

Inspection of Walton Academy

Harlaxton Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 7JR

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils understand Walton's core values to be 'ready, respectful and responsible'. Most pupils aim to demonstrate these values in daily school life. Pupils enjoy coming to school and value the education they receive. They benefit from the dedication of staff and leaders. Pupils know that their teachers want them to do well and they feel well supported.

Pupils learn in a welcoming and orderly environment. They behave well. Pupils report that bullying does not happen often, but, if it does, staff deal with it quickly. They know that staff work hard to keep them safe and look after them. Pupils know that there are many people to whom they can turn if they have a concern.

Pupils can participate in the wide range of activities available. These include the football club, chess club and performing arts club. Pupils can become members of the school council, and there is a wide range of ambassador roles available for them, including sports, kindness and eco ambassador roles. These opportunities enable pupils to develop leadership skills and confidence.

A high-quality careers education prepares pupils well for their next steps. They are well informed about future opportunities for education, training and employment.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those in the sixth form. The school meets the requirements of the national curriculum. There is a strong focus on ensuring that pupils are ready for their next steps.

Curriculum plans are well structured. Pupils learn new knowledge in a logical order and build on what they already know. For example, in some of the English lessons we visited, they were reviewing prior knowledge of Shakespeare. Pupils achieve well.

Most teachers use assessment well, either to check that pupils remember important knowledge, or to embed knowledge. Teachers use retrieval tasks, questioning, low stakes testing, starter activities and quick recall. However, sometimes, they do not always ensure that assessments identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Most teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. They have strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subjects they teach. Teachers present information clearly and choose activities that help pupils to learn. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, teachers do not match the work they set well enough to pupils' ability and their prior knowledge.

Leaders quickly identify the pupils who have fallen behind in reading. They ensure that pupils get help to read with speed and fluency. Staff encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Leaders have introduced a communication strategy that includes a focus on pupils' communication skills around reading, oracy and numeracy. One new approach to support this is reading in tutor time. This is still in the early stages of implementation in the classroom.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that pupils with SEND can access the same ambitious curriculum as everyone else. They identify these pupils' needs and provide teachers with the detailed information they require to support these pupils in their learning. Pupils with SEND do not miss out on learning as a result.

Students enjoy their sixth-form experience. The curriculum in the sixth form allows students to study courses that meet their interests. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and provide supportive feedback. Students enjoy positive relationships with their teachers. They are proud of their school and would recommend the sixth form to others. There are many opportunities for students in the sixth form to volunteer their time to help others. For example, many students mentor younger pupils and provide support with extra-curricular activities. Sixth-form students are well prepared for future success.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils know how to look after their physical and mental health. Relationships and sex education is detailed. The careers programme is of a good quality, and the pupils spoke positively about these lessons to inspectors. However, the curriculum needs developing in some areas to make sure that British values and other faiths and cultures are taught explicitly and remembered by pupils.

Governance is strong. The governors and trustees are knowledgeable and hold leaders to account effectively. They also provide effective support and challenge. Staff are proud and motivated to work at this school. They agree that leaders take workload into account when developing and implementing policies.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive high-quality training in safeguarding and regular updates from experienced safeguarding leaders. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concerns. Leaders keep accurate records. They use this information to ensure that pupils get the help they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The personal development programme is not yet fully planned or properly sequenced to enable pupils to know more and remember more. Not all pupils have a clear understanding of British values and do not remember content taught to them about other faiths and cultures. Leaders should ensure that a well-planned, effectively sequenced programme of personal development enables pupils to be fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Some teachers do not always ensure that the content being taught is set at the right level for all pupils in the lesson. When this is the case, pupils can be doing work that is too easy for them, or complete work quickly, so that they are waiting for more work to be provided. Teachers should ensure that the content is ambitious and well matched to pupils' needs, to ensure that pupils achieve the curriculum aims.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136624
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10211954
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	948
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	109
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Quigley
Principal	Jessica Leonard
Website	www.walton-ac.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Diverse Academies Trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, science, art and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited a range of lessons in other subjects. For these subjects, they checked the work pupils had produced in lessons and spoke to pupils in the class.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for behaviour, personal development and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. She reviewed a range of documents and the single central record.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and some trustees.
- Inspectors observed pupils around the school at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Dawn Ashbolt, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Roche	Ofsted Inspector
Imtiaz Patel	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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