

# The Grove Special School

Grove Gardens, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 2EN

**Inspection dates** 14–15 July 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher's well-judged and determined leadership has resulted in all students achieving their full potential, despite the many setbacks they encounter.
- Senior leaders work skilfully together and have a very clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The consistent and rigorous analysis of data enables them to ensure that the quality of teaching and students' achievement continue to improve.
- Senior leaders are very well supported by middle leaders who have a range of diverse talents and skills.
- Governors are very supportive of the school and constantly challenge leaders to provide the best provision possible for all students.
- Students' behaviour and their attitudes are excellent. Extremely effective arrangements are in place to ensure that all students are very safe. The safeguarding work with the special care class is exemplary.
- The provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders is outstanding.
- Students consistently make sustained and outstanding progress.
- Experienced and well-trained staff provide exceptionally high levels of care and ensure that progress is outstanding. Continuing professional development is well linked to the performance management of the staff and students' progress.
- The teaching assistants are a huge strength of the school. They are very well trained and constantly focus on students' well-being and academic achievements. The therapy team, including the school nurse, are instrumental in delivering high quality intervention when it is needed.
- All the support staff, including the caretaker, office staff and kitchen staff, are included in training and support students' welfare and personal development well.
- Early years education ensures that all children get off to an excellent start so that they are fully ready for Year 1.
- Students' achievements in the sixth form are outstanding thanks to the targeted support that the students constantly receive.
- Technology, art and sports are strengths of the school. The curriculum provision is outstanding.
- However, the different communication programmes used in the school for students with the most complex needs are not always familiar to, or used proficiently by, all staff.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in many lessons involving different teachers. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Walks around the school were conducted and learning was observed in different key stages with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils from Years 2, 7 and 9 read. The inspector observed support for students in whole-class sessions, in groups and with individual students.
- The inspector looked in detail at the work in students' books, files and online from across the age groups in the school. The inspector held a meeting with two groups of students where they talked about their work and their perceptions of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff and different groups of students. She interviewed members of the governing body and spoke to representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation including: the school's summary of its view of its own performance; the school development plan; policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding; information about students' attendance and behaviour; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; information about students' achievement and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- There were 12 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). The inspector discussed summaries of the school's own parental questionnaires. She also took account of the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Jean Tarry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Grove Special School is much smaller than the average-sized all-through school.
- It is a community school that caters for day students aged two to 19. All the students have statements of special educational need, an education health and care plan or (if from Scottish borders/an out-of-authority placement) a co-ordinated support plan. They have profound or severe learning difficulties. Around half of the students have complex communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders.
- In 2015, there was a redesignation of the school to include provision for very young children aged two. However, there are no two-year-olds on site at present.
- The Reception children are integrated into Key Stage 1 and these children attend full time. There are some who attend the Nursery and this is part-time provision for them.
- The sixth form department is in a separate building across the road. This is known to parents as the Business and Enterprise class. These students are taught in purpose-built accommodation.
- The school works closely with the other schools in the locality and delivers special needs outreach work and training to support students in mainstream schools and other settings.
- Approximately half the students are supported through Northumberland's and the Scottish Borders Children with Disabilities team and some have varying degrees of respite care.
- There are some students who enter the school at various times during the school year and they are admitted from a wide catchment area.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported through the pupil premium, is above the national average. The pupil premium is funding the school receives to support those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Since the last inspection the school has had a number of refurbishments, such as the new library, upgrading the lightworks/sensory room, the new therapy room, a new classroom and the extension to a classroom and the headteacher's office.
- The school has a range of clubs, including the breakfast club and after-school care that are managed by the governing body. There is also a holiday club organised for students at the school.
- The school has received a number of awards over the past three years, including the Artsmark Silver Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark Award, Inclusion Quality Mark Award, Equalities Award, Sainsbury School Games Gold Award, International Eco-Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award and Anti-Bullying Accreditation.

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

- Develop a joined-up approach so that all parties are involved in the planning and delivery of the different speech, language and communication programmes in use in the school, by:
  - ensuring that all staff receive high quality training in this area so that they know exactly how to plan and deliver appropriate activities to ensure that all students make even more rapid and sustained progress with their communication skills across all the different subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's leadership is extremely effective. Her drive to provide a high quality of education for all students is absolutely exemplary. The deputy headteacher supports this work very well and has been instrumental, with the senior leader, in monitoring and evaluating curricular provision.
- The leaders have ensured an effective approach in the marking of students' work, particularly for the most able students and those who have complex special educational needs. The analysis of data by leaders is rigorous and all staff take ownership of tracking students' progress in order to enhance students' achievement to the maximum.
- The senior leadership team shares new ideas and looks for ways to improve the school's work. Leaders demonstrate that students' progress has really improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders' checks of the school's performance ensure that they have an excellent understanding of what is working really well and what requires much more attention. Plans to make improvements are discussed regularly at leadership meetings and action is taken very quickly, for example, with training for governors.
- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection because leaders make regular checks on its quality. Senior leaders look carefully at the plans for lessons, the lessons taught and the students' progress in their work. A typical staff comment is, 'I love my job and gain a huge sense of achievement. I am very proud to work here. It's a great place to work as our training is very focused on the priorities for the students' learning.'
- The management of teachers' performance through setting targets linked to students' performance is very good and has a very positive impact on students' learning over time.
- The work of middle leaders is effective. They ensure that there is much that enriches the curriculum and they strive to make it as exciting as possible.
- Students experience a range of activities such as outdoor pursuits on residential trips, football in the local sports hall, supermarket shopping, café trips and a whole range of visits and visitors to the school. The school website has examples of how students make good progress as they learn about life in a multicultural society and our British values. They learn about democracy as they vote to elect school council members.
- The school develops students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness exceptionally well. Students are taught to be reflective and to persevere with their writing and reading tasks. They are taught to be resilient in their mathematical development, especially when they have to solve challenging problems, such as measuring the wax or the wick needed for candle-making.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted exceptionally well and leaders are committed to tackling discrimination of any kind. Leaders ensure that students behave exceptionally well and that very positive relationships are established, particularly with parents and outside agencies. A typical comment from a parent is, 'Locals say Berwick has got this right. This school does a cracking job for our most vulnerable children. We're very proud of this school and the leaders are a huge support to the families involved.'
- The leaders work exceptionally hard to ensure the children have exciting opportunities in sport, French, music, information and communication technology (ICT) and a range of pursuits, such as the residential to The Calvet Trust Centre in Kielder, visits to London and Seahouses to name but a few.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is being used very effectively. For example, it pays for specialist coaches to teach cricket, swimming or yoga and this has a very positive impact on teachers' own knowledge and practice for giving future lessons.
- Strong leadership ensures that the pupil premium funding is used extremely well to ensure that eligible students make as much progress as others in the school. There are always very small numbers in each year group and this often distorts the figures. Sometimes there is only one student in a particular year group.
- Leaders monitor the whole-school provision very well by looking very carefully at the attendance, behaviour and progress of students on a regular basis. There are also excellent procedures and policies for safeguarding students; these fully meet requirements and are very effective. For example, students who have the most complex needs report that they have very positive learning experiences and feel very safe in school. Leaders are also very good at advising students about the next steps in their education and training.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support. Its support for governance has been very effective. Recently this has included work on how to check on the assessment and tracking of students' progress as they journey through the school.

### ■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is knowledgeable and has a range of skilled professionals on board. Governors know the school very well and use all the information and data about students' progress very effectively to compare the school's performance with that of other similar schools locally and nationally. They have ensured that governance has improved since the last inspection and it is now highly effective. Governors provide excellent, robust, rigorous support and challenge in a quest for on-going improvement across the school. Governors know how good the quality of teaching is and will not stand for anything less than consistently good or better for the students at the school. Governors know the importance of focused school performance management and its link to pay progression. They always ensure that the pupil premium is used very effectively to make a significant difference to the individual students concerned, resulting in outstanding progress. The governing body checks on the impact that funding has on students' progress in all subjects and has made a very positive impact on the improvements made in many areas over the last three years.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. There is a very calm, orderly approach to the beginning and end of the school day. Students' attitude to their work is exemplary and this makes a very positive contribution to their outstanding progress. Activities in all their lessons always capture students' interest and so they enjoy their lessons. Students are often very engaged and this ensures that the pace of their learning is rapid.
- Students are proud of their school and of their achievements. A typical comment from a student is, 'The school has taught me about my own behaviour, safety and how to get on with other people. They teach us to be more independent. We learn how to iron, to cook, to clean and how to make a business work.' Students agree that the school is helping them to improve their academic achievement, behaviour and social well-being.
- The students are clear about what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour on the playground and in class. Adults are excellent role models for students, particularly in relation to attitudes and manners. Playtime supervision is very effective as students feel very safe and they know that they have an adult to go to if they need any assistance.
- When asked what is special about the school, students say, 'All the staff are very friendly and we enjoy coming to school. It's like a family. All the teachers help us to do our work and to learn lots of new things.'
- The students are very polite and well-mannered to one another, to staff and to visitors. They help and support one another well in the dining room, in class and outside on the playground. They really enjoy reflection time during lessons and are taught to listen to one another. They often discuss their ideas sensibly to improve their own learning.
- Students are well-behaved in and out of the classroom. The older students look after the younger students in the dining hall or on the playground and this develops their sense of responsibility. The school council ensures that students develop their skills in speaking, listening and valuing others' opinions. They also listen really well to one another in their class groups as they practise their basic skills. They discuss issues that concern them, such as addiction to sugar and the amount of sugar in drinks bought locally.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. There are so many aspects of this work which are excellent, for example the regular meetings which ensure that all staff have a really accurate overview of individual students, to ensure they are kept really safe and well. The timely intervention by well-trained, highly-focused staff allows students to catch up rapidly with their classmates and this makes them feel happier, safe and secure.
- Learning about the many different types of bullying features in assemblies and lessons to good effect. Consequently students are able to recognise the difference between bullying and falling out. They informed the inspector that bullying very rarely occurs and when it does, staff are extremely vigilant in monitoring the situation and they sort issues out very quickly. The students are very confident about approaching any adult in school if they need help to resolve any issue.
- Attendance is a high priority resulting in attendance which is in line with the national average in similar schools. Staff have effectively impressed upon parents the need for their children to attend school regularly and this has paid dividends. Students really do enjoy coming to this school as they want to learn more. They realise the need for really good attendance and enjoy the rewards they receive when they

come to school regularly. Some individuals have a number of medical appointments which they must attend and this can affect the attendance figures.

### **The quality of teaching**

**is outstanding**

- The impact of the quality of the teaching over time is outstanding. This is because activities given to students very clearly build on what they already know and can meet students' varying needs and abilities exceptionally well.
- Expectations of what students are capable of achieving are exceptionally high in all key stages. For example, students are expected to solve mathematical problems and show the working out. They are moved on as soon as they need more challenge. The teaching of mathematics is strong throughout the school because of well-matched provision, particularly for the most able. Students are involved in relevant practical mathematical activities that engage and interest them so that they make rapid progress. For example; students find it fascinating as they measure the sugar in fruit drinks, or learn what money they save as they find free leisure activities, or work out timetables for travel and costs involved in trips, or learn what the temperature dial means on the iron as they learn how to iron a shirt.
- Teaching of English has improved strongly, especially in writing. Work always meets the needs of the students and they are motivated and interested in their writing tasks, such as writing poems about their school, because they find it relevant. In addition, the quality of marking is strong across the different subjects or classes, meaning that students are clear about how to improve their writing.
- The improvements in the teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and the sounds that they make) has had a positive impact on students' standards in reading across the school. The students, and particularly the most able, are challenged with their reading tasks and enjoy the range of material on offer in the new library.
- Some staff are not fully competent with the individual, often bespoke, speech, language and communication programmes for some of the students with very complex needs. The teachers' plans do not always clearly identify a joined-up approach with all involved across the different subjects.
- Learning support assistants are very well trained in general. They have the necessary skills to support students in English and mathematics fully. They build important relationships with students. They are kept sufficiently well informed of what students are expected to learn and what is needed to help to promote rapid progress. As with other staff, the exception is with some of the specialist speech, language and communication skills. Students appreciate the valuable input of the support staff, which enables most of them to make good and often outstanding progress, in both their academic and personal development.

### **The achievement of pupils**

**is outstanding**

- The students achieve extremely well during their time at the school. Students enter school with significantly below average attainment. Sometimes the education of some of the students has previously been disrupted over a period of time before arriving at The Grove. Students' progress is outstanding overall in reading, writing and mathematics, considering their starting points. All students spoken to during the inspection said that they thoroughly enjoy their lessons and thought that they were making significant progress at the school thanks to the lessons and teachers' help and support.
- Students' efforts in lessons and in their individual work are helping them to make rapid progress and to compensate for any previous gaps in their learning. In a food technology lesson, for example, students were engaged and motivated to complete their tasks of measuring the ingredients for making cheese scones or a tasty tray-bake for other students. Their efforts were recorded and students were given instant verbal feedback about their achievements.
- Achievement in reading is outstanding. Students often talk about how they follow their own interests with their different books, comics, adventures, science fiction or internet research work. All students make significant progress with their reading skills as a result of very effective teaching and support. Students use the new school library books effectively to extend their reading skills and to encourage a love of reading and enjoyment of books. Those who find reading difficult are supported well through individually tailored programmes to make rapid progress.
- Achievement in mathematics is excellent, especially when linked to other subjects. Students solve mathematical problems, such as gathering the relevant information independently, and learn to work together well by discussing the different ways to accomplish a set task, such as planning a trip.
- By the time they leave school, students' attainment is usually below average. However, all students make at least good and very often outstanding progress. All students leave with some qualifications. For



example, they achieve ASDAN qualifications in Life Skills or Functional Skills at Entry Level 1, 2 or 3 in English and mathematics.

- Most students go on to further education in the sixth form. This reflects the determination of the school's leaders and managers to ensure that students succeed at the next stage of their education.
- Those students who enter the school at various times during the school year make at least good progress.
- There is very little difference between the performances of different groups of students. The number of students in each group is so small that an analysis of their comparative performance does not generate meaningful statistics. However, inspection evidence, along with students' work, confirms that all groups of students are making at least good progress and often outstanding progress. For example, the disadvantaged and the non-disadvantaged students achieve equally well.
- The most able students make excellent progress as their work often provides an extra level of challenge so that they are stretched and achieve their full potential in all subject areas, and particularly in English and mathematics.

### **The early years provision**

**is outstanding**

- All the children start with skills that are significantly below those typically seen in children of this age, owing to their specific needs. Children make outstanding progress during their time in the early years because they are supported extremely well so that they start to acquire literacy and numeracy skills. When they leave the Reception Year, although their skills are still below those expected for children of this age, they are very well prepared for their next stage of learning in their next class.
- The teaching is organised exceptionally well and provides a very calm atmosphere so children feel safe and secure at all times in the setting. All the relationships are very positive and conducive to outstanding progress for all the children involved. The teaching ensures that learning is really enjoyable and that the activities provided meet children's varying needs and abilities. For example, they enjoy learning about the letters and the sounds that they make as they search for the correct letters in the water or sand. Some children investigate early number or writing skills through mark-making with a variety of textures. Children are fascinated to learn about French culture through the coffee and smell of the cheese or the texture of different foods. They enjoy learning about the life of a butterfly and the story of The Gruffalo and remember facts from the previous lesson.
- Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's social skills and their readiness for learning before they enter their next class. Children clear up after themselves and then make their own decisions about what they want to play with next. They follow instructions from adults carefully and behave very well indeed. The outdoor provision provides children with so many relevant opportunities to develop their skills, such as planting and growing carrots, onions and potatoes to use in cooking.
- Excellent leadership and management ensure that provision in the early years is very strong. The staff ensure that safety procedures are thorough and that the partnerships with parents are extremely effective. The use of their children's records of achievement with home to school links are a particularly useful way of sharing valuable information. Parents are very pleased and agree that the early years provision is helping their children achieve excellent outcomes.
- The school works actively to involve the pre-school settings in transition programmes, especially with children in the special care class. There are very strong relationships with these providers and this helps children to settle into their new school with ease.

### **The sixth form provision**

**is outstanding**

- The sixth form students are very proud of their Business and Enterprise class. It is very clear from inspection evidence and by looking at students' work that students are making outstanding progress. The data on students' progress are used consistently well by all staff to plan learning.
- The arrangements for transition into the sixth form ensure that students are well prepared for the sixth form and settle very quickly. Students further develop their personal skills at a rapid rate. They use and apply their skills in a wide range of situations, such as cooking, ironing, shopping, photocopying, reading the newspapers, disabled sports and helping other students with their needs. Students' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary. They always try their very best to meet the high expectations of all staff. The students are proud to be involved in their own learning.
- Teaching is outstanding as the staff encourage students to express their views confidently, explore choices, to reflect, ask questions, and answer in a sensible way. Students are proud of their qualifications

as they gain Functional Skills Level 1, 2 and 3 and ASDAN qualifications.

- The arrangements to prepare students for their move to post-19 provision are being developed. Students experience the world of work in areas such as office duties with photocopying, or as a teaching assistant, or in catering or working with motor mechanics or animals.
- Sixth form provision is led and managed well by a knowledgeable senior leader. Students feel safe and safety and welfare requirements are fully met. As a result, students are settled, secure and confident. Teamwork is a considerable strength and has a significant impact on students' outstanding achievement. A typical comment from students was, 'We like the Business and Enterprise work we do. We are able to make money to fund our own London trips which we have to plan ourselves. This gives us a real sense of achievement and makes us more confident.'



## 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>	122385
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	449488

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	45
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	12
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Laurence Pearson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01289 306390
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