

# The Grove Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122385
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	380462
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Michele Crichton

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	37
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	5
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Laurence Pearson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 July 2009
<b>School address</b>	Grove Gardens Tweedmouth Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2EN
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Michele Crichton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. All five classes and teaching staff were observed during the inspection. Three joint lesson observations were carried out by the lead inspector and members of the senior school staff. Visits were made to the after-school club and to the breakfast club. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and analysed 32 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff. She observed the school's work, and looked at a number of the school's documentation relating to self-evaluation, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the quality of teaching.

## Information about the school

This is a small school for pupils with a very wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. All have a statement of special educational needs reflecting the severity and profundity of their difficulties. Many pupils have additional complex difficulties, often relating to autistic spectrum disorders. There are more than twice as many boys as girls. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and the vast majority speaks English as their main language. Nearly half the pupils are supported through Northumberland's or Scottish Borders Children with Disabilities Team, with varying degrees of respite care. Pupils are admitted from a wide catchment area at varying times in their school lives. The few pupils admitted to the Early Years Foundation Stage typically have profound and multiple learning difficulties that have been identified at birth. Almost a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are additional clubs, including the breakfast club and after-school care that are managed by the governing body.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of children</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of children</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- The Grove is a good school. It has improved well in the last three years. The pupils, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Achievement is good across the school from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form. For a small number of pupils it is outstanding. The sixth form is good.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. The pupils, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about behaviour and safety in the Grove. Pupils' behaviour is typically excellent in response to the very clear and high expectations of staff. As a result, learning is good and pupils are highly adept in managing their own behaviour and conduct.
- Teaching is at least good in each key stage and is sometimes outstanding. The staff team work exceptionally well together. They are highly knowledgeable. Pupils are known as individuals. Any additional support that pupils require is of good quality and pupils make good progress. Thorough and accurate assessment helps teachers to meet pupils' individual needs well. However, occasionally in lessons pupils' targets are not well focused on the immediate and next steps in learning.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governing body know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Professional development is a strong focus within the school. The good curriculum and pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins good teaching and promotes positive outcomes for pupils. Since its last inspection, the school has maintained or enhanced its range of accreditations available to pupils. The school works effectively with a range of agencies.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the systems for assessing pupils' progress by providing clearer targets for pupils to help focus their learning in lessons.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' cognitive ability in the school is such that attainment, including in reading, is unlikely ever to rise above 'low' if compared to national benchmarks for most pupils. Consequently, it is more apt for the judgement of their achievement to be based on an evaluation of pupils' learning and progress relative to their starting points and the assessment measures used within the school. Pupils' progress from their individual starting points is good and achievement is good across the school. For some individuals progress and achievement are outstanding. Evidence of these can be found in all key stages and in all subjects, from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form. This positive achievement is accomplished through good quality teaching. For example, in an outstanding science lesson, the teachers' very high quality skills in questioning and subject knowledge developed pupils' thinking and listening skills, extended vocabulary and ensured pupils persisted with a task. Additionally, in a mathematics lesson good use of interesting and fun resources enable pupils to explore shapes and patterns, develop three-dimensional awareness, take turns and cooperate with each other.

Pupils make good progress in developing academic skills, such as reading, writing, communication and mathematics but also in their personal development skills, such as confidence, self-management and decision making. Due to the very wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities within the school, highly flexible provision enables individual programmes of learning, well matched to pupils' needs, to take place. For example, these may be in the form of GCSE subjects, extended sensory awareness programmes or structured activities to develop reading skills. Progress in reading is good for those pupils for whom it is most applicable. Pupils say they enjoy reading and know they are improving. Older students in the sixth form appropriately use their good reading skills to continue on to the next stage of their education. Communication is a focus for all pupils and this is promoted at every opportunity in formal lessons or more social situations at lunch time.

Parents and carers comment on their delight with the school and the good progress their children make with typical comments such as, 'There are excellent teachers and assistants. My child enjoys attending school and has made good progress. It is such a wonderful school where all staff are willing to go the extra mile'. Additionally, 'Our son loves school and even wants to go during the holidays'.

### Quality of teaching

Parents and carers hold an accurate view on the good quality of teaching within the school. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding across all key stages. For example, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy painting

using different colours and textures. They learn about contrast, concentration skills and communication. Equally, in a good sixth form business skills lesson, students were kept focused and on task due to the excellent relationships with staff, good knowledge of the individual person and the well-adapted curriculum. This can be seen in business enterprise sessions where students' plan, make and market goods and apply literacy and numeracy knowledge in context.

A cohesive staff team works very well together to meet all pupils' need. Strengths across the team include a clear focus on improving pupils' communication and independence, effective behaviour management techniques, strong expertise in child development and secure knowledge of each individual pupil as a person. Skilled questioning techniques were frequently observed in the majority of lessons. While there are many accurate and helpful procedures for assessing pupils' progress that accurately inform teachers' planning, it is sometimes unclear how this information links together to provide clear learning targets for pupils. For some pupils this limits their understanding of their targets. The teaching environments are bright and enjoyable places in which to learn. Best use is made of the available space throughout the school. A range of specialist equipment is adeptly used by staff to ensure pupils make the best possible progress they can. For example, imaginative and fun 'light works' sessions take place to stimulate pupils' sensory awareness, develop coordination and their communication abilities.

The good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities are evident in pupils' positive learning attitudes, their good cooperation across different year groups and their understanding of their responsibilities both in school and in the world beyond. The good curriculum is personalised and bespoke to the individual needs of each pupil. It ensures the promotion of both academic and personal skills to ensure the individual makes the best progress they can.

## **Behaviour and safety of children**

Pupils' behaviour was judged as outstanding at the previous inspection and has remained so typically over time. Evidence to support this can be seen in the views of parents and carers who are highly positive about behaviour and safety. The pupils say overwhelmingly that they feel safe in school and that adults are always there for them if they have any concerns. The curriculum supports pupils' outstanding behaviour and safety with key emphases on self-management and how to keep safe. A strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural ethos permeates the school and is supported and demonstrated by all staff. A focus on positive behaviour is reflected in the many rewards and commendations the pupils achieve.

The quality of relationships within the school is exceptional. All staff are consistent in their expectations of behaviour. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with highly effectively, learning for other pupils is not disrupted and calm and focused learning returns again quickly. Pupils themselves make an outstanding contribution to a safe, positive learning environment. They behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. They readily help and support younger pupils, for example, without prompts from adults. They are highly tolerant, considerate and supportive of each other. Although figures are influenced by the small number of pupils who have acute medical conditions, for the vast majority of pupils, attendance is above average

Incidences of bullying are rare and parents, carers and pupils express utter confidence in the school's systems for dealing with such occurrences. No pupil has been excluded during the history of the school.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are keenly focused on school improvement. The area for improvement identified at the last inspection is successfully met, the school has developed well and there is good capacity for this to continue. This is demonstrated by good quality planning and documentation clearly setting out what has already been achieved and where there is still more work to do. For example, in 2010, sixth form provision was extended to create a business and enterprise group. It focuses on ensuring both relevant academic achievement and developing life skills for the students who enter this stage of learning. Additionally, senior teaching staff have recently developed a reading and writing programme to use with mainstream school partners for the benefit of pupils with early literacy and communication skills. Both of these initiatives are embedding and developing well.

The impact of professional development is evident in the extensive knowledge that staff have and their adept skills at promoting learning for all pupils regardless of their need. This maintains and demonstrates a strong commitment to equal opportunities. The curriculum is good throughout the school with a range of age appropriate activities and resources to make learning fun, interesting and relevant. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is also good. Carefully crafted learning takes place for each pupil providing a wealth of learning experiences, through visits to museums, art galleries, parks and sporting activities. Parents and carers, for example, readily acknowledge this and praise the quality of the extended provision the school offers indicating that pupils 'benefit immensely from after school clubs and all the activities that the school offers'.

Very good partnership work with parents, carers and external agencies promote the good achievement of pupils. This can be seen in extensive and highly personalised programmes of learning that each pupil follows. Leaders and managers ensure that the tackling of discrimination in school is good. A strong commitment to the individual lies at the heart of the school's ethos. All pupils are carefully and individually monitored to ensure that there is no discrimination and all pupils achieve and progress equally positively. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes ( see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 January 2012

Dear Pupils,

**Inspection of The Grove Special School, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 2EN**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. It was lovely to meet and talk with you. You told me many things about your school such as about what you have learned and about the many good things that go on all the time. You also told me about how safe you felt in school and what pupils do to help each other throughout the school. It was very clear from our discussions and the questionnaire replies I received from you, and from your parents and carers, that you are happy at school, and feel that you are safe and cared for well. There are lots of good things in your school, good progress, good teaching and the leaders and managers who run the school are also good. I thought your behaviour was outstanding.

Your teachers have a lot of information about the progress you make. Sometimes it is not clear how this all fits together so that you know exactly how well you are learning or what you are specifically learning in each of your lessons. I have asked your teachers to make a better system.

I know that you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future. I must also say thank you to all those pupils I heard read.

Yours sincerely

Michele Crichton  
Lead Inspector

