

# Grindon Hall Christian School

Nookside, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 8PG

## Inspection dates

5–6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
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

- Despite the rapid progress made by senior leaders and governors in developing their skills and competencies since Grindon Hall opened as a free school in September 2012, they do not yet have a robust and well-evidenced overview of the impact that aspects of the school's work have on raising standards.
- Self-evaluation is not sufficiently accurate. The collection, analysis and use of on-going information about the progress of the school, in all areas of its work, are not being accurately or fully used by senior leaders and governors to drive improvement.
- Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation limit the overall effectiveness of the school improvement plan (SIP) as a tool. It is not used regularly by governors and senior leaders to assess the school's rate of progress over the life of the plan.
- Some teachers are not using all available information to inform pupils of how well they are doing or to update their personal learning/examination targets.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enter the school with broadly average skills and knowledge. For some their attainment on entry is above average. By the end of Key Stages 4 and 5, most achieve above average standards in almost all GCSE and A-level subjects. The areas of underperformance seen last year are being tackled.
- Teaching is generally of a good standard.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good.
- The sixth form is good.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 part-lessons taught by 22 teachers, including a small number of teaching assistants working in the classrooms.
- Two inspectors met with six pupils from Year 1 and six from Year 6, to talk with them and listen to them reading from a book of their own choosing.
- The lead inspector looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, (Parent View), prior to and during the inspection. Before the start of the inspection there were no responses. By the end of the inspection there were 79. Additionally, two parents sent in written responses, via the school, to the inspection team. Two other parents sent email directly to CfBT (the inspection service provider working with Ofsted), which was passed on to the lead inspector. One of these parents also requested a telephone conversation with the lead inspector, which was held during the early part of day two of the inspection. All this information was used by inspectors, and the general findings shared with the Principal.
- Forty-one staff questionnaires were received and used as an additional evidence source by the inspection team.
- A range of documents was considered and meetings were held with the Principal, senior staff and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of pupils and staff during lessons, scrutinised workbooks, and observed behaviour and movement in and around the school site during the school day.
- The lead inspector also contacted Sunderland College and spoke with a member of staff currently working with a Grindon Hall sixth-form student, who is studying A-level drama at the college.
- One inspector also spoke with a small number of parents who were collecting their children from school at the end of the first day of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Brian Blake, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

Colin Scott

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Grindon Hall Christian School opened as a free school in September 2012, having previously been an independent school since 1988.
- Since opening, the school has taken on a significant number of extra pupils, especially of primary age, and current applications to join the school are well in excess of the number of places available.
- The numbers on roll in both the primary and secondary phases are smaller than for equivalent schools nationally.
- The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, at 8.6%, is well below the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils is of White British heritage.
- The percentage of pupils supported at school action is well above average.
- The percentage of pupils supported at school action plus or those with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school currently uses Sunderland College for one Year 13 student studying A-level drama.
- The school's most recent results for pupils at the end of Years 6 and 11 meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in primary and secondary schools.
- The school uses early entry GCSE in English literature for Year 10 pupils, as a prelude to them taking their GCSE in English language at the end of Year 11. In last year's GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils achieving the best grades exceeded the national average.

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

- Help teachers to improve their teaching by:
  - providing the pupils with on-going and updated information about how well they are doing in their work, using existing best practice in the school as a guide
  - using the most recently collated and analysed assessment data to update regularly pupils' personal learning or examination grade targets as an aid to raising their expectations to achieve the very best in all aspects of their work
  - providing pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 with more opportunities to write at length across a wider range of subjects other than just in English
  - developing mathematical learning by balancing practice and repetition of questions with more challenging learning tasks, especially for the most able.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - improving the SIP to include monitoring and evaluation strategies, and progress measures (success criteria), to help ensure that nominated staff/governors gather, analyse and inform senior leaders and governors of the progress being made against every priority and action over the life of the plan
  - developing the strategic management roles of all senior and middle leaders across the whole school
  - ensuring that the governing body reviews and evidences all aspects of the school's work on a regular basis

- an external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The vast majority of pupils generally start at the school with standards that range from broadly average to above average. By the time the pupils reach the end of Year 6, attainment levels are close to average, but progress accelerates during Key Stages 3 and 4 so that at the end of Year 11, the pupils achieve above average for five or more A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. The performance of students in the sixth form is more variable, with some underperformance in AS level, but with much better performance at A-level so that overall, achievement is good.
- Overall, higher-attaining pupils achieve above average standards throughout their time in school. Girls generally do better than boys, but this gap is closing. Other groups of pupils, such as those who are disabled and those with special educational needs, and those entitled to support through the pupil premium, make similar rates of progress to those of their peers, with no significant gaps in overall performance.
- Last year's performance, detailed in the school's first nationally published results, showed some underperformance in the Year 1 phonics screening check, in pupils' progress in writing and mathematics between Key Stages 1 to 2, in pupils' achievement of the better grades in GCSE biological sciences, chemistry and French, and in the results from AS level examinations.
- However, the progress of pupils since September 2013 is showing that the school is maintaining those areas where there has previously been a good level of performance, while improving upon those areas which underperformed last year. These improvements have resulted, in part, from the school's regular collection and use of pupils' performance data to help inform teachers' planning.
- Those Year 7 pupils who were below the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 2 make up ground quickly through the catch-up initiative and are now progressing at a rate similar to that of their peers.
- Those pupils taking English literature, as part of the school's early entry policy, achieve above average results.
- The school's use of an off-site provider for a sixth-form drama student is making a positive contribution to that student's current achievement.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Although the vast majority of teaching is of a good or better quality across the school from the Early Years Foundation Stage to sixth form, some requires improvement because it is not challenging pupils of different abilities to progress their learning at a pace commensurate with their abilities. For example, there are some occasions when the most able pupils are not always given work that extends them in a way, which helps them apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in tasks that extend and deepen their understanding. However, for the vast majority of lessons, the most able pupils work productively at tasks that motivate and interest them to achieve well.
- Examples of where some work fails to really develop pupils' learning are seen in mathematics, where work did not sufficiently challenge or extend pupils' learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2 particularly, but not exclusively, in English, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to write at length so that they can develop both stamina in writing and the time to develop complex ideas. These exemplar characteristics, which were seen in both lessons and in the pupils' workbooks, including work which they had done at home, underpin why some teaching requires improvement.
- However, when teachers get the match of task right, as happens most of the time in school, pupils' progress is good or better, and their attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- Teachers are very well organised and work well with the pupils in lessons and around the school

more generally. As a result, the pupils know exactly how they should behave in lessons towards adults and their peers.

- Teachers are using information about pupils' prior performance to inform their planning and help them set targets for pupils' future learning and achievement. However, these targets are not always updated as regularly as they need to be as an aid to help students to raise further their aspirations to achieve the highest possible standards.
- Marking is regular, but varies in quality across different subjects. Some of the best marking is seen in English, where detailed comments about the quality of the work produced, and what the pupils must do to improve upon it, help them to develop their own ideas and extend their understanding of how they can produce work of a better standard.
- Homework is marked regularly and appropriately set across the school, with pupils saying that they enjoy working on tasks at home. A very large majority of parents who spoke with inspectors, or responded to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, said that homework was a real strength.
- Teaching generally provides opportunities for the pupils to read regularly, both for information and pleasure, and primary-aged pupils' records of their reading are shared and commented on by parents on a regular basis.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the school site, both in and out of lessons, in a calm and orderly manner.
- Pupils are punctual and are quickly ready to start work when they arrive in lessons. This means that best use is made of the lesson time available, which makes a major contribution to the good quality teaching and good pupil progress seen in the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- All of those parents who spoke with inspectors, and almost all who responded to the inspection questionnaire, confirm that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved and are safe.
- Pupils understand how to keep safe and are quick to recognise when bullying, in whatever form it takes, occurs.
- School records of bullying, anti-social behaviour or racist behaviour incidents show a very small number of incidents, but actions taken by staff are effective.
- Pupils say they enjoy attending school.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning in all lessons.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Senior leaders, including governors, have made rapid progress in developing the range of skills and competencies required of them since the school opened as a free school in September 2012. Their desire to make Grindon Hall a very successful school is clearly evident, but there are some areas where further improvements are needed. In particular, this relates to some aspects of the monitoring and evaluating done by senior and middle leaders, and particularly governors, to ensure that every aspect of leadership and management reach at least a consistently good standard.
- The leadership and management of actions to improve teaching are weaker aspects. Systems for evaluating the information derived from leaders' observations of teaching and linking this to training and development for teachers are not developed well enough. Consequently, the rate at which leaders are driving improvements in teaching quality, moving good practice to be outstanding and reducing the proportion of teaching that requires improvement, is not happening at a fast enough pace.
- The actions within the school improvement plan have merit and relevance to raising standards through improved quality of teaching. However, an absence of detail about the on-going

monitoring and evaluation strategies by which nominated staff or governors gather evidence about the rate of progress being made in each of the separate actions, and a lack of clear success measures, diminish the plan's effectiveness as a tool in driving school improvement.

- A further consequence of these relative weaknesses is that the current self-evaluation of the school's provision, submitted to inspectors and included as a key part of the school improvement plan, is limited in its use of robust progress evidence, gathered from both national comparisons and internally from within the school. This has led to some overgenerous current self-evaluation judgements.
- The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, and access a broad range of different areas of learning. Where the school has limited or no expertise in particular areas, senior leaders have made effective links with local providers to cater for individual pupils, for example, with Sunderland College for A-level drama. There are, however, more limited opportunities for pupils to develop their broader range of design technology skills, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4. A range of extra-curricular activities helps to enrich the learning opportunities for pupils.
- The school currently receives additional income, as part of the government's physical education and school sport initiative, and is using this to fund the appointment of a gymnastics coach, to support the further development of this activity in school. The early signs are that this is helping a number of children reach an excellent standard of performance.
- The school ensures that all safeguarding procedures meet with current regulations, including the checks required to ensure that all adults are suitable to work with the pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Recent training and external reviews are helping the governors to develop a better understanding of their role. Although they have a clear sense of what they need to do to fulfil this role, the degree to which they are holding the school to account, in particular senior leaders, is still developing and is yet to reach a level whereby it is robust and challenging enough against all aspects of the school's performance. This is particularly so in relation to the analysis and use of pupils' performance data so that they can challenge underperformance. The school's review of the pupil premium funding is detailed, but it is not sufficiently clear about the impact of different strategies used, including targeted support for named individuals in different activities, on improving their performance. This means that accurately assessing the impact of spending for each individual pupil is not yet fully secure, nor is it sufficiently identified as an important part of on-going priorities and actions in the school improvement plan.

## 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>	138567
<b>Local authority</b>	NA
<b>Inspection number</b>	425684

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Mainstream free school
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	541
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	56
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	R Mole
<b>Principal</b>	C Gray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5344444
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5344111
<b>Email address</b>	info@grindonhall.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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

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

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

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

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

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

