

Lord Grey School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110531
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	363766
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1424
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Madeleine Carrington
Headteacher	Tracey Jones
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
School address	Rickley Lane Bletchley , Milton Keynes Milton Keynes MK3 6EW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in parts of 52 lessons taught by 52 teachers, some of which were observed jointly with senior staff. They scrutinised students' books, held discussions with senior and middle leaders, with other staff, representatives from the local authority and with members of the governing body. Inspectors held telephone discussions with the school's advisor. They talked to four groups of students formally and with many others in lessons and around the school. They observed students at breaks and at lunchtime, attended two assemblies and observed other activities. The inspection team scrutinised school documentation, including governing body minutes, school development plans, assessment records, documents relating to safeguarding and school monitoring, and attendance data. They analysed 249 parents' and carers' questionnaires and those from staff and students.

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

- The impact and sustainability of recent management actions on improving teaching, raising attainment and creating achievement which is at least satisfactory.
- The development of students' personal competence as learners and whether they play their part in improving their own progress.
- The accuracy and reliability of staff assessment of standards and progress.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average school, with about a fifth of its population coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion from families known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, with most of these needs relating to moderate learning difficulties. The school's first specialism in modern languages was recently re-designated and the second specialism is in humanities, comprising English, drama and citizenship. When results fell below the government's floor targets in 2009, the school moved into the National Challenge programme, but moved out after better results in 2010. The school has had significant support from the National Challenge advisor, now retained as an independent advisor, from other local schools and from the local authority. After a three-year period with an interim headteacher, the new headteacher took up her post in September 2009. At its previous inspection in 2010 the school was given a notice to improve progress and aspects of teaching and learning. Several recent appointments to the senior team have included a new deputy headteacher, a business manager and an inclusion manager. There has been considerable staff turnover recently and difficult recruitment to some departments has incurred the need for supply teachers, but staffing is now stabilising. At the time of inspection, most Year 11 and Year 13 students were on flexible leave fitting round their examinations. The school works in partnership with Leon School and others for post-16 provision.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Lord Grey is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly and which already has many good features, including the effectiveness of the sixth form. The positive impact of changes, some of which had just begun at the time of the previous inspection, is now clearly evident in all aspects of school life. The new headteacher's strong drive and determination to provide equal opportunities for all individuals to achieve their best, has inspired students and staff alike. The recent track record of improvements in the quality of teaching and to the curriculum has halted previously weak performance. Together with effective self-evaluation this shows that senior leaders and governors provide strong strategic direction and good capacity to improve the school further. Students enjoy the higher expectations placed on them, so attendance is above average, punctuality good and behaviour in many, though not all lessons, is good. These strengths, together with good teamwork, cooperation and a familiarity with modern languages through the school's first specialism, are useful personal attributes which prepare students well for working life. Students' independence and competence as learners have increased and many speak proudly of the improvements in the school in the last two years.

Extensive investment in good quality staff development has been very successful and staff have responded with alacrity to opportunities which have improved their practice.

Assessment is now reliable and accurate, for instance, because of good training. While good practice exists in some teachers' marking, the school has correctly identified that it does not always give good guidance for improvement. Staffing difficulties in science have led to declining performance, but while this has begun to improve, achievement and performance remain weaker than in English or mathematics.

Current outcomes demonstrate satisfactory teaching, although the majority observed was good or better. This is the main reason for better standards among current year groups and results from the hard work of staff, governors, school advisors and students which has created an ethos of pride in performance and success. This picture is not quite consistent though, and a significant strength lies in senior staff's incisive self-assessment and accurate judgements of where teaching is weaker. Despite good support, a small minority of teaching does not promote satisfactory learning. With weaker staff, behaviour can deteriorate, partly because sensible, fair school procedures, which students themselves respect, are not implemented well enough. However, the proportion of good and outstanding practice has increased, providing very good models for others. Some departments, such as information and communication technology (ICT), have also developed procedures which could usefully be shared more widely. Shrewd recruitment is strengthening subjects such as science.

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Academic standards have risen, so current Year 11 students are meeting their challenging targets and standards are on track for broadly average results this year. Achievement is accelerating across the school and Year 10 students are on track for much better outcomes. This improved progress is not always fully understood by parents and carers, and the school recognises the need to make consultation and information about achievement more accessible and useful. A significantly improved curriculum now provides good opportunities to study a range of courses which greatly enhance students' chances of better achievement. Other positive influences include good progress tracking. This feeds useful information into pastoral and tutorial procedures, enabling staff to provide good quality care, guidance and well-focused support interventions to maintain and improve students' progress. Good safeguarding procedures lead to students feeling very safe and well able to learn.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the trajectory of improved attainment and achievement in all subjects, but particularly in science.
- Draw on existing good practice in the school to improve the consistency of teaching by:
 - improving the guidance for improvement which teachers provide through written marking
 - widening the use of effective practices, such as systems which involve students in assessment as exemplified in ICT
 - ensuring that all staff use the school's behaviour management systems consistently well.
- Strengthen partnerships with parents and carers, particularly in transmitting information about students' progress through:
 - reviewing the nature of parents' and carers' consultation with staff
 - simplifying and clarifying reports.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The school had begun to reverse students' underachievement and low standards in 2010, but much better provision is now improving outcomes rapidly for those of all abilities. Attainment is broadly average from generally average starting points, which reflects satisfactory achievement, with no groups now underachieving. Year 11 students have made particularly good progress this year. Outstanding achievement was observed in a range of subjects and in personal, health and social education. These examples showed excellent progress by students in lessons because of improved teaching of a curriculum well matched to students' needs. In Year 8 drama lessons, for instance, students of all abilities and backgrounds responded outstandingly well to teachers' very high expectations of behaviour and concentration. This led to excellent discussions and subsequent perceptive physical interpretations of a range of emotional issues in their texts. In Year 10

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personal, health and social education, excellent relationships with the teacher produced extremely mature, sensitive responses in a sex education lesson. Students respectfully shared ideas in discussions and learning was excellent. These lessons, together with good tutorial lessons in mixed-age groups, have significantly improved students' personal development, independence and spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Students understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles, with many opportunities provided through a strong physical education department. Extensive modern languages provision gives students good insight into a range of cultures, for instance some were eagerly anticipating the imminent return visit of a group of Chinese students and teachers who recently hosted them in their own school.

In a Year 10 revision lesson in mathematics, good planning, the effective use of new technology and the teacher's constant checking for understanding created outstanding progress. By contrast, another Year 10 mathematics lesson lacked additional adult support for less-able students to keep them on track and motivated. Behaviour deteriorated and learning was weak. In most other lessons, such help is targeted well and helps achievement. A Year 9 ICT lesson about databases showed students using the department's highly effective assessment procedures with enthusiasm, generating outstanding learning and excellent enjoyment. Occasionally, as in a Year 9 science lesson about polymers, more-able students are not challenged sufficiently, although this group is mostly making satisfactory progress now. In this lesson, other factors such as inadequate marking and weak planning led to unsatisfactory progress.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory but remains variable. Senior staff recognise inconsistencies and students, parents and carers accurately identify examples of weaker practice. Outstanding teaching is recognised and celebrated and a culture of sharing good practice is developing. The number of supply staff is reducing as the school strengthens.

Well focused staff training has resulted in accurate assessments which form the basis of good tracking of individuals' and groups' achievements. Staff spot trends quickly and apply interventions and well-focused guidance if progress flags. Recent curriculum changes have provided a good range of options and courses to suit students' various needs, with further good planning for developments next year and beyond. Different pathways allow more-able students to achieve breadth and depth of study, with options for slower learners to consolidate progress over a longer period. Participation in the rich extra-curricular programme in sports, arts, languages and other activities is good, enhancing students' leadership skills, independence and competence as learners. Students greatly appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive from tutors and others in their houses and mixed-age tutor groups, changes which they feel have improved their enjoyment of school. Good support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities means that they achieve satisfactorily and increased challenge for the most able is leading to their achieving the higher grades of which they are capable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Staff and students correctly identify good leadership and management since the arrival of the new headteacher as the key factor in the school's successful improvement. An openness to advice and help from many partners including the school's previous National Challenge advisor and the local authority typifies an ethos of listening and learning. Senior staff acknowledge, for instance, that parents' and carers' responses to recent changes in reports and consultation procedures require review. Good management of teaching has led to very positive staff morale and a similar refreshingly open willingness to learn from opportunities to develop and improve. This is also reflected in good governance, with governors strongly determined to make this school better still through their challenge and support. Managers' energies have properly focused on putting right internal matters initially, with successful emphasis on creating equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. However, strong recognition that next steps involve improving satisfactory aspects such as community cohesion and students' wider involvement in the community, reflects much thoughtful, realistic planning for future development. The specialisms,

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particularly languages, promote community involvement well as part of designation, resulting in good impact on partner primary schools' language teaching, but such provision is not yet consistent across all departments. Improved equality of opportunity for all students, particularly through the curriculum for the more able, further demonstrates the capacity to sustain improvements. Strong safeguarding procedures include good improvements to premises' security.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Improvement since the previous inspection has resulted in good, well-managed provision in the sixth form. This leads to strong personal and academic outcomes for students from relatively low starting points. The two schools have worked out effective partnership arrangements very carefully, maximising good curriculum opportunities at different levels and using each school's staffing and resources to good effect. The 'joint' head of sixth form works in each school for part of the week and strong teamwork enables other leaders at Lord Grey to manage the sixth form effectively in her absence. This school provides most of the AS/A2 level courses, with students transferring from Leon School for these, and Lord Grey students to Leon for others. Despite some reservations before they transfer, students integrate very harmoniously, enjoy good social experiences and speak highly of their post-16 life. They appreciate their good teaching and the good quality care, guidance and support they receive from staff, particularly the regular advice about their progress and achievements, including emails and 'alerts' if they fall behind. Year 12 students play an important part in the vertical tutor groups, providing a mature role model for younger ones. Students now achieve well in the sixth form and progress is accelerating. Predictions for current students show no variation between groups, and results are on track to match the national expectations this year. Staff are enthusiastically

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planning for the implications and challenges which higher standards on entry from Year 11 will bring as the main school improves.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

From a relatively low return, the large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires were positive about the school's provision and outcomes for their children. Several commented appreciatively on recent improvement since the new headteacher took up post. A very high proportion feel that the school keeps their children safe and the highest proportion of negative views related to students' progress. This reflects the school's recent position as needing to improve progress, and inspectors spent most time investigating this. The team judges that achievement is accelerating quickly and students now make satisfactory progress. Linked to this were several concerns about the ways in which information about progress is transmitted to parents and carers, which inspectors also investigated. The school has agreed to review the nature and style of parents' evenings, subsequent opportunities for parents and carers to attend subject clinics and the ways in which reports are presented. A few commented on the inconsistency of teachers' management of unsatisfactory behaviour. Inspectors agree and have included this in the areas for further improvement. Such instances are increasingly rare, but issues have been identified by the school and staff training is ongoing. Inspectors are satisfied that senior staff are managing this properly. The need for supply cover, where behaviour management can be an issue, is reducing as the school strengthens its staffing. A very small minority mentioned a lack of challenge for more-able students, which the school has recognised and addressed, and inspectors judge that current provision is accelerating their progress and leading to higher outcomes. Inspectors explored parents' and carers' reservations about children's healthy lifestyles and found that the physical education department provides an extensive and accessible range of opportunities for students to keep fit.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lord Grey 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 249 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,424 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	17	137	70	22	11	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	52	26	135	69	7	4	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	23	121	61	26	13	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	17	112	57	42	21	7	4
The teaching is good at this school	26	13	124	63	33	17	8	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	13	128	65	33	17	5	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	13	121	61	45	23	3	2
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)	27	14	133	68	23	12	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	14	128	65	28	14	7	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	20	110	56	37	19	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	15	114	58	32	16	8	4
The school is led and managed effectively	31	16	127	64	21	11	6	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	21	114	58	20	10	13	7

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



13 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Lord Grey School, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 6EW

Thank you for your welcome when we came to your school for the inspection. Thank you particularly to those who took time to talk to us and whose lessons and books we saw. I am writing to inform you of our findings.

Your school has improved since its previous inspection and is now a satisfactory school with many good features. The headteacher's good leadership, her hard work and that of senior staff, teachers, governors and others have carried through good plans which have accelerated your progress significantly. Standards this year are broadly as expected, though science lags behind a little. We have asked the school to improve that. School improvements are continuing, so those in lower years are doing better and standards are rising further. Your parents and carers are not always clear about your progress, so we have asked the school to clarify these communications. We were pleased to find that students, staff, parents and carers strongly agree with us that the school keeps you very safe. Your personal development, independence and basic skills levels are improving too. These skills, together with good experience of languages, good teamwork and positive attitudes, are preparing you well for working life. Your good attendance and punctuality also help. Those who go into the sixth form achieve well. This is partly because a good curriculum in the main school and in the joint sixth form provides well for students at all levels. We agree with your views that the vertical tutor groups and new house systems are providing good care, guidance and support, enjoyable experiences and new friendship links.

Most of the teaching we saw is good, but we agree with some of your parents and carers who feel that it is too variable, and we have judged it satisfactory overall. To make this more consistent, the school is already recruiting new staff, to avoid the need for so many supply teachers, though this has been difficult in some departments. In addition, we have asked the school to provide you with better marking, make sure that good systems like assessment in ICT are used more widely, and that all teachers use agreed behaviour management systems well to control any disruption. We feel confident that you will be able to help staff to improve these things. Thank you again.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms

Lead inspector

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