

Grove Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124032
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359566
Inspection dates	14–15 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Samantha Craig
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola McIntyre
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 16 lessons and observed 11 teachers. The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including school and subject development plans, teachers' lesson plans, assessment and tracking evidence and a large sample of pupils' workbooks. In addition, 53 parental, 99 pupil and 32 staff responses from questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement of higher-ability pupils to determine whether teaching is challenging enough.
- How effectively information is used from assessments to set individual targets for pupils to improve their own learning.
- How effectively leaders and managers have implemented their vision for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average junior school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is a little below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number with statements of special educational needs.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It provides a caring, supportive environment whose pupils say that learning is fun and that they feel safe and very well cared for. It has continued to improve since the last inspection, retaining and improving its strengths in pupils' personal development and improving the rate of progress in pupils' academic work. Standards have risen from being significantly below average in 2008 to being overall securely average in 2010 and a little above average in English. Pupils now achieve well and have very positive attitudes to their work. Typical comments in the pupils' questionnaires were: 'I enjoy school because I love learning' and 'number work is fun'.

Teaching is good and some lessons are outstanding. Most lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers challenge pupils to do the best they can and pupils enjoy the responsibility of choosing which level of challenge to aim for. Just occasionally the pace is slower because teachers have not planned sufficiently well and work is less well matched to the individual needs of the class. The marking of pupils' work varies between teachers. Some is excellent and gives pupils very clear advice on how to improve their work and rigorously ensures that all pupils make good progress. Pupils also have many opportunities to assess their own work and that of their friends.

Pupils do well because the good teaching is also enhanced by a stimulating and exciting curriculum that finds ways to broaden their horizons. Displays around the school are stunning. A striking example of the creative curriculum is the Narnia room which is a spare classroom currently decorated as an enchanted snowy forest complete with trees, lamp-posts, twinkling lights, a sleigh and, of course, a wardrobe. The room is a stimulus for creative writing and the quality of work the pupils have produced is excellent. In the summer term the room will be transformed into a beach; last term it was the 'horror room'. The safety, happiness and well-being of every pupil are at the heart of the school. Well-organised arrangements for pupils' care and support lead to their good progress and development of effective social skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable thrive in this school and make good progress.

Outstanding leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher has been key to the school's success. A strong sense of united purpose drives things forward and management is good across the school with all subject leaders playing a major role in developing and carefully checking the quality of work in their areas. The governing body is enthusiastic and committed to helping the school in its drive for improvement but many members are new to the role and, as yet, governors do not take a fully active part in checking the school's work and holding it to account.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to that of the best by ensuring that:
 - pupils are set work that always closely matches their differing abilities
 - the best practice seen in marking and assessment is used consistently across the school.
- Strengthen the governing body's ability to monitor and challenge the school's performance by:
 - providing training and development opportunities for governors to improve their confidence in carrying out their role
 - ensuring governors are fully involved in checking the impact of the actions taken to improve achievement and strengthen provision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They enjoy being challenged and respond well to the high expectations of their teachers. They maintain good levels of interest and many are good independent learners. In an outstanding mathematics lesson pupils were engrossed in working out co-ordinates on a Narnia map. High quality classroom management and good relationships ensure that pupils are keen to succeed, behave well and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are enabled to take a full part in all lessons. All pupils become confident and secure and willing to risk answers even when it is partly a guess. Pupils work well, independently, in pairs or in groups and support each other well. Across the school pupils make good progress from their different starting points that vary from average to below average. Standards have improved in all subject areas and the school has been particularly successful in improving writing. An increasing proportion of pupils are now reaching the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics.

Pupils are clear that they feel safe in school and that there is little or no bullying. If there is, they know which adults to go to and are confident that help is available. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living through the curriculum and their engagement in sport. They enjoy competing for the 'giant banana' award given to the class which has the best record of healthy eating each week. The school has recently installed a fitness suite complete with rowing and running machines and exercise bikes to be used by pupils, parents and staff in a drive to achieve even greater fitness. Pupils are proud of the fact that the school has just submitted a portfolio of evidence in order to gain the healthy school award. Pupils enjoy taking on a range of responsibilities such as being prefects, head boy and girl, members of the school council, taking the 'hot seat' in lessons, entertaining senior citizens and raising money for different charities. They have links with local special schools and a school in Uganda. Pupils are aware of other cultures through work in the curriculum which includes 'multi faith day' when members of different races and religions visit school to talk about their lives and beliefs. The school has two pet rabbits and selected pupils take good care of them, even accompanying them on visits to the vet. Attendance is above average, partly as a result of the school's strong promotion of attendance and partly because pupils enjoy school. A good attitude to work and good social skills ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In good and better lessons, teachers use good subject knowledge to generate pupils' interest and enthusiasm and ensure they are engaged, motivated and enjoy their work. The pace is brisk, activities are often timed and pupils rise to the challenge of working 'against the clock'. The school has its own system which allows pupils to choose whether to aim for platinum, gold, silver or bronze levels of attainment and teachers usually guide pupils sensitively to choose the right level of challenge. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support different groups and ensure that all pupils make good progress. In the small minority of satisfactory lessons the pace is slower, planning is less structured so that learning is less well matched to individual pupils' needs and as a result, behaviour sometimes deteriorates as pupils lose interest. Assessment and marking are good overall; some marking is outstanding but this is inconsistent across all classes.

The curriculum is good. Pupils enjoy a broad, balanced and creative curriculum enhanced with memorable experiences such as the Narnia room'. The curriculum supports the effective development of pupils' academic skills, their good social skills, ability to communicate, teamwork and independence. The curriculum is designed to enhance pupils' aspirations and encourage them to aim high. Planning is good and all actions are rigorously evaluated to plan for further creativity and achievement. There is a wide range

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of activities on offer for all pupils including sports, music, traditional games, knitting, sewing and gardening.

A wide range of targeted support helps to remove some significant barriers to learning. The school works very effectively with external agencies to support pupils' attendance, behaviour and emotional development. The school can identify many examples of ways in which it has helped vulnerable pupils and has had a positive impact on their learning, progress and personal development. The home–school link worker offers particularly successful support to pupils, parents and carers. Transition arrangements into school in Year 3 and on to high schools after Year 6 are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clear determination and drive to improve the school is successful because it is shared by all involved in decision making, including staff, governors and pupils. All are committed to sustaining improvement and moving the school to outstanding. The school predicts pupils' attainment accurately and meets its challenging targets because it has a rigorous tracking system and sets high expectations. Teachers of every class know they are accountable for the progress made by the pupils in their care. Subject leaders play a significant leadership role in their subject areas, providing training for colleagues and monitoring the quality of progress and the standards achieved. Lesson planning and the delivery of lessons are rigorously checked to constantly improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding arrangements are good; training is regular and up to date. The site is well managed and safe. The headteacher and business manager play a strong role in ensuring that all safety requirements are met. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors take their lead from the headteacher. The chair of governors provides strong support but other governors are not yet sufficiently experienced to challenge the school academically and to hold it to account. Partnerships with local businesses, academic institutions, medical and social services are well used to enrich pupils' experience and ensure their safety. Relationships with homes and families are dealt with sensitively and the school has put in a lot of work to develop and improve its relationship with parents. A home–school link worker provides courses for parents, regular newsletters and helps to keep parents informed about what is going on in school. The school recently achieved recognition for the quality of its work with parents and carers by gaining the Leading Partnership Parent Award. The school promotes equal opportunities well through its good provision for different groups, notably those with special educational

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needs and/or disabilities and those who are able and talented. Community cohesion is well promoted because the school has an accurate understanding of its own community and good links with national and international organisations in France and Uganda. Action planning is regularly updated and the school evaluates the quality of its work in this area.

Based on what has been achieved since the last inspection in terms of rising standards, better teaching and good provision in all areas, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Relatively few parents responded to the questionnaire. Inspectors' findings agree with the large majority of those who expressed positive views about the school. Parents were happy that their children enjoy school and said that it had improved considerably in the last few years. Many said that they felt well informed about what is happening in school. A small minority expressed concern about the recent disruption caused by closing the school because of snow. The school accepts that this is never an easy decision and always causes difficulties for parents but the decision was made for safety reasons. Two parents wondered whether there was enough challenge for higher attaining pupils and two felt that children with special educational needs might not have enough support. The inspection team found that all groups of pupils were making good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grove Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 289 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	30	35	66	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	45	28	53	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	26	30	57	6	11	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	21	33	62	7	13	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	14	26	32	60	4	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	21	30	57	8	15	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	34	31	58	0	0	3	6
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	28	30	57	2	4	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	21	34	64	5	9	3	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	28	32	60	3	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	19	30	57	5	9	5	9
The school is led and managed effectively	14	26	28	53	2	4	7	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	32	27	51	6	11	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



16 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grove Junior School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 2NL

Thank you for making my colleagues and I so welcome when we visited you in school in the last week of term. I really enjoyed listening to some of your acting and singing in the Christmas concerts. I am sorry your Christmas party had to be postponed but I am sure you enjoyed it later in the week. We enjoyed meeting you and reading your comments on the questionnaires.

Grove is a good school. You are making good progress and achieving well. You told us how much you enjoy school and how you feel safe. We were impressed by your behaviour during lessons and as you move around the school, even during the excitement of concerts and the last week of term. You receive good teaching and a creative curriculum and this is why you are doing well. Your teachers set high expectations and you respond to the challenge.

Your school is well organised and well led by the headteacher and her team. They are always looking to see how they can improve the school for you. In order to help the school improve we have asked the headteacher to make sure that all lessons are good by ensuring that you always have work which is set at the right level for you and to make sure that the marking of your work is really good in every class. We have asked that the governors should receive some training to help them to support the school and challenge it to do even better.

I wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw

Lead inspector

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