

Grange Junior School

Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon SN3 4JY

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Actions taken by leaders, including governors, to move the school forward and to fully address the issues of the previous inspection have been hampered by continuing uncertainty and changes in leadership and staffing. As a result, they have not yet secured consistently good or better teaching across the school.
- Teachers' and pupils' own expectations of what pupils should achieve are not always high enough. As a result, pupils' progress is not improving quickly enough and requires improvement.
- Some pupils show an over-reliance on adults rather than thinking for themselves. Others do not always challenge themselves to produce their very best work. Consequently, their behaviour for learning requires improvement.
- Leaders, especially middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects, do not always play a big enough part in checking and developing teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders are not making full use of existing strengths in teaching to secure equally good practice across the school.
- Pupils do not always make the best use of the guidance they receive from marked work and this slows their progress.
- New assessment procedures are not yet underpinned by consistently accurate checks of pupils' progress in all classes.
- Pupils' handwriting skills and their accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not emphasised or developed well enough in all classes.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders, aided by governors, are steadfastly bringing the school out of a difficult period of uncertainty and change.
- The school is a welcoming place where very supportive relationships strongly promote British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school safeguards pupils and secures their welfare effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe and are well looked after. They know how to stay safe and to keep each other safe.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their rate of attendance is above average.
- Leaders' actions are rapidly improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics, and show a capacity to improve further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning and accelerate the progress of all pupils by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently set and encourage high expectations of what pupils should achieve
 - develop pupils' ability to contribute more and take greater responsibility for their own learning
 - insist that all pupils respond fully to the guidance given in teachers' marking and quickly improve their work
 - share the good and better practice already evident in parts of the school.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - establishing consistently high expectations of well-presented work
 - emphasising the importance of legible handwriting, and accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write extensively and imaginatively.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that leaders at all levels, especially middle leaders, have the skills needed to hold teachers accountable for improving the quality of teaching and the progress their pupils make
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' progress are based on reliable information and are implemented with consistent effectiveness in all classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders' ability to bring about improvement since the previous inspection has been impeded by continuing uncertainty in securing the substantive position of the new headteacher.
- Continued instability in other leadership roles and in teaching staff has also hindered efforts to fully address the issues of the previous inspection and to make full use of expertise across the federation. In particular, steps taken to secure consistently good teaching have not been effective enough.
- Increasingly, in recent terms, despite these difficulties, the previously acting and now newly appointed substantive headteacher has steadily moved the school forward and quickened the pace of improvement. She has been aided by sustained support from governors and the relatively new assistant headteacher.
- In particular, leaders' determined and well-considered actions have significantly strengthened the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics, and show a renewed capacity to improve further in both mathematics and other areas.
- Although the period of uncertainty has now ended, some teachers are newly appointed and others now have changed senior or middle leadership responsibilities. Consequently, some leadership roles and skills are still being developed and have not been in place long enough to have a strong enough impact in bringing improvement. For example, they are not yet making full use of the existing strong practice in the school to share skills and secure consistently good teaching.
- The headteacher, with increasing support from new senior leaders and better-informed governors, checks the work of the school accurately. Leaders identify and target the right priorities for improvement within a detailed school improvement plan.
- The headteacher now focuses management of staff performance and pay progression more effectively than in the past on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. However, procedures have not yet been in place long enough or implemented with sustained rigour to establish consistently good teaching in all classes.
- Staff promote very supportive relationships with pupils, treat them equally and do not tolerate discrimination. This is seen in the way they work closely with outside agencies and with parents to support those pupils considered vulnerable due to their circumstances. Leaders and staff are also mindful and diligent in addressing the needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders, including governors, have strengthened their checks to ensure effective use of additional government funding. As a result, the pupil premium is used efficiently to help disadvantaged pupils learn as well as other pupils.
- The school provides a well-balanced and broad curriculum that gives pupils interesting topics to study. In recent terms, pupils have been offered more opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, especially in music and sport, which pupils enjoy and in which they increasingly excel.
- The staff promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school has also developed a coordinated programme to promote pupils' understanding of British values and to prepare them for life in modern Britain effectively. For example, displays and class routines are supported by a focus on specific values such as tolerance, respect and cooperation. These are further emphasised during assemblies. Issues such as democracy are also explored well through elections to the school council and currently, for example, by exploring pupils' views about planned development of outdoor learning facilities.
- The primary sports funding is used effectively to provide specialist coaching to develop teachers' expertise and pupils' skills and fitness. Funds are increasingly used to enable pupils to take part in competitive sports events such as 'The Swindon Partnership School Games'. Over the past year, the school has also introduced new after-school sports clubs such as netball, cricket and rugby. School records show that about 20 pupils now attend the netball and tag-rugby clubs with over 40 pupils participating in Kwik Cricket.
- The past uncertainty in leadership and instability in staffing at the school also hindered the local authority's efforts to provide effective support. Since the previous inspection, school leaders have not always been held to account with sufficient rigour to secure a faster pace of improvement. The local authority has been able to provide more effective support this academic year, for example in helping to improve provision in mathematics.

- A large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents and appreciate the supportive relationships with staff. However, a minority of parents recognise the degree to which past disruption in leadership has hampered the drive to improve the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors meet their statutory responsibilities well. They have provided determined stewardship to sustain a supportive level of continuity during a period of uncertainty and change. Governors continue to stand ‘four square’ with the headteacher and share her desire and efforts to drive rapid improvement in the work of the school. Governors now receive good information from the headteacher. They have reorganised their structure with the two joint Chairs of the Governing Body providing a strong lead in ensuring that the right priorities for improvement are identified. Governors are better informed than in the past and ensure that staff leaders are held to account for bringing the desired improvements in teaching and learning. Governors undertake training regularly and have a clear understanding of how the school’s performance compares with that of other schools and needs to improve. Governors ensure that pupils receiving additional funding are making better progress this year. However, they know that as with other pupils, they have not yet sustained good enough progress over time.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that procedures for vetting staff, assessments of risks at the school and on trips, and policies to secure pupils’ welfare fully comply with the statutory requirements. Leaders and staff liaise well with parents and are particularly diligent in supporting pupils who may be at risk to keep them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement as it is not yet promoting consistently good progress for all pupils across different year groups and classes.
- This is because some teachers are not yet using new assessment procedures effectively and do not always set high enough expectations of the quality of pupils’ work, especially writing. When questioned, some pupils said, ‘We could be challenged more.’
- Some teachers do not always challenge pupils sufficiently to learn for themselves and produce their very best work. Consequently, pupils’ responses to teachers’ marking of their written work too often vary in quality. This leads to some pupils repeating mistakes and not improving their handwriting, spelling and punctuation sufficiently in their next piece of work.
- A few teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in questioning pupils to check their understanding during lessons and this, too, limits progress.
- Even so, renewed stability in leadership and teaching this academic year has supported a faster pace of improvement. This is evident in the majority of good teaching and learning observed during the inspection, and increasingly in the school’s own checks of pupils’ learning. For example, there have been good improvements in the way teachers use displays to celebrate pupils’ work and to provide advice and targets to promote improvement.
- Teachers have improved learning in mathematics by focusing more specifically and effectively over the past year on motivating pupils and raising basic numeracy skills.
- Teachers have also responded well to the strong direction from the mathematics subject leader and now set clearer objectives to pupils about what they will learn.
- Teachers give good guidance about how pupils should edit and correct their work and this is deepening pupils’ learning, especially in mathematics. Pupils say that they enjoy the challenges given to them in the before-school mathematics club.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make sure that pupils are kept safe. They also ensure that pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and those who are disadvantaged, are supported well by additional government funding and receive effective assistance.
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to visit the well-stocked school library and to read books for enjoyment and to extend their learning, including when studying specific topics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The supportive and encouraging care and social and moral guidance promoted by all staff lead to pupils' equally respectful and appreciative relationships. This warm interaction, which pupils also share with each other, supports their physical and emotional well-being.
- Although comments from parents vary, most do suggest that their children are well looked after.
- Pupils talk confidently about their friendships and helpful relationships at school. Pupils respond in a similarly positive way to the school's effective emphasis on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils learn to respect the views of others and to act as responsible citizens, and demonstrate a good understanding of British values.
- Pupils are polite to staff and to visitors, willingly stepping back, holding doors open and warmly greeting them as they move about the school.
- Pupils undertake out-of-class responsibilities, including on the school council, diligently. They talk enthusiastically about their current involvement in planning improvements to the school's outdoor facilities. Inspection findings and pupils' views indicate that this is a recent development and that their ability to take more responsibility is not always fully developed.
- The school's records show that staff provide timely and good support to vulnerable pupils and those with behavioural and emotional needs. They also show that there is little bullying in the school with the very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour being dealt with effectively.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying might take and, for example, know how to use computers safely to stay safe from cyber bullying. One pupil said, 'There's been meetings with our parents and lots of "cyber bullying" education going on in the school.'
- Leaders and staff work well together to ensure that procedures for keeping pupils safe are implemented effectively. Consequently, pupils feel safe and know well how to keep themselves and each other safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Observations of pupils' responses in class and their work in books, particularly writing, showed inconsistency in teachers' and pupils' expectations of their behaviour for learning. While some teachers set high standards, especially in mathematics, a few do not expect enough of pupils or develop their self-learning skills sufficiently. As a result, some pupils too often do not produce their best work or strive to improve it quickly enough, and their progress is restricted.
- Inconsistency in pupils' behaviour for learning contrasts sharply with the way they warmly relate to adults and each other.
- Pupils behave well and act courteously and sensibly as they move around the school. At times, they behave extremely well, as seen during the inspection in the singing assembly when they were challenged to show initiative and express themselves. Pupils mix and play well together; very occasionally physical play at break times is over-robust.
- Pupils say that behaviour is better now than in the past. Most parents who responded to Parent View expressed agreement with this view, but several still have concerns about behaviour and how it dealt with.
- Pupils' above-average attendance continues to reflect their enjoyment of school and the effective work of leaders, in partnership with parents, in reducing absence.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Although pupils' above-average attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 has reflected improvement since the previous inspection, it has not represented good enough progress, especially by the most-able pupils, from their starting points.
- Inspection findings show that this continues to be the case, particularly in writing. Although pupils are developing their writing skills well in some classes, progress in writing still requires improvement because teachers' and pupils' expectations are not consistently high enough in all classes.
- Too often, for example, limited expectations result in poorly presented work and slow the development of pupils' skills in handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- At times, pupils, including the most able, do not have enough opportunity to express their ideas by writing extensively and imaginatively. This further weakens their ability to make the good and better progress needed to fill gaps in previous learning and to prepare them fully for the next stage of their education.
- School records, work in pupils' books and observations of pupils' learning in lessons shows that strengthened leadership and teaching of mathematics have improved progress in all classes.
- Pupils are increasingly responding well to the teachers' increased emphasis on developing their ability to think and reason, and to apply their improving skills by tackling mathematical problems. This is quickening pupils' progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability make similarly good progress as their classmates and other pupils nationally in mathematics and reading. This is because pupils are given work that is planned accurately to meet their needs, and receive effective support to ensure that their progress does not stall. The quickened progress now made by disadvantaged pupils also reflects the effective work of leaders, in partnership with parents, in raising their attendance. This enables them to benefit from the extra support provided at school. As a result, any gaps between the attainments of disadvantaged pupils compared with those of their peers across the different year groups are being steadily closed.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They benefit from frequent opportunities to refer to particular texts and favourite stories during topic work across the range of subjects and during English lessons. For example, pupils in Year 3 study the Stone Age and pupils in Year 6 read passages from *Macbeth* to advance their reading skills and understanding of adverbial clauses.
- An increasing number of pupils across the school also make good progress and show talent, especially when challenged to express themselves in music, singing and sports.

School details

Unique reference number	126207
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	100012343

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Joint Chairs	Sarah Hurley and Chris Speller
Headteacher	Louise Seavill
Telephone number	01793 822405
Website	www.grangefederation.co.uk
Email address	office@grangefederation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2014

Information about this school

- This junior school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- Pupils are taught in single year group classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is federated with the adjacent infant school.
- There have been significant changes in leadership and teaching, and much uncertainty about the position of headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The new substantive headteacher was officially appointed in February this year after serving in an acting headteacher role for the previous three terms.
- The work of both schools in the federation is now overseen by the headteacher and a single governing body. Leadership in each school is also aided by an assistant-headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons and saw the work of 15 teachers. They were accompanied by the headteacher and assistant headteacher during most of these visits to lessons.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's analysis of how well it is improving. The inspectors examined the school's systems for checking progress and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors talked to individual pupils and a representative group of pupils about the school and their work. They listened to individual pupils read and attended two assemblies and a before-school mathematics club. The inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body. Inspectors also held meetings with school staff, mainly senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed in the 59 online responses to Parent View and in 10 staff and 57 pupil questionnaires. They gathered the views of several parents during informal meetings at the school during the inspection and took account of a letter from a parent.
- The inspectors considered the school's use of the primary physical education and sports funding and the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Marion Borland	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector

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