudes and behaviour and a curriculum enriched by the achievement of specialist arts school status.

Systems for monitoring, evaluation and review at all levels are established and the outcomes clearly determine the priorities for improvement. However, the pace for achieving sustained improvement has been too slow. A host of well-intentioned initiatives and strategies have been introduced but are not effectively co-ordinated so that staff at all levels can contribute to a coherent programme. Actions are not always evaluated in terms of their impact on standards. Progress since the last inspection is inadequate as the school is now judged to be inadequate overall. The school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

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

Walton-le-Dale High School

Brindle Road

Bamber Bridge

Preston

Lancashire

PR5 6RN

7 March 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and listening to your views. As well as looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by your parents and carers. This proved very helpful. With your support, the school has been successful in improving both the exam results in Year 9 and the behaviour around the school. We are also aware of how pleased you are to have specialist arts status.

This is a summary of our other findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- We think your school is improving but at the moment the GCSE examination results are not good enough. For this reason we have given your school a Notice to Improve, which means it will be re-inspected in a year's time to ensure that the results are as good as they should be. You can assist in this by continuing to work hard and behave well in lessons.
- We have also asked your school to improve attendance. You can ensure this happens by supporting your school's efforts and attending regularly.
- Much of the teaching in your school is satisfactory and some is good. We have asked your school to continue its efforts to improve this, so that all teaching is good or better.
- We have also asked Mr Hill to make sure everyone clearly understands how to improve the school.

Thank you again for welcoming us. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela M Headon HMI