

Grange School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109735
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	377973
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Declan McCarthy

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Isabelle Hay
Headteacher	Iain Davidson
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy

Additional inspector

Karin Heap

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Parts of 26 lessons were observed and 15 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with staff, three members of the governing body, and a local authority representative. Telephone discussions took place with five parents and carers and informal meetings were held with three groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including: safeguarding policies; the school improvement plan; the school's data for tracking pupils' progress; and samples of pupils' work. Questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and 32 parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

Grange School caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and various degrees of autism. It specialises in cognition and learning. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are more boys than girls. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and none speaks English as an additional language. A few pupils are looked after children. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Currently, there are no pupils at Key Stage 1 and much larger proportions at Key Stages 3 and 4 than at Key Stage 2. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes. The roll has fallen by a third and an increasing number of those pupils referred have more complex needs, such as challenging behaviour and severe autism. The school's outreach service no longer exists, although it continues to provide specialist support to other schools when requested. The leadership team has been restructured: a new headteacher took up post shortly after the last inspection and a new manager for secondary autism has recently been appointed. The school is subject to local authority re-organisation proposals.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It enables pupils to achieve well as a result of good teaching and good leadership and management. It is not outstanding because there is some variation in achievement and in teaching, especially in mathematics.
- Achievement is good and pupils make good progress over time. At Key Stage 2, they make good progress in reading and this leads to good achievement in reading over time. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. At Key Stage 4, most pupils make outstanding progress towards their examination courses. Although achievement in mathematics is good across the school, it is not as good as in reading and writing.
- Teaching is good overall but varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are brisk and lively. Work is generally well matched to pupils' abilities. However, teachers do not always develop pupils' understanding of technical vocabulary, particularly in mathematics. As a result, pupils occasionally fail to fully understand new concepts. Opportunities to use and apply mathematics across different subjects, especially in the newly introduced creative curriculum in the primary department, are not as well developed as they are for promoting literacy and information and communication technology. There is also some inconsistency in marking in mathematics.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are courteous and polite, and behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and say that there are few incidents of bullying. Some pupils with more challenging behaviour make outstanding improvement in their behaviour.
- Leadership and management are good. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly through effective performance management systems and supported by good training opportunities. Leaders also share good practice across the school. Consequently, this has led to increased expertise in teaching and, particularly, in the management of challenging behaviours.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - focusing on the development of mathematical language in the teaching of mathematics to support the learning of new concepts
 - ensuring greater consistency in marking pupils' work so that they always know how to improve their learning
 - developing more opportunities to use and apply mathematics in different subjects and activities
 - ensuring that leaders check planning and pupils' work to ensure that this is happening.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils at Key Stages 2 and 3 make good progress, given their starting points. Older pupils make outstanding progress in a wider range of examination courses provided since the last inspection, including GCSE, diploma courses, BTEC, Foundation Skills, Entry Level Certificates and Unit Awards. Progress in reading is good over time and a few pupils make outstanding progress. This is because the school has implemented a new approach to the teaching of phonics (sounds and letters); reading and writing are taught together to good effect and reading is given high priority. This was seen in an English lesson, where Year 11 pupils made good use of information and communication technology to produce well-illustrated books for primary-aged pupils and listened to them read. Both primary pupils and those in Year 11 made outstanding progress. Equally, a few pupils at Key Stage 3 with autism, who were following a structured programme of phonics, used their knowledge of blending very successfully in reading new longer words with three syllables. Pupils with more complex needs make good and sometimes outstanding progress because highly skilled teaching assistants adapt approaches and materials to meet their needs and continuously check and record small yet significant gains in progress.

Although progress in mathematics over time is good, it is not as good as in English. This is because the development of new mathematical language and concepts is not consistent and there are fewer opportunities to promote the use and application of mathematics in different subjects and activities. Pupils make good progress in computer skills as a result of increased opportunities to use information and communication technology in lessons and activities.

Parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress. Some said that their children were making outstanding progress and a few said that their children were not making as much progress in mathematics. Inspection findings indicate that learning in lessons is good and sometimes outstanding. When they leave school, most pupils enter further education, employment or training.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. All teachers have secure subject knowledge, lessons are brisk and lively and staff usually make good use of a range of resources. Highly-skilled teaching assistants enhance the quality of teaching through strong teamwork with teachers in lessons. Staff provide continuous feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Marking usually informs pupils of how to improve their work but this is not always the case in mathematics. Teachers generally make good use of challenging questions to extend pupils' thinking, although on occasions there are missed opportunities, particularly in mathematics. For example, pupils' work in Year 9 showed that average- and higher-ability pupils are too often given the same tasks. This means that more-able pupils are not extended sufficiently. Teachers are implementing the new creative curriculum in the primary department well which promotes the use of basic skills strongly, although mathematics is less well promoted. Teachers are skilful in teaching reading and in using phonics to develop reading, writing and spelling.

Pupils are generally given enough homework to consolidate or extend their learning, although not as much in mathematics as in English. Pupils say that teaching is good and teachers usually help them when they are stuck. Parents and carers agree that teaching is good and that teachers provide excellent care and support for their children. Teachers make good use of their detailed knowledge of pupils' prior learning to plan sequences of lessons which build skills, knowledge and understanding systematically.

The curriculum promotes literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well, although there are fewer planned opportunities to promote the use and application of mathematics in different subjects and activities. This was particularly evident in lesson planning where key vocabulary and the use of computers were highlighted but very few opportunities were provided to promote numeracy. Through the effective implementation of the curriculum, teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This was seen in the many opportunities provided for pupils to reflect on their learning, to collaborate with others or to work independently.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are good. Parents and carers believe that behaviour is good and that their children are safe in school. Pupils also said that behaviour is usually good and that they feel safe in school. Parents, carers and pupils agreed that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils' good behaviour, their above-average attendance and good punctuality reflect their positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is always good and occasionally outstanding. A significant number of pupils with challenging behaviour on admission make outstanding progress in their behaviour and are able to re-engage with learning. This was seen in the outstanding progress a few pupils made in reading as a result of their rapid improvement in behaviour. There are few exclusions and few incidents where physical restraint has been used. Pupils respond well to the consistent management of behaviour in lessons. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and racist and sexist name

calling. They recognise and manage potential risks well and play safely in the playground. They use the internet safely and use specialist equipment with care in lessons.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders complement each other well in providing a strong direction for school improvement to which all staff and members of the governing body aspire. Good monitoring of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, and the involvement of leaders and the governing body in reviewing and evaluating the work of the school, mean that improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school demonstrates good capacity to improve further. The issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed: the teaching of reading has improved; there are more opportunities to promote literacy and information and communication technology across subjects; and the primary curriculum is now based on themes which greatly enthuse pupils' learning. The governing body monitors the school's work well and ensures that statutory requirements, including for safeguarding, are met. The school tackles any form of discrimination well and promotes tolerance and respect. Pupils' achievement is good and equal opportunities are promoted well. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups, although pupils are not achieving in mathematics as well as they are in English. Leaders have focused their attention on the development of reading and writing skills and the use of information and communication technology. They have identified clear priorities for developing mathematics and the need for greater consistency in the use of technical vocabulary to support pupils' understanding of new concepts. However, they have not yet monitored the impact of these across the school.

The school provides a good curriculum, with a newly developed primary curriculum based on termly themes and a wide range of examination courses tailored to individual aptitudes and abilities at Key Stage 4. A wide range of visits, visitors and schools clubs, including residential visits enrich learning. The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through personal social and health education and topics, such as the study of different climates and geological features such as volcanoes throughout the world. Provision for pupils with autism is developing well. The recent introduction of coffee mornings for parents and carers of pupils with autism provides them with opportunities to exchange information and support one another. Strong partnerships with other schools, such as those within the Kempston Education Trust, are enabling the school to promote effective practice in other schools. Equally strong partnerships with multi-professional agencies are considerably enhancing the quality of care and support for those pupils with the most severe and complex needs or whose circumstances make them most vulnerable.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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).

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 pupils' 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.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grange School, Bedford, MK42 8AU

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were impressed with your good attendance and your good attitudes to learning. I was also very impressed with the way the oldest pupils helped the younger ones with reading. Thank you for sharing your views with us. We agree with you and your parents and carers that yours is a good school. Here are some of the best things we found out about your school.

- You are making good progress, especially in reading and in examination courses.
- Teaching is good and teachers make sure lessons are lively and interesting for you.
- You stay safe in school and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- You are kind and care for each other.
- Your school is managed well and all the staff and members of the governing body want to make it even better.

I have asked the school to help you to do as well in mathematics as you are doing in reading by helping you to understand the language of mathematics. I also want you to know how to improve your mathematics when your work is marked and to have more opportunities to use mathematics in different activities. I have asked your school leaders to check on how well this develops.

Keep on doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Lead inspector

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