

Mount Grace High School Academy Trust

Leicester Road, Hinckley, LE10 1LP

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Mount Grace is a friendly, welcoming school where all pupils and staff are valued and feel proud to be part of the community.
- School records and the lessons seen during the inspection show that the overall quality of teaching is typically good.
- As a result, pupils make good progress as they move through the school and are reaching standards above those of similar schools by Year 9.
- Pupils make particularly rapid progress in mathematics and science.
- Current performance data show that standards in English are rising quickly this year.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive, and their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that any problems will be dealt with quickly by adults.
- The school is led and managed well. The senior team and governing body have recently been further strengthened and reorganised.
- Teaching and learning are led well, and well-chosen staff training is further developing the amount of good and outstanding teaching.
- Subject leaders are taking increasing responsibility for the progress of pupils and for sharing good practice in teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding, and in a small number of the lessons the planned activities do not fully challenge pupils.
- Pupils do not have good opportunities in all lessons to be actively engaged in developing their independent learning skills.
- Marking does not always show pupils clearly how to improve their work, and pupils do not have enough opportunities to respond to the comments made.
- Pupils' performance and attendance are not always checked carefully enough to ensure they are making the best possible progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 29 lessons or part-lessons taught by 29 different teachers. Three of these lessons were seen together with school leaders.
- They also made many shorter visits to classrooms to look closely at marking in books, support groups and the history theme day for Year 9 pupils.
- The team watched an assembly and visited many different areas of the school and the site during lessons and at break times.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, senior staff and subject leaders.
- The inspection team examined a range of school documentation including: school development plans and policies; lesson and departmental plans; records of lesson monitoring and checks on pupils' work; and records of meetings, including those of the governing body.
- Inspectors examined a range of data, both that available to the public and that used by the school to monitor pupils' current progress and attendance.
- The 25 responses made to the online Parent View by the end of the first day of the inspection were considered, along with staff questionnaires. Inspectors also considered the results of a range of consultations that the school conducts with pupils, parents and carers and staff.

Inspection team

David Martin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Additional Inspector
Beverley Mabey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mount Grace High School Academy Trust is a below-average-sized secondary school that converted to academy status on 1 August 2012. When its predecessor school, Mount Grace High School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be a good school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra money given to schools by the government to narrow gaps in achievement for certain groups of pupils, is below average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than in most similar schools, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school leadership team has been widened since becoming an academy, with several new members joining, some as associate members recruited from middle leader positions. The governors have also reduced in number and have reviewed their working arrangements.
- The school only has Key Stage 3 pupils so government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in secondary schools, do not apply.
- Five pupils regularly attend the Burbage Independent Learning Centre for either one or two days a week, to help them to improve their behaviour and self-esteem.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so it is consistently at least good and more is outstanding, by:
 - checking that all marking gives pupils clear advice on how to improve their work
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in lessons, working independently of the teacher for periods of time
 - making sure that work is matched even more closely to the needs of different pupils so that they are always fully stretched.
- Check even more carefully on the academic progress and attendance of different groups of pupils, to make sure all are performing consistently well.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Pupils learn well in the great majority of lessons. They arrive promptly and settle to work quickly. Little time is lost because pupils have positive attitudes to learning, so lessons are highly productive. Pupils develop a broad range of skills and knowledge in subjects across the school in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology.
- Teaching groups in Years 8 and 9 are organised on the basis of pupils' ability levels, and this means that work is usually challenging but achievable for all classes. This is reflected in good levels of progress for all groups of pupils, including the most and least able.
- Greatly strengthened data and tracking systems lead to early support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those who may find learning harder. Their needs are quickly identified and a raft of effective additional support is provided to help them, particularly with literacy and reading problems.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium also make good progress. The gaps in attainment between groups are now closing and these pupils' attainment is now on average far less than a term behind other pupils in English and mathematics. Pupils supported through the Year 7 'catch-up' premium also make good gains, particularly in reading.
- The five pupils who attend alternative provision for part of the week are also making good progress because the placement is well suited to their needs. Staff receive regular reports from the centre, and visit to check for themselves how well pupils are doing.
- The progress that pupils make is good overall and particularly strong in mathematics and science. From broadly average starting points, pupils are on track to attain standards in Year 9 final assessments that are above national expectations. Standards are high in mathematics at all levels, and at higher levels in science. Attainment in English is rising, and the school's current accurate information on pupils' performance shows that gaps between boys and girls have narrowed considerably during the course of this year.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- School records indicate that the proportion of good and outstanding lessons is improving. Inspectors broadly agreed with these findings, although the proportion of outstanding lessons seen during the inspection was not as high as the records suggest.
- In most lessons, relationships are excellent. Activities are well planned and proceed at a good pace. Pupils make strong gains in skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Work in books is detailed and thorough.
- The objectives for lessons are clearly shared with pupils, and teachers carefully check that they understand what is expected. In most lessons, the expected outcomes are clearly met and sometimes exceeded. In many of the lessons seen there was a real sense of enjoyment and fun, particularly in the Year 7 history day.
- Teachers generally use questioning well to involve all pupils. They check that pupils have remembered what they learned in previous lessons, as well as how much new information they have learned. The subject knowledge of teachers is notably strong.

- Teachers often develop pupils' skills by getting them to lead parts of the lesson, or to assess their own and other pupils' work. Pupils work well together, and cooperate effectively to discuss and complete tasks together.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers make good use of information on what pupils already know and can do in their planning to challenge pupils and inspire high levels of progress. Marking reinforces this by referring to National Curriculum levels and including precise advice on how to improve work, which has a clear impact on pupils' motivation. These features of planning and marking are not yet consistent across the school.
- A few lessons are dominated by teacher talk. Pupils say that they prefer active, engaging lessons with a variety of practical, discussion and paired, group and individual tasks. Inspectors agreed that not enough lessons included such opportunities.
- In a small number of lessons, tasks are not challenging enough and teachers' questioning lacks depth and only requires a simple response.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are consistently respectful towards each other and adults, and listen carefully to the views of others. Good manners are a strong feature of the school and pupils are increasingly encouraged and helped to manage their own behaviour.
- The school has a clear and well-understood behaviour policy and uses a variety of rewards to celebrate positive behaviour. Pupils' punctuality is excellent. They are taught how to stay safe, and put this into practice through considerate and sensible behaviour around the school site.
- Different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying are well understood by pupils, particularly through topics covered in 'lifeskills' sessions. They say that bullying incidents are rare, and that adults always deal quickly and effectively with any that do arise.
- Attendance has been above average over time, but has fallen back this year for a variety of reasons that include unusual patterns of illness. The school takes a great deal of trouble to work rigorously with families, including those facing greater difficulties or where there are persistent patterns of absence.
- Not all groups, particularly those known to be eligible for free school meals, attend as well as others. The school does not currently check on these groups in detail and does not have this information readily to hand.
- Very few pupils are permanently excluded and fixed-term exclusions are falling as alternative internal measures are successful in helping to overcome difficulties that pupils may have. Several parents spoke warmly of the support that the school gives, both for behavioural issues and other particular difficulties. The small number of pupils who find behaving consistently well difficult are very well managed by the school, so learning for others is very rarely disrupted.
- There is an active school council and other leadership opportunities are available to pupils. It is typical of pupils' good attitudes that the school council suggested the slogan 'Respect - give it to get it,' which is prominently displayed around the school. Just occasionally, pupils lose concentration due to too much teacher talk and too little engaging activity early enough in the lesson. Pupils themselves recognise some inconsistency in teachers' expectations about

behaviour and work.

The leadership and management

are good

- The experienced headteacher brings a clear vision and set of values that inform all the work of the school. An equal opportunity to high achievement, respect and the wide range of experiences offered by the school lie at the heart of these values. Discrimination or harassment of any sort is not tolerated.
- At the time of becoming an academy, these values were restated. At the same time the leadership team was re-energised by the addition of staff who give a strong lead, particularly by developing teaching and raising aspirations by making good use of data to set ambitious targets for performance at all levels. All these developments mean that pupils' achievement is rising strongly and the school has a strong capacity to improve further.
- Subject leaders now take greater responsibility for pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. They evaluate their work thoroughly, and are gaining confidence in sharing good teaching strategies more widely. This is also having a positive impact on further raising the quality of teaching.
- Plans to improve the school are clear and easily understood, with an ongoing cycle of planning, review and self-evaluation. As a result, the school can clearly identify the good progress that is being made against its key targets.
- Policies are working documents that accurately reflect the way that the school operates. All staff model the respectful, courteous behaviour that is expected and received. The teaching and learning policy is presently under review in order to take teaching to the next, outstanding level.
- Certain groups have been identified for additional support, particularly boys, pupils who are cared for by the local authority, and those known to be eligible for free school meals. As a result, gaps in performance are closing quickly. The school does not yet identify all pupil groups when analysing performance data, although this is an identified priority for the coming year.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of subjects and options to inspire pupils' interest. It is enhanced by the impressive 'lifeskills' programme and enriched by an extensive range of activities that include many visits out and visitors to the school.
- Through these experiences, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern British society. The school has built impressive links locally, nationally and internationally to broaden pupils' cultural understanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have also restructured their operations. The former committees have been replaced by a smaller group of governors, each taking responsibility for a key aspect of the school's work.
 - New recruits have further strengthened what is an experienced body of governors with good professional skills. The governors are both supportive and, as records of meetings show, increasingly challenge the school to do even better.
 - Governors know the strengths of the school well, and what needs to improve. They see the school in action, including visiting lessons. These visits are recorded and used to raise questions and plan further action.
 - A planned surplus is intended to help the school to provide well in the future in the face of

falling numbers. This is typical of the sound financial management and thoughtful forward planning of governors, leaders and managers.

- Governors have first-hand knowledge of the performance of the school, and receive very good information from leaders and managers. They carefully monitor spending and its impact, including on pupils eligible for additional support through pupil premium funding.
- The arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are under review and are being carefully matched to the national 'Teachers Standards'. Future staff pay rises and promotion will also be dependent on meeting ambitious targets for pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Governors were concerned that standards of teaching were not as high in the inspection as school assessments and their own visits indicated. However, they are determined to investigate the reasons behind this with school leaders and managers. Governors have fully supported initiatives to strengthen and support any weaker teaching in the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138477
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	409375

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	559
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Herbert
Headteacher	John Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01455 238921
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