

# Grantham The Walton Girls' High School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120639
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313701
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Martin 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>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	714
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Alex Vowles
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs R Gulson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Harlaxton Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01476 563251
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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 Girls' High School is an oversubscribed specialist school for performing arts (from 2002) with a second specialism in vocational education (from April 2007). Students at the school come from the town of Grantham, surrounding villages and some from a greater distance. Eligibility for free school meals is lower than average but other socio-economic indicators are broadly average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and very few have a first language other than English. More students than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the proportion with statements of special educational need is around average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Walton Girls' High School provides an outstanding quality of education for its students. The personal development of the girls is exceptional; the impact of the specialism in performing arts on the school and wider community is remarkable; the achievement of students is good with some outstanding subjects. The school gives excellent value for money. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection and the school has a good capacity to keep improving in the future.

The school offers outstanding support to students on a day-to-day basis. Students' needs and interests are well known by the adults working in the school; the high level of care is greatly appreciated by parents. Alongside this support, there is a relentless expectation of the highest possible standards of behaviour, involvement and academic and wider achievement. This produces a striking 'can do' philosophy that permeates everything that the school does. As a result, students are articulate, lively, cooperative, creative and genuinely interested in their learning.

The school fosters very well students' growing maturity and intellectual curiosity. The outstanding curriculum is very well matched to students' needs and interests, with a growing vocational element and wide range of choices. The enrichment of the curriculum, particularly through performing arts specialist areas, and also through sport and a wide range of visits and visitors, is impressive. There is an extensive range of performance and other activities available, many of which feature in the school website. Teaching is good and is often outstanding, particularly in specialist areas. The majority of lessons are interesting, challenging and offer opportunities for the development of students' independent learning and thinking skills. The school is aware that there are some inconsistencies in teaching, but no teaching is unsatisfactory. Students' academic progress is at least good as they move through the school due to the good and outstanding provision. Standards, while broadly average overall, are improving. GCSE 5 A\*-C results were significantly above the national average in 2007. Students who enter the school with lower levels of achievement and those requiring additional support make particularly good progress. Achievement in specialist subjects is outstanding.

The excellent outcomes for students result from outstanding leadership that is decisive, energetic and thoughtful. The headteacher is relentless in her pursuit of the school vision, ably supported by a talented senior leadership team. Many other key staff carry out their responsibilities with verve and creative skill. The school plans carefully for further development and actions taken always lead to significant improvement and even better opportunities for students. Although regular and thorough, the monitoring of classrooms does not focus with sufficient precision on the aspects of outstanding practice that it wishes to promote and disseminate.

Governors are well informed and involved. They are supportive and highly visible in the school community. Discussions with students and responses from parents confirm the strengths found by the inspection team. Those involved with the school cannot speak highly enough of the contribution that the school plays within the community. Most importantly, they all recognise that the school produces active, mature citizens who are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of their learning and future lives.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the regular monitoring of classrooms with a particular focus on effective learning, in order to increase the proportion of good and better teaching and disseminate the best practice more widely.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the school is a little below average, and significantly fewer students than nationally enter with higher levels of attainment.

The progress made by students by the end of Year 9 is good. It is particularly good in English due to recent initiatives to raise standards. As a result, standards reached at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory overall. Results at the highest levels in mathematics and science were lower than average, reflecting the ability of students on intake.

Attainment at Key Stage 4 is good with outstanding elements. GCSE 5 A\*-C results increased steeply from 2005–2007, from significantly below to significantly above national averages. GCSE 5 A\*-C results that include English and mathematics have also improved, but remain below average for girls. The great majority of students achieve at least to their potential and most exceed their targets. The progress made by students by the time they leave the school is good overall and shows an improving trend. Progress is outstanding in some subject areas, particularly the specialist subjects.

The school exceeded ambitious targets for all key stage tests and examinations in 2007. There was evidence of outstanding success against targets in specialist subject areas. Students entering at lower levels of prior attainment and those receiving additional support again make particularly good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They respect and celebrate the beliefs of other faiths and are well aware of the different cultural traditions in Britain and globally. Students thoroughly enjoy school. They relate extremely well to adults and to one another, and their behaviour is excellent. They leave the school as mature and confident young people; as a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of education and adult life.

A particular strength of the provision is students' awareness of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. They have successfully promoted initiatives to improve the quality of food available in school, and most engage in the many sporting activities available to them. The high levels of participation and enjoyment are reflected in the well-above average levels of attendance achieved in recent years. Students participate well in the life of the local community, particularly through the performing arts faculty. They also support charities, make visits and work with others to improve the local environment. Students feel safe and adopt good practices in lessons and around the school. Bullying is rare and they are confident to seek adult support when needed. The school promotes issues such as drug abuse effectively through the curriculum, in the personal education programme and through support agencies. Preparation for their future economic well-being is good, particularly in developing strong team working and communication skills.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The majority of the teaching in the school is good or better and none is unsatisfactory. Students have excellent attitudes to learning and appreciate the many lessons where they are given opportunities to be active participants and independent learners. In the minority of lessons that are satisfactory, there is often too much teacher talk and a slower pace. The better lessons are clear about learning objectives; teachers plan work that challenges students of all abilities and engages their curiosity. Teachers are now using the much-improved information and communication technology (ICT) facilities more effectively; particularly the interactive whiteboards, but students would like even more access to computers across the curriculum. The school is increasingly engaging students in understanding how they learn through the gifted and talented programme. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly, but this could be even more rigorous. Some school judgements appear to be a little generous and are not as helpful as they might be in identifying aspects of best practice. The school supports well those students who need particular help or have disabilities, as their good progress indicates. Teaching assistants play an important role in the school and are an integral part of the planning and delivery of lessons.

Assessment, a weakness at the last inspection, has improved considerably. Teachers have access to a wide range of information about the performance of students and use it effectively to plan lessons. Students are aware of their levels or grades and expectations of students are very high. Marking, although excellent in some cases, is inconsistent. It does not always help them to understand the next steps in improving their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the needs of students very well and is instrumental in developing their outstanding enjoyment in learning. Students follow a broad and balanced curriculum that has improved since the last inspection with the introduction of vocational courses and provision for ICT. Through working closely with the local college, students have greater opportunities to take up young apprenticeships. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets National Curriculum requirements and students in Key Stage 4 choose from a good range of options for a school of this size. Provision for personal, health, social and citizenship education is outstanding and contributes very effectively to students' excellent personal development and well-being.

A wide range of activities ensures that students have an excellent understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives. Work-related learning is delivered to all students through core subject lessons, the careers education and guidance programme, enterprise activities and work experience. These ensure that students are clear about the options open to them post-16 and results in nearly all going on to further education. The outstanding impact of the school's specialist performing arts status is evident in improved resources, in developing students' confidence and self-esteem through performance, and in exceptional links with the wider community. Visitors as well as visits, both at home and abroad, extend classroom experiences and widen students' horizons.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The school operates as a purposeful family community with a sense of belonging and care for one another. Pastoral care is excellent because teachers and support staff use an effective range of checks to keep track of students' personal and emotional well-being and respond promptly to their needs. Students with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers, learning mentors and outside agencies, leading them to make good progress in their studies and personal development. Students are kind to one another and staff are good at sorting out any problems that arise. There are rigorous arrangements for safeguarding students. Checks for the suitability of staff and staff training are thorough, up-to-date and meet current requirements.

Teachers set targets to monitor and, through generally supportive marking and regular dialogue, ensure that students understand how to improve and are well motivated to succeed. Observation and assessment lead to early diagnosis of students whose progress may be slowing and the school is quick to respond by putting measures in place to support them.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the further development of the school. Senior colleagues ably support her in its implementation. The school provides an environment in which students thrive and standards of attainment are good. The innovative and carefully structured approach to the school's specialist status as a performing arts college permeates the entire curriculum, enhancing greatly the experience of every student and enabling each to realise her potential to the full. The high quality of this experience also enriches the wider community through effective links with primary schools and other institutions.

The school plans its development carefully, so that impact on the school is positive. Recently it has been successful in acquiring a second specialism in vocational subjects and already benefits are evident in teaching and learning in a number of subjects. Plans for developing the new sixth form are well under way. Issues arising from the previous inspection have been resolved successfully.

Finances are managed skilfully. The accommodation is well maintained and there is careful planning for the further development of buildings and other resources. Problems arising from the current cramped accommodation for performing arts will shortly be partly resolved by new building.

The school is well supported by a range of outside agencies. Strong links with other schools and colleges in the area further enhance the range of opportunities for girls as they move to the next stage of their education. Governors are effective in challenging and supporting the school. They give generously of their time in regular visits to linked departments.

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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	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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

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

<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>	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	No

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

13 March 2008

Dear Students

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

The inspection team that visited your school recently had a thoroughly enjoyable two days watching you working and talking with you about life at the school. I am now writing to tell you what we found on our visit.

You are fortunate to attend an outstanding school. We know from the things you told us that you believe the school to be special; responses from your parents show that they also agreed. There are so many good things about the school that it is impossible to list them all! Here are some of the main strengths that we found.

- All adults working in the school look after your care and well-being very well.
- The school has very high expectations of your conduct and achievements.
- You receive good teaching, some of which is inspirational.
- Teachers track your progress very carefully and provide extra help, support and encouragement when it is required.
- You achieve well and often very well, meeting your targets and regularly exceeding them! Results at GCSE in 2007 improved to above the national average.
- The school gives you many opportunities to take responsibility; you are rewarded for good work and effort.
- You have a good choice of subjects and excellent preparation for your future as learners and young adults. You keep fit and eat healthily.
- The many additional activities that you enjoy are quite exceptional, particularly in the performing arts.
- You make a valuable contribution to your school and wider community.
- The adults who manage your school outstandingly well always have your best interests at heart.

You play your part in the success of the school by taking part enthusiastically in all that the school has to offer. You are enquiring, interested learners who have excellent attitudes to your work. Your growing maturity as you move through the school is a credit to your parents and the school, and above all to yourselves.

Even the best schools can improve! We have asked the senior staff to identify carefully the things that make the best lessons so good and to find ways to share this amongst the staff, so that all lessons are challenging and exciting.

We would like to offer each one of you every success in the future.

David Martin

Her Majesty's Inspector