

Grove Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114688
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	357586
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Marshall

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Edwards
Headteacher	Peter Swan
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
School address	Church Road Crowborough TN6 1BN
Telephone number	01892 663018
Fax number	01892 653170
Email address	office@grove-park.e-sussex.sch.uk

Age group	3–19
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Inspection number	357586

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eighteen lessons and 12 different teachers were observed. Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers, teaching and support staff, governors, parents and carers and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, provision for those pupils having special educational needs and/or disabilities, and minutes of governing body meetings. In addition, 38 questionnaires from parents and carers, 33 staff questionnaires and 31 pupil questionnaires were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's assessment and tracking procedures in planning for individual pupils' needs.
- The impact of the school's provision on pupils' personal development and its safeguarding procedures.
- The school's monitoring procedures to enable all teaching to be as good as possible and enhance outcomes for all pupils and raise achievement.
- How the curriculum and additional activities meet individual needs and contribute to the development of workplace and other skills.
- In the light of recent changes, how successfully leaders and managers at all levels are enabling continuity and improvement.

Information about the school

Grove Park School is located on three separate sites within a two-mile radius, according to the three phases of education – primary, secondary and sixth form. The secondary and sixth form sites are co-located with its mainstream partner school. The school caters for pupils with the full range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, medical difficulties, and specific learning difficulties including hearing and visual difficulties. Many of the pupils have complex needs; for instance, 5% are registered blind.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low. Girls make up only a third of the school roll. The school has pupils from a wide range of backgrounds, a fifth of whom are known to be eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection, pupil numbers have risen in the school by 40% across all ages.

The school holds the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark Awards.

In the summer of 2010, the headteacher resigned. A temporary acting headteacher from the partner co-located mainstream secondary school was appointed initially until Easter 2011 and latterly, with the appointment of a new head of school to start in September, in a substantive capacity as executive head.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this good, and improving, school, because they trust the staff who they say are always 'there for us'. Grove Park School also has a number of considerable strengths. The acting headteacher, with the senior leaders' very effective support, has initiated many changes since the beginning of the academic year that have transformed a number of its practices. All know the school's strengths well and the school's view of itself is accurate. Its track record of constantly seeking to improve, for example through the development of personalised assessment systems and the very effective monitoring of teaching, shows that it has a good capacity to continue improving.

Teaching is consistent, and seldom less than good. Teachers plan carefully to meet the individual needs of pupils and they deploy the many additional adults in the classroom expertly so that all pupils can flourish at a level that is appropriate for them. The school has developed a detailed range of assessment data so that the pupils' progress across a variety of complex needs can be systematically demonstrated. There is good recording, clear target setting and reviews are completed in a timely fashion with the involvement of both education and care staff. The secondary department's and sixth form's focus on appropriate external accreditation is promoting equality of access to the next stage of education at college or in training. This is an area that staff are constantly focused on so that all pupils are enabled to find their appropriate place in the world on leaving school.

As a result of the carefully constructed individual learning programmes and exemplary care, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy positive and supportive relationships with staff members. The school has a strong emphasis on the implementation of thorough and practical behaviour plans. As a result, the behaviour of pupils improves considerably, particularly the behaviour of those with autistic spectrum conditions. Given the number of medical conditions some pupils have, their attendance overall is good. The range of therapy support currently in place is well deployed, but, as the school is aware, does not always adequately meet the needs of some pupils, particularly those in the lower part of the school.

Good relationships exist between staff and the majority of parents and carers of pupils. Most parents and carers hold the school in high regard and commented positively on the improvements in the last few months, and the care shown by all staff. Many parents and carers agreed with the sentiments of one who said, 'Really pleased with the school and glad my daughter is so happy there.' However, there are some parents and carers who, despite the newsletters and updates, feel that they are not being kept fully in the picture about what is happening in the school and, in particular, with regard to the current leadership position and the question of co-location. The school agrees that it must address this issue of communication with urgency.

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

The school has improved considerably since the last monitoring inspection and there is now a clear vision for the school that leaders effectively translate into reality. The work of the parents and carers in the Grove Park Association is effective and much appreciated by the school. The school's careful audit of community cohesion clearly illustrates how much they achieve in preparing pupils for the outside world. Links with the local community are very good, and pupils' awareness of, and preparation for, living and working in a culturally diverse United Kingdom are developed well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order that pupils make as much progress as possible, considering their multiple learning needs, ensure that they receive the appropriate type and level of therapy in all parts of the school.
- Make strenuous efforts to remedy the confusion over the future, and the current leadership, felt by some parents and carers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment on entry is very low compared with other learners of the same age because of their special educational and complex needs. From day one, pupils participate well in all learning activities. Observations of lessons during the inspection confirmed that, throughout the school, all groups of pupils make good progress. It was impressive to observe, in almost all lessons, very good behaviour and the skills pupils acquire in working independently or with their classmates. This helps to create the good climate for learning that was evident in all classes. The good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes is firmly based on meeting individual pupils' needs, whenever possible, and sharing best practice. This is built on very well in the older classes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The pupils make consistent progress with their life skills as the individualised curriculum provides an extensive range of opportunities to develop them, for example through off-site visits and visitors to school. Pupils respond extremely well to encouragement to maintain a healthy lifestyle in relation to diet, exercise and emotional development. This has resulted in the school's Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Pupils develop a high level of self-esteem and dignity due to the excellent relationships they have with adults and the sensitive way in which their needs are met, such as when medical support is provided.

Within the context of the pupils' needs, they make a good contribution to their own and the wider community through fundraising, work experience and community activity in their coursework. The work in the award-winning school garden in the secondary unit is particularly noteworthy. Careful planning also ensures pupils concentrate on literacy and mathematics across the school, which helps their development of basic skills to enhance their future economic well-being.

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

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	
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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

As all lesson observations showed, careful planning enables all pupils to make good progress. All staff work together highly cohesively as a team. The work of teaching assistants is very good and they give careful and sensitive support to pupils in lessons. Lessons are always conducted in a peaceful and industrious atmosphere and learning moves on at a fast pace. Teachers always give clear instructions and explanations and make particularly good use of signs and symbols to involve pupils and to make their meaning clear.

An outstanding science lesson with the Year 7 and 8 pupils was a good example of how effective many lessons are. The session began with the teacher focusing on different materials and what constituted a fair test. Every pupil was involved at his or her own level of ability. This moved on, without stopping, to the aims of the lesson and pupils' individual targets. The results that emerged were remarkable. The level of excitement and involvement was very high.

The carefully constructed curriculum ensures inclusion is central to all planning. Creativity across all aspects promotes pupils' enjoyment and their improving communication skills. The artwork on display around the school, and in pupils' own 'learning journey' folders, is very good. Staff ensure older pupils' individual interests are harnessed, to raise self-

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

esteem, independence and confidence, so improving learning. The curriculum gives emphasis to everyday skills such as communication, empathy for others and working together, as demonstrated in the sixth form cooking lessons and pupils' purchasing of materials at a local shop. Links with the wider community are very well developed. Good provision is available both on the school site and from the school accessing the resources of the wider community.

Pupils are given countless opportunities to express their opinions and they have the means to communicate so any issues or concerns they may have can be addressed through various channels. Pupils' views and opinions are valued and are used to effect change around the school.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive and ambition of the management under the rigorous leadership of the acting headteacher has moved the school forward in an exceptional way in the last two terms. In particular, the partnership with the very effective deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers ensures that changes are now being embedded and a real sense of urgency to continue to improve has become established. Staff are focused relentlessly on further improvement and work brilliantly together and everyone, including the administrative team and support staff, are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned. As one staff member said, reflecting the views of all, 'I thoroughly enjoy working at Grove Park and feel very valued as a member of staff.'

The school now knows itself very well and sets the right targets to become even better. Documentation is thorough and the evaluation of the school's work is honest and accurate. The reorganised governing body is fully involved in this process, challenging decisions and requesting explanations where necessary. It holds the school to account in a challenging but supportive manner. Its focus on further establishing the co-location with the mainstream secondary school is enabling the school to thrive in all directions.

Very careful attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure good levels of safety and the highest quality of care. There are, for example, very good procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. Pupils' safety and well-being are paramount at all times, ensuring that the school is a very safe and supportive place to be. The senior managers, supported well by all staff, are effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination for all pupils across all aspects of the school's work, demonstrated by their action to improve all aspects of teaching as their first priority. The contribution the school makes to community

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

cohesion is good. A plan and clear actions are in place for promoting pupils' understanding from local, national and global perspectives.

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	2
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start to their education in the Reception class. The huge level of commitment and care shown by all the staff is evident in the way that all children settle into the school so well, and enjoy every moment they are there. Home visits and many meetings enable the staff, children and their families to get to know each other and help make sure that starting school is a happy event. These visits lead to the full involvement of parents and carers that continues right through the school.

Staff know the children very well and they ensure that they all receive provision that is appropriate to their needs and therefore they all progress well. The sessions led by the visiting therapists showed just how much the children can progress when their needs are fully met. The training that staff have received enables them to make a level of therapy available whenever it is required. However, as they have carefully assessed, the use of trained therapists at times is what these children need, and this is not always available. All children are given every chance to determine their own way forward, which guarantees their full involvement in all activities.

Children make good progress and achieve well, especially in communication skills, and in their personal, social and emotional development. Adults have high expectations, provide very clear routines and enable children to build strong, positive relationships. At all times, the class teachers engage and stimulate the children. The way the children joined in singing, watered plants to grow 'food in 1945' for their healthy eating, or chose how many times to answer a question were particularly noteworthy. The classrooms and role-play rooms are stimulating and resources are used well as children move from one activity to

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

another. The outside area provides the same exciting level of challenge and stimulation, especially for the more mobile children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Through their excellent practice, members of the sixth form department prepare their students for an active and involved adult life. Their co-located premises are increasingly giving their students opportunities to expand their horizons and take opportunities for learning. The outstanding personalised, curriculum meets the students' diverse range of needs and abilities exceptionally well. All aspects are carefully planned and varied, with the many experiences required to move the students towards being independent adults. The way in which one boy was enabled to cope with his particular problems during the inspection by playing the piano in the way he had learned alongside the sixth form leader was particularly impressive.

The quality and variety of the activities and leisure pursuits promote the students' independence skills and self-confidence. Excellent provision is available to enable students to access the resources in the wider community. Staff know all the students well and are clear about their individual needs and the steps to take to enhance personal growth.

The sixth form department is outstandingly well led and managed and provides a more adult environment, where the students can learn to cope with their futures during later college life. The fact that so many students move onto college placements shows how successful they are. Nothing is ever too much trouble and the way that resources have been improved since the last inspection has meant that the students have made even better progress since then. This shows the staff's high level of commitment and the sixth form's outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

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

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents or carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team were happy with the school and the education their children receive. They consider that in the last few months, their children's education has improved. They feel that the school has a dedicated team of staff and that the acting headteacher leads and manages the school well. They feel that the school has a very warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere and the majority feel their children make good progress. Inspection evidence supports these views. Inspection findings did not confirm the views of a few parents and carers who feel the school does not help them to support their children's progress, and does not have effective management in place. Inspection evidence showed that the school has tried very hard to reassure parents and help them as much as they are able, but clearly this is not yet being fully effective. These criticisms, and all other comments, were shared and discussed with the acting headteacher and senior staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grove Park 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 86 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	58	15	39	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	61	12	32	1	3	1	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	61	13	34	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	32	19	50	4	11	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	16	42	19	50	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	37	17	45	6	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	32	24	63	0	0	1	3
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)	14	37	12	32	2	5	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	34	20	53	3	8	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	39	16	42	3	8	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	47	17	45	2	5	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	11	29	16	42	7	18	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	37	21	55	1	3	2	5

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grove Park School, Crowborough TN6 1BN

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently. We did enjoy our visit. Yours is a good school, and we agree with what you told us it is a really fun place to learn. Here is a list of some of the things that we think are really good.

- The school looks after you very carefully and you all achieve well by the time you leave.
- You behave well, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- You often have very good ideas about how to make things better and you have a good understanding of how to live healthily.
- You find lessons interesting and really enjoy school.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do, in school, on visits and in clubs.
- The headteacher and staff manage the school very well.

Even in good schools, there are some things that can be made better, and we have asked your teachers to make sure that no matter which class you are in, you are given the best possible support from therapists whenever possible. Also, some of your parents and carers said they are not too happy with the information they receive from the school about who is managing the school now and what the future will bring. We have asked the headteacher and staff to do as much as they can to make sure they are happy with all the school is doing for you.

Finally, we would like to thank you once again for all your help. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.