

The Grange School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111401
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	378296
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Joan Davis HMI

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Nelson
Headteacher	David Stanley
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Additional inspector

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This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons, taught by 37 teachers. Further evidence was gathered from short observations of pupils receiving additional support and inspectors listened to groups of pupils reading. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, leaders of secondary and primary phases, the former School Improvement Partner, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at a number of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching, information on current attainment and progress and local authority reviews of the school's effectiveness. The inspection team considered four responses to the online Parent View, an analysis of 240 parental and carers' questionnaires and other completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This all-through school opened in 2010, having been formed from an amalgamation of the secondary, junior, infant and nursery schools which are based in four separate buildings on two sites. There are three resourced bases for children with autistic spectrum disorders and there is also a resourced base for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 with speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost three times the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well-below the national average, as is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. The school has gained a number of awards, including the Intermediate International Award

The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school received a monitoring visit for the secondary phase in 2011 and was judged to have made satisfactory progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection for the predecessor secondary school. In April 2013, the school will move into a new building which is currently under construction.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- The overall quality of education provided by The Grange School is satisfactory. It is not yet good due to the variability in leadership, teaching and outcomes between the primary and secondary phases. Pupils in the nursery, infant and junior phases make good progress. Outstanding teaching in the primary phases is making a strong contribution to pupils' learning and enjoyment. Leaders in the primary phases have been relentless in securing improvements in provision and, as a result, these elements of the school have gone from strength to strength. The school has not sufficiently shared existing outstanding practice across all phases to drive improvements at secondary level, where pupils' progress is only satisfactory. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment is improving across the school, however, in the past pupils at the end of Year 11 have not made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics. School leaders have successfully addressed underperformance in English in the secondary phase, however, improvements in mathematics have been less secure and performance dipped slightly in 2010. Robust data provided by the school during the inspection demonstrate that the school has reversed this decline and gaps between the performance and progress of pupils in the school and that of their peers nationally are narrowing. Pupils with special educational needs, including those for whom there is resourced base provision, make similar progress to other pupils across all phases.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. The school provides an inclusive environment and pupils with special educational needs are integrated well in the broader life of the school. The best teaching is characterised by lessons that are deftly planned to match the needs and abilities of all pupils. Particularly outstanding practice in this respect was observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the other primary phases. However, the quality of teaching at secondary level is inconsistent and sometimes lessons are insufficiently challenging. In addition, the work of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is often marked in a cursory fashion and therefore pupils are frequently unclear as to what they need to do to improve their work.

- Behaviour is good overall and in some instances exemplary. Pupils feel safe in the school and incidences of bullying are dealt with effectively. Attendance is above the national average and the school has worked particularly effectively in reducing the number of exclusions. Pupils are friendly and helpful. They show respect for one another and for their teachers.
- The executive headteacher and the governing body have provided stability during a period of considerable change. They have successfully used performance management to tackle some areas of weakness and they now have a track record of securing improvements, for example in behaviour, attendance and in English. Therefore there is satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. However, the vision for the future development of the school has not been articulated effectively and areas of the school operate independently, to the detriment of overall improvement. The school has identified this as an area for development and is in the process of rationalising the leadership structure in order to promote a more cohesive and unified sense of direction. The school is accurate in its self-evaluation and plans for the further improvement of areas of provision, such as teaching, correctly identify the appropriate priorities. Robust procedures for tracking the progress of pupils are firmly embedded across all phases and are making a highly effective contribution to driving improvements in outcomes for all children at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Drive further improvements in achievement at Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics, so that the gaps between performance and progress of pupils in the school and that of their peers nationally narrow at a faster pace.
- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
 - disseminating effectively existing outstanding practice in the primary phases
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons that address the needs, abilities and interests of all pupils
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of marking so that pupils receive precise information on how to improve their work.
- Construct, communicate and embed a clear vision and strategy for the further development of the 3 to 16 school community, effectively harnessing existing outstanding practice in order to drive improvements in outcomes for all pupils.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers feel that their child is making good progress at the school. Inspectors did indeed find this to be the case in the primary phases, but not so at secondary level. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with development levels that are low for their age. During their time in the Nursery and the Reception class they make good progress in all the main areas of their learning. By the end of this stage of their education, their skills are in line with those expected for their age. By the end of Key Stage 1, outstanding provision is ensuring that attainment is consistently above the national average

and convincing evidence from lesson observations and the school's own tracking data was provided to demonstrate that attainment has risen further in 2012.

In Key Stage 2, attainment is significantly above the national average in English and mathematics. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest levels in these subjects is similar to the national average in English and above the national average in mathematics. Therefore, during the primary phase of their education pupils make good progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals mirrors that of other pupils in the school and is also good. The attainment of the aforementioned groups of pupils is above that of their peers nationally. Learning and progress across the primary phase, as observed in lessons during the inspection, were never less than good, and in some instances were outstanding.

Pupils enter Key Stage 3 with prior attainment that is significantly below the national average. Some pupils attending the primary phase of the school continue their education elsewhere, and the school receives the majority of its secondary pupils from other feeder primary schools. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress in this phase of their education and the school is reducing quickly gaps in the performance and progress of some groups of pupils.

Although there has been a rising trend in attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4 since the previous inspection, there has been a pattern of underachievement, particularly in English and mathematics. Rigorous procedures for tracking the performance of pupils have had an impact on improving outcomes overall and, more particularly, in mathematics. Convincing data were provided by the school to demonstrate that the decline in mathematics has been reversed and the gaps in performance and progress between pupils in the school and their peers nationally are narrowing, although at a slower pace than in English. There has been an upward trajectory in pupils' attainment in English and the proportion of pupils making expected progress in this subject is approaching the national average. Across other areas of the curriculum, there is some variability and a degree of underachievement because teaching does not always address sufficiently the needs and abilities of all pupils. Learning and progress as observed in lessons were satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4.

In the past there has been considerable disparity between the learning and progress of different groups of pupils in the secondary phase. Girls have historically made better progress than boys and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals have not made progress commensurate with other pupils in the school and their peers nationally. The school has effectively deployed resources in this respect and, although some gaps in performance and progress remain, they are narrowing.

Literacy and numeracy are well developed in the primary phases. Attainment in reading at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 is above the national average and this is also the case in mathematics. Skills are taught with precision and, as a result, pupils show enthusiasm for reading and a good understanding of terminology in numeracy. Equally, in the secondary phase pupils are willing readers, however, the promotion of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is at the early stages of development.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their child is taught well at the school; however, inspectors found that teaching was of variable quality. Across all years in the primary phase, teaching is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy their work and the wide variety of stimulating activities that are planned to promote their learning. Pupils value the efforts that teachers make to render their lessons interesting. For example, pupils spoke enthusiastically about how their teacher had dressed up as Her Majesty the Queen to talk to them about the forthcoming Golden Jubilee celebrations. Teachers' subject knowledge is profound and therefore lessons are always appropriately challenging, enabling all pupils to make at least good progress. In addition, the environment is highly conducive to learning, with attractive, informative displays and excellent use of indoor and outdoor space to intrigue and inspire all pupils. For example, children in the Nursery can choose their own activities such as planting bulbs in the 'Garden Centre' or browsing through books that interest them.

However, this exemplary practice, while it exists at secondary level, is not as widespread and too often lessons are pedestrian and lacking in challenge. As in the primary phases, the best lessons are characterised by careful and imaginative planning to suit the needs and abilities of pupils. For example, in one outstanding Year 7 geography lesson, pupils were debating the destruction of the tropical rainforest. In order to deepen their understanding of the topic, they had to imagine they were, for example, a member of the indigenous community. The lesson was intellectually challenging and pupils' contributions were perceptive, showing a high degree of reflection and empathy. In this way, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported. However, this good practice is not consistent and in weaker lessons pupils show a lack of engagement in their studies. In addition, too often work is marked in a cursory fashion and little subject-specific information is conveyed to pupils on how to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A minority of parents and carers expressed some concerns about behaviour. However, the large majority of parents and carers feel that behaviour is good at the school, and inspection findings confirm this point of view. Leadership of behaviour is strong across the school and this has had a marked impact on outcomes. Attendance is above the national average across the school and the rate of exclusion has been reduced dramatically to below the national average. Most pupils say that they feel safe in the school and most parents and carers echo this point of view. Pupils understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it. Racist incidents are rare and dealt with appropriately.

Incidents of bullying, when they occur, are dealt with, for the most part, effectively. However, some pupils seemed unaware of the fact that name-calling and ostracising individuals could be construed as forms of bullying. Pupils mix well together and are polite and courteous. The school works effectively to foster harmony between pupils; for example children in the Nursery were observed on their afternoon break, waiting patiently for their turn to receive the drink that was being offered and thanking their teacher politely. On Sports Day, which took place during the inspection, behaviour was found to be exemplary.

Leadership and management

The school has faced considerable turbulence in the past and the executive headteacher and governing body have provided a steady steer since the school's inception. The day-to-day organisation of the school is well managed and roles and responsibilities are clear. Much time and energy have been devoted effectively to the planning and construction of the new building, which is on course to be finished early in 2013. Leadership at all levels in the primary phases is outstanding, but of more variable quality in Key Stages 3 and 4. Nevertheless, the school has correctly identified areas of weakness and has accelerated the pace at which it tackles underperformance. Thorough procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and teachers' effectiveness are embedded across all phases and have established a sharp focus on improvement and a culture of accountability. School leaders have been successful in raising aspirations; for example, as one member of staff commented to an inspector, in a discussion about pupils' progress: 'We used to hope that they would achieve – now we expect it'. The school has put in place training to improve the quality of teaching and has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in this area of provision. However, opportunities have been missed to drive improvements by disseminating existing outstanding practice.

Senior leaders have found it a challenge to establish a cohesive and unified identity to the school. They have not articulated effectively enough their vision for an all-through school and therefore the possibilities for improvement provided by such a unique setting have not been explored and exploited successfully. There is a lack of an overarching shared sense of purpose and there are limited opportunities for staff from the different phases to work collaboratively. The school is looking forward to resolving some of these issues when it moves into the new building, but has been slow to grasp that all members of the school community could already have been working more effectively together in order to secure improvement across all phases.

The school works productively with a range of partners and as a result the number of pupils who leave school and do not go on to further education, training or employment is well below the national average. This is particularly impressive given that the school is located in an area that is economically disadvantaged. A particularly productive partnership with a local outstanding school has been effective in improving self-evaluation, tracking and teaching. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. This is supported through the curriculum and also through visits. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 have enjoyed meeting pupils from other ethnic backgrounds through a partnership with a primary school in Liverpool.

The curriculum is good in the primary phases, but satisfactory overall. At primary level, the content of lessons is interesting and lively, providing a broad and balanced curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. Across the school, the curriculum meets all statutory requirements and school leaders regularly review the effectiveness of provision. However, at secondary level they have at times been slow to adapt the curriculum to improve outcomes for pupils.

The governing body is loyal and has demonstrated both vision and commitment in its work for the school. Governors have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have worked with the school's leadership team to tackle underperformance. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders, in

conjunction with the governing body, promote equality satisfactorily and tackle discrimination effectively.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



25 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Grange School, Runcorn, WA7 5DX

We would like to thank you all for the friendly welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by the respect you show to one another and to your teachers. You behave well in lessons and appear to enjoy coming to school. Your attendance is above the national average. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education overall, but that it is better in the Nursery and in Key Stages 1 and 2. You make good progress when you start the school but by the end of Year 11 attainment and progress are satisfactory. Your school has plans to address this.

Teaching is outstanding in the primary phases but satisfactory overall. We noticed that you enjoy lessons that stimulate your imagination and when teachers plan a range of activities that help all of you to learn. You work hard in these lessons. You appreciate the support you receive from your teachers and you know who to turn to if you have a problem.

We have identified a number of areas where we think your school should make improvements. We asked the executive headteacher to make sure that good teachers share their expertise with others so that all lessons are as good as the best. We also think that teachers in Key Stages 3 and 4 should mark your work more thoroughly and give you clear advice on how to improve. In our judgement, if the school takes these actions, then your examination results at the end of Year 11 should improve.

All of you can help in the further improvement of your school by continuing to attend school regularly and working hard, taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to you. We would like to pass on our good wishes to you all for the future and hope that you have a successful move into your new building next year.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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