

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Walton High School

The Rise, Walton-on-the-Hill, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 0LJ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

Outcome

Walton High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Andrew Leese. The school is part of the Walton Multi-Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Neil Finlay, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Benjamin Rowell.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a lively school. Pupils are happy here and attend often. Leaders pay a great deal of attention to pupils' safety and well-being. Because of this, pupils feel safe here. They build strong positive relationships with their peers and, increasingly, pupils treat one another with the kindness and respect that leaders expect.

Behaviour across the school has improved a great deal in recent years. The school has put a great deal of thought and effort into making this happen. A calm and focused environment typifies the school. In most lessons, pupils focus on their learning and take pride in their work. Teachers are quick to challenge pupils when they fail to meet leaders' expectations. Pupils who struggle to behave are well supported. Pupils are comfortable turning to staff for help if they need it.

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum that spans well beyond the academic. Increasingly, pupils achieve well. Pupils gain a sound understanding of their social and moral responsibilities while here. For example, many students in the sixth form act as mentors, providing support and guidance to younger pupils, while some older pupils in key stage 4 run sessions for younger pupils, aimed at promoting their physical health.

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

The school has undergone a period of transformation in recent years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been significant turbulence in the leadership of the school. This has settled now. Leaders are quickly re-establishing a positive culture of excellence across the school. Staff are well supported to make the changes needed.

The school has revitalised the academic curriculum. The things pupils learn are ordered well so that when they encounter new learning, this builds successfully on what they already know. This helps pupils to remember what they have been taught. In most lessons, including in the sixth form, teachers check on pupils' learning well. They spot gaps in knowledge quickly and adapt their teaching to make sure pupils have understood everything they ought to. However, in some lessons, this is less consistent. Where this happens, gaps in pupils' knowledge are missed, and misconceptions persist. This holds pupils back.

In most lessons, teachers push pupils to tackle challenging concepts. Most pupils do so with enthusiasm and make strong progress. However, the work given to pupils does not always take account of their prior learning and, at times, lacks ambition. In addition, when pupils do not produce their best work, this is not always challenged. Consequently, some pupils do not demonstrate positive attitudes to learning within lessons, and do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported here. The school works closely with a range of external agencies to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' individual needs. Teachers use this information well to adapt their teaching. Pupils with SEND make strong progress toward their individual goals while here.

Leaders are nurturing a positive culture of reading across the school. Increasingly, pupils, including those in the sixth form, engage with a broad range of challenging texts within their lessons. Pupils with gaps in their reading knowledge are identified quickly and effective interventions are put in place. This work is helping these pupils to develop their ability and confidence to read.

The school's work to develop pupils' personal development is impressive. For example, students in the sixth form recently ran a shadow election, in which all pupils learned about the democratic process, discussed pertinent issues, and cast their votes. Experiences such as these are helping to shape pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. There is a broad range of opportunities for pupils to develop their passions outside of the classroom. Pupils, including those with SEND, regularly benefit from a range of clubs, such as debating society, and various sports clubs. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive high-quality information about the world of work.

Since the return from the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has worked smartly to provide targeted support to those pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour. This is helping these pupils to re-engage with their learning. Complementing this, staff work closely with families and external agencies to understand and overcome the barriers to good

attendance. Leaders rapidly re-engage pupils in their education when necessary. The school's work to improve pupils' attendance is notable.

The recent shift in the culture across the school has been profound. Leaders have quickly re-established a calm and nurturing environment, where pupils increasingly strive to achieve their best. While the most recently published outcomes do not yet reflect this, this work is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, assessment is not used precisely enough to identify the next steps that pupils need to take in their learning. As a result, teaching is not always precisely planned and delivered to move pupils on in their learning, and they do not achieve as well as they might. The school should refine the way in which pupils' learning is assessed in order to maximise their progress over time.
- Some staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, some teachers do not give pupils the work that they need in order to make the progress they should. The school should ensure that all staff share their high expectations, provide pupils with challenging work and insist that all pupils always produce their best work.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Walton High School, to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2012.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142987
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10344084
Type of school	Secondary
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	1267
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Benjamin Rowell
CEO of the trust	Neil Finlay
Headteacher	Andrew Leese
Website	www.waltonstaffs.com
Dates of previous inspection	8 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Walton High School is one of two secondary schools that comprise the Walton Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school makes use of two unregistered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- An inspector met with the CEO and other members of the trust.
- An inspector met with three members of the local governing body (LGB), including the chair of the LGB.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils at social times and in formal meetings.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the views expressed through the staff survey.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing responses, including free-text responses, submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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