

# The Grange School

Latham Avenue, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 5DX

**Inspection dates** 27–28 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In the secondary phase, the gap between the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium and their peers is not closing quickly enough.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough in the secondary phase. Teachers do not always use information about students' current achievement to make sure activities enable them to make progress to higher levels.
- There is variability in the leadership, quality of teaching and students' achievement between the primary and secondary phases.
- Senior leaders and governors do not have a clear vision for the whole school community. They have not made the most of the outstanding practice which exists in the primary phase to drive improvements for all students.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' achievement in the primary phase is good. Pupils make at least good progress throughout Key Stage 1 and 2. By the end of Year 6, attainment is either in line with or above national averages.
- There has been an upward trend over the last three years in the achievement of students at the end of Key Stage 4. In 2013 there was a significant improvement in the number of A/A\* grades attained by Year 11 students.
- Teaching in the primary phase is never less than good. This reflects the strong leadership which exists in this part of the school.
- Pupils and students throughout the school are polite and friendly. They value the care and guidance which they receive from the staff.
- The special needs team and provision provides high quality, personalised support for pupils and students throughout the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons taught by 43 different teachers, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Six groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. A meeting was also held with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 41 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and of 86 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, data relating to students' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Selby	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Brine	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maureen Coleman	Additional Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Grange is an all-through 3-16 school. In April 2013, all phases of the school moved into a new building.
- The school has three resource bases for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and a resource base for students in Key Stage 3 and 4 with speech and language difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs supported at school action is above national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above that found nationally.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students access alternative provision at the Riverside College.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in the secondary phase by making sure all teachers:
  - use information about students' targets and current achievement to set tasks at the right level, in order for them to make consistently good progress
  - challenge students more and have higher expectations of what they can achieve
  - use assessment activities in the lesson which help to move students' learning on
  - use questioning more effectively to check and develop students' understanding, and help them to think more deeply
  - explain clearly, when marking students' work, what they need to do to improve, and give time for them to reflect and act upon this advice during lessons.
- Improve students' achievement further in the secondary phase by:
  - ensuring all students make at least good progress in all subjects relative to their starting points
  - building on the improvements secured so far to ensure that gaps in achievement for students supported by the pupil premium are closed quickly.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the school's leadership by:
  - creating a cohesive, strategic vision which is communicated effectively across the whole school community
  - using the outstanding practice which exists in the primary phase to drive improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school
  - ensuring that, in the secondary phase, clear and effective policies exist and are applied consistently by all staff.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage below the expectations for their age, particularly in speech and language development. Consequently, this area is given a high profile and children are encouraged to communicate and use language to develop reasoning skills. The progress they make in this and other areas is at least good and they enter Key Stage 1 broadly in line with national expectations.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 continue to make good, and sometimes, outstanding progress. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with national averages and significantly above in reading and mathematics at Levels 4b and 5. Leaders are acutely aware that achievement in writing is not as strong, and driving improvements in this area is a high priority. Robust progress data indicates that the majority of pupils are on track to achieve their aspirational targets at the end of this current year. The progress made by pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is broadly in line with that of their peers. Indeed, a much higher proportion than their peers made more than expected progress in reading.
- Leaders had planned in advance how they would use the primary sport funding, focusing initially on raising self-esteem and participation of Year 5 boys. This has already led to improved attitudes to learning.
- The percentage of students attaining five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4 has increased significantly over recent years to be slightly above the national average in 2013. There was also a significant increase in the number of A\* or A grades attained in 2013, which reflects the greater focus given to meeting the needs of the most able.
- At Key Stage 4 there has been an improving trend in the attainment and progress of students in English and mathematics over the last 3 years. In English, the percentage of students who make expected progress is higher than the national figure, but in mathematics this remains slightly below. The percentage of students making more than expected progress is rising at a faster rate in English than mathematics.
- In the secondary phase, the gap between the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium funding and their peers is not closing at a fast enough pace and remains too wide. In 2013, students supported by the pupil premium achieved generally a grade below their peers in English and mathematics. The same pattern is repeated when expected progress comparisons are made, with gaps narrowing, but not quickly enough. This is now one of the highest priorities and a recently appointed senior leader is co-ordinating a range of strategies across the school and tracking their impact. Senior leaders have used the pupil premium funding primarily on extra staffing as well as extra provision and resources. Middle leaders are able to bid for pupil premium funding but must provide a clear evaluation of its impact. The mathematics department, for example, had provided an evaluation of the impact of a residential activity and one-to-one support.
- Senior leaders have used the Year 7 catch-up premium to fund the 'Arc'. This is a route for lower achieving students in Years 7 and 8 who all have a personalised timetable. Achievement data of last year's students demonstrate how successful this approach is and how their learning is accelerated as a result.
- Pupils and students with special educational needs in both the primary and secondary phases receive excellent support, and consequently, they achieve well. Each individual's progress is tracked thoroughly and staff in school work effectively to ensure that students have every opportunity to achieve their potential. Staff work closely with students, parents and carers and other providers to ensure a successful transition at the end of Year 11.
- The school's arrangements for alternative provision lack rigour. A visit to the local college to speak to some students during the inspection revealed some concerns about how appropriate their courses and activities were. Students' targets were based solely on their behaviour and not linked to learning. The students will be following accredited vocational courses from January 2014 and senior leaders are swiftly following up the concerns raised.

- In recent years the school has entered students early for mathematics but this is no longer the case.
- In all the lessons observed in the primary phase during the inspection, pupils' learning and progress were never less than good. This was not always the case in the secondary phase and this was because learning activities did not create opportunities for this to happen.
- The high priority given to reading which is so evident in the primary phase is extended into Key Stage 3. In a weekly lesson for Years 7 and 8, reading for pleasure is promoted alongside the development of reading skills.

## The quality of teaching

## requires improvement

- Consistently good and outstanding teaching in the primary phase is enabling pupils to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Teachers are highly skilled and sometimes inspirational; they engage, motivate and challenge pupils and consequently they are keen to learn.
- In the secondary phase, there are variations in the quality of teaching and it is not consistently good. Often, where teaching requires improvement, lessons lack the appropriate level of challenge. Teachers do not take enough account of individual student targets and current achievement when planning lessons. This means that students are not given the opportunity to make good progress.
- In lessons where teaching is less than good, teachers often over-use peer assessment activities which do not always effectively move all students' learning on to the next level. Teachers also miss too many opportunities to develop students' communication skills.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use questioning to probe students' understanding which means they do not learn as much as they could. However, where teaching is good or better, effective questioning is used to develop students' confidence in expressing their ideas. Teachers in these lessons ask searching questions, challenging students to take their thinking to the next level.
- Where the quality of teaching is good or better, teachers use their passion for their subject and their knowledge of their students to engage, enthuse and involve them in the lesson. They provide interesting work for the students to undertake with many opportunities for them to learn independently and collaboratively. They use a range of assessment throughout the lesson to inform the learning and ensure all students are making good progress. An example of this was a Year 9 GCSE music lesson where the teacher's love of her subject was infectious and led to absolute engagement from all the students. The teacher created an excellent climate for learning and had clearly enabled the students to develop effective habits in order to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- The quality of marking in the secondary phase is variable across subjects. At its best, marking celebrates success and gives specific guidance for improvement, but too often, it lacks detail and does not explain to students how to progress to the next level.
- High expectations are constantly reinforced throughout the primary phase. It is therefore disappointing that some secondary teachers are willing to accept poor standards of presentation in written work.
- In the secondary phase, there are too many missed opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to widen their horizons. This was particularly the case across a range of personal, social and health education lessons observed during the inspection.
- Teaching assistants contribute very positively to the quality of learning across all subjects. They work closely with teaching staff to plan the most effective way to help pupils and students to make good progress. There is a real sense of partnership and mutual respect between teaching and non-teaching staff.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour and attitudes to learning of the pupils in the primary phase are outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school and talk very positively about all aspects of school life. They relish the high expectations that are set for them and value the help and support they receive from staff.
- The behaviour and attitudes to learning of students in the secondary school are generally never less than good. Positive, respectful relationships exist between staff and students, and where these coincide with good or outstanding teaching, students respond maturely and demonstrate initiative.
- Those pupils and students spoken to during the inspection felt that there was very little bullying in school and that when it occurred, it was dealt with effectively. This is supported by the school's records of racist and homophobic incidents. They felt confident that the majority of staff would challenge any casual use of homophobic language.
- Pupils are welcoming, polite and helpful. During lesson changes, breaks and lunchtimes, they conduct themselves in a responsible manner.
- As a result of a range of effective strategies, attendance has been on an upward trend over recent years and is now above average. There is also a low level of persistent absence in the school. Fixed-term exclusion figures have declined significantly over recent years. Senior leaders are now focusing on closing the small gap that still exists between students supported by the pupil premium and their peers in attendance and fixed-term exclusions figures.

**The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The executive headteacher has successfully led the transition of the four separate schools into one new building in April 2013. However, he, and the governing body, have not grasped this opportunity to establish a clear and cohesive vision to bring the school together with a unified identity. In the absence of an effectively articulated vision for this all-through school, there exists, for the most part, two separate schools operating under one roof. As a result, too many differences remain between the leadership, quality of teaching and standards of the primary and secondary phases. The unique setting of an all-through school provides a range of possibilities to drive improvement and too many of these opportunities have been missed.
- There is very effective leadership at all levels in the primary phase. The head of school has successfully brought together nursery, infants and juniors to create a primary community with a strong sense of a shared vision. The head of school and senior leaders are very well respected by all staff and pupils, and they, in turn, have high expectations of and for them. Senior leaders have a very clear understanding of strengths and take effective action to address any areas of concern. Consequently, standards in the primary phase are continuing to rise at a fast pace.
- Strong leadership does exist in the secondary phase but this is variable. Too many policies and procedures are left to individual middle leaders to interpret as they wish which inevitably leads to inconsistency. This is particularly the case with the approach to marking and lesson planning.
- The school's view of its own performance is accurate. The primary development plan provides a clear route map for how areas of concern will be addressed. The secondary development plan is not as effective at mapping out specific actions and identifying how their impact will be monitored and evaluated. The very brief whole school strategic plan does not indicate how any of the objectives will be achieved.
- Senior leaders are aware that the quality of teaching overall in the school is less than good, but driving improvements in this area is not a high enough priority. Expert knowledge and features of outstanding teaching exist within the school, particularly in the primary phase but these are not shared effectively with all staff.
- The executive headteacher has introduced a robust performance management system. Teachers have clear and challenging targets which are linked to the progress which their students make. Salary rises are approved only when teachers' performance merits them.

- In the primary phase, the curriculum encourages a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning. There has been a recent curriculum change at Key Stage 4 which has broadened the number of option choices available to students. It is too early to evaluate the overall impact of this new curriculum design on students' achievement but there is evidence that it is improving students' engagement with their learning. During Key Stage 4 students receive a range of information, advice and guidance to assist them on their next steps in training, education or employment.
- The local authority has been supportive of the school's involvement with the 'Achieve Together' project which has had a significant impact on improving examination results in the secondary phase. However, it has not ensured that improvements are driven forward at a fast enough pace, and that there is a cohesive strategic vision and development plan for the whole school.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - There has been a recent review and reconstitution of the governing body which was done in consultation with a National Leader of Governance. The newly formed committee structure enables governors to hold senior leaders to account more effectively. The standards committee looks closely at how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact this is having on students' achievement. They have carried out a skills audit of their members and have taken advantage of a range of training opportunities. They are now able to ask more searching questions of senior and middle leaders. Governors have a clear knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school and fully understand how salary progression is linked to performance management. They are very supportive of the executive headteacher but they have not worked proactively with him to create a unified strategic vision for the whole 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111401
<b>Local authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	429985

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1106
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	S Nelson
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	David Stanley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01928 562660
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