

The Grove Academy

Fourth Avenue, Watford, WD25 9RH

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few children reach the age related expectations by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Work does not consistently capture children's interest. Some find the work too easy and do not progress at a quick enough rate.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 are not high enough.
- Not all pupils are making sufficiently rapid progress in developing their writing skills.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Pupils' progress in the different year groups is variable.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low.
- Best use is not being made of the outdoor area to maximise the learning opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has the following strengths

- Owing to strong leadership by the principal, combined with the effective support from members of the Trust, the governing body and senior leaders, the academy is improving rapidly.
- Academy data show that over the last two terms pupils are making accelerated progress in the large majority of classes.
- Standards in reading and mathematics in the current Year 6 are broadly in line with expectations and are much higher than last year.
- The proportion of good or better teaching, especially in Key Stage 2, has increased significantly. There are now more examples of good and outstanding teaching on which the academy can build.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitude to work are good. In the occasional lesson it is exemplary. Their attendance has improved and is now average.
- Pupils get on well together and feel safe. The academy has recently been awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons, of which three were observed jointly with the principal. In addition, the inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly. They heard some pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and the principals of the sponsoring academies, Bovingdon and Hammond Academies.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the academy has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the development plan.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took account of the 82 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and 21 questionnaires returned by members of staff. Inspectors also looked at the results of recent parent surveys carried out by the academy.

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Lacey-Hastings	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Keen	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Grove Academy is much larger than the average-sized primary school. It is sponsored by the West Hertfordshire Academy Trust. The Academy opened in September 2012 as Berrygrove Academy and changed its name to The Grove Academy in September 2013.
- The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage is higher than that found in most schools. They come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average. None are currently at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority, and other eligible groups.
- The academy did not meet the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The principal and nearly all of the teachers have joined the academy since it opened in 2012. Approximately half of the teachers are new this academic year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that is consistently good or better in all year groups by:
 - building on and sharing the existing good and outstanding practice
 - raising some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that activities provide pupils with the level of challenge they need.
- Make certain that a greater proportion of children reach the age-related expectations by the end in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making more effective use of the extensive outdoor area to promote learning
 - increasing the amount and range of high quality resources for outdoor learning
 - providing more learning opportunities which capture the children's interest and help them work with sustained concentration.
- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in writing in Key Stage 2 by:
 - consolidating the recent improvements in the teaching of phonics and mathematics in Key Stage 1
 - focusing on developing in all pupils' wider vocabulary and accurate grammatical skills
 - encouraging pupils to use interesting vocabulary and figures of speech to bring their writing to life.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Too many pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have not made enough progress over the last five terms (since the academy opened). In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is better but inconsistent between year groups and classes. Pupils' progress in developing their writing skills is not as rapid as that in reading and mathematics.
- Many children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those expected for the age. They settle quickly and form good relationships with their classmates in a safe and secure environment. They make reasonable progress in the different areas of learning. However, few reach the expected levels by the time they enter the Reception class.
- Children's progress in the Reception classes is variable. In July 2013, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the year was below the national average.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2013 in reading, writing and mathematics were exceptionally low. Although pupils' progress has accelerated recently, standards in the current Year 2 are well below those expected for their age.
- In the 2013 Year 6 National tests the government's minimum targets for the proportion gaining Level 4 and making expected progress in mathematics, reading and writing was not met. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2013 were exceptionally low in mathematics and below average in reading and writing.
- The most recent assessment data suggest that standards are higher and the government's minimum targets are likely to be met. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average in mathematics and reading but below average in writing.
- In 2013, pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 6 did not reach the same standards as their classmates and made less progress. They were about a term behind in mathematics and half a term behind in reading and writing. More recent data suggest that over the last two terms pupils in Year 6 generating pupil premium funding made slightly better progress than their classmates. This is because the pupil premium funding is being spent appropriately to provide additional staff, further support for literacy and numeracy and to support a number of initiatives to generate pupils' interest in learning. However, as a result of the legacy of previous under attainment, there is still a gap in standards between the two groups. It is more evident in the older classes than the younger ones.
- Pupils' writing skills in most year groups are not as well developed as they should be. Some pupils make basic grammatical errors and others do not use a sufficiently broad vocabulary. Many pupils do not bring their writing to life by including features such as adjectives, similes, alliteration or metaphors. In contrast, some pupils are able to write fluently and sustain the reader's interest. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to develop their writing skills in other subjects.
- Pupils are making reasonable progress in developing their reading skills. Changes in the way that phonics (the sounds that letters make) are taught is resulting in more pupils reaching the expected level in the end of Year 1 phonics checks. However, they do not consistently apply their knowledge when undertaking writing tasks. Older pupils who find reading difficult do not have sufficiently secure phonics skills to help them read unfamiliar words. More confident readers select their own books and recommend titles and authors to their friends.

- In mathematics, pupils in most classes in Key Stage 2 are now making good progress in developing their mathematical skills. Recent, effective teaching in Year 6 has seen the pupils making accelerated and sometimes outstanding progress in developing their mathematical skills. Pupils in the Year 6 classes are working confidently and can explain clearly the terms 'mean', 'median', 'mode' and 'range'.
- Assessment data for all year groups show that over the last two terms pupils from all backgrounds, including the more able pupils, are now making at least the expected progress in most classes. In some classes in Key Stage 2 progress is good.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Their progress is checked regularly and they are given additional support to boost their progress when necessary.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good in all year groups to enable all pupils to make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and in a very small proportion of classes in Key Stage 2 requires improvement.
- Where learning is slower, the teacher's expectations of what some pupils can achieve are too low. They do not ensure that all pupils are working at the most appropriate level. As a result, some pupils find the work too easy and are not making rapid progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage best use is not being made of the extensive outdoor area to promote children's learning. The amount and range of good quality equipment to promote their learning is limited. Some activities do not capture the children's interests so that they do not always work with sustained concentration.
- The quality of teaching has improved dramatically over the last two terms. School records indicate that there is a much greater proportion of good and outstanding teaching and no inadequate teaching. This is corroborated by pupils' progress data and can be attributed to the expectations set by the principal, improved systems for checking on pupils' attainment and progress, and the systematic support given by senior leaders to all teachers within their phase of responsibility.
- In lessons where pupils make the best progress they find the work stimulating and enjoy the challenge. Teachers ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. As a result, the pupils work enthusiastically to complete the tasks. Teachers use questioning strategies effectively, probing and extending the pupils' understanding. More able pupils are challenged and find the work stimulating, a good example being in the Year 6 mathematics lessons on data handling, mentioned above.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved a great deal. There are many good examples of marking, with pupils being given clear guidance to improve their work. This helps them to make rapid progress and reach their challenging targets.
- Teaching assistants are usually deployed effectively and provide good support. Alongside the teachers, they strive to ensure that all pupils, including potentially vulnerable pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.

- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and encourage them to share their ideas with each other and with the adults. This promotes their social skills and their ability to communicate clearly with others. The outcome of emphasis placed on developing good relationships is reflected in the pupils' much improved behaviour.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It has improved a lot since the academy opened. The vast majority of pupils now apply themselves in lessons and have a much more positive attitude towards learning. In the occasional lesson their behaviour is exemplary. This is reflected in pupils' accelerating progress which is evident in their work over the last two terms.
- Most pupils behave well at all times. They move around the buildings sensibly and are generally polite and well-mannered in the way they speak to adults and to each other. Academy records show that exclusions, incidents of inappropriate behaviour and racist incidents have reduced significantly. Pupils say that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are now rare and, if any occur, they are dealt with fairly and swiftly by the senior leaders.
- Pupils are now proud of their school and most wear their new uniform with pride. Displays and equipment are treated with respect. There is no litter. They know about different types of bullying, for example, name-calling, fighting, racial bullying, or religious intolerance.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They appreciate the safety features around the school site and are aware of potential dangers when using the internet and when taking part in sporting and adventurous activities. Pupils know who to turn to if they are worried.
- Pupils' attendance is rising steadily and is currently average for primary schools. Better attendance and improvements in the quality of teaching are helping pupils to make accelerated progress.

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership by the principal and the effective support from the deputy principal and senior leaders are leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. Standards are rising, particularly in Key Stage 2, as the proportion of good and outstanding teaching increases.
- The principal sets high expectations. Assessment procedures have been reviewed. These are now much more robust and rigorous. The assessments are discussed in depth at the half-termly pupil progress meeting. Teachers are asked to explain if pupils are not making at least the expected progress and what they are going to do about it.
- Teachers are keen to improve their professional skills and regularly attend courses. Senior leaders work alongside teachers to improve their practice and to ensure greater consistency in the implementation of policies. This is proving to be more successful in Key Stage 2 than in the other key stages. Some teachers have not yet fully responded to the advice offered to ensure that their teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers plan together in their year groups so that pupils in parallel classes cover the same ground. In all classes, there is a focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. When possible other subjects are brought in through a theme or topic, details of which are uploaded

on a termly basis onto the school web site.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example, through educational visits, playing musical instruments and taking part in a wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities. The primary sports funding is being used appropriately to support some of the above and to employ specialist sports staff, for training teachers and extending the range of sporting activities clubs. As a result, staff are more confident in teaching a range of sports and pupils are eager to become involved. Pupils have a much better understanding of how sporting activities contribute to healthy living.
- Senior leaders and governors are keen to promote good relationships within the academy and the local community. Interactions between pupils are much more harmonious, with significantly fewer inappropriate incidents being reported. This has contributed to the academy gaining the Quality Inclusion Mark recently.
- The academy has some links with the local authority. It has bought in some support from the local authority to help improve provision and outcomes for pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Overseeing the work of the academy is undertaken jointly by the Trust and the governing body. The groups are working effectively with the principal and senior leaders to improve provision and outcomes for pupils. As members of the Trust, the principals of the two sponsoring academies regularly visit to offer guidance and to evaluate the academy's development. Their evaluations are spot on and reports are shared with the governing body. As a result, the governing body has an accurate view of the academy's strengths and areas for development. Members of the governing body attend courses and are developing their skills and understanding of governance well. Governors regularly ask the principal about the quality of teaching, pupils' attainment, their progress and behaviour. They will not accept discrimination of any sort. Their recent training on understanding pupils' performance data and making national comparisons helps them understand where teaching is consistently good and where additional support is needed. They know how targets are set for teachers to improve, and understand the process for rewarding good teaching. The academy meets the latest requirements for safeguarding. Members of the governing body check to make certain that procedures are followed and the site is safe
- The budget is overseen by the Trust and monitored to ensure that money, including the primary sports funding and the pupil premium allocation, are spent as intended. Members of the Trust set the principal suitably challenging targets. Checks on the progress of the actions to tackle the priorities identified in the development plan are undertaken regularly.

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	138507
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425162

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	655
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Anderson
Principal	Anne Heywood
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01923 674463
Fax number	01923 674461
Email address	admin@thegroveacademy.org.uk

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: 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 and 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.

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
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

