

The Grange School

Latham Avenue, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 5DX

Inspection dates

7–8 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils are not making as much progress as they should in the secondary phase.
- Teaching is improving throughout the school but some weaker teaching remains in the secondary phase, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Most pupils behave well but lessons in the secondary phase are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour.
- The attitude to learning of some secondary pupils is too casual. Pupils do not always apply themselves to making the most of their education.
- Some pupils lack confidence in their own abilities. Some do not respond to teachers' advice and guidance in marking comments.
- Rates of exclusions have increased but this is partly because the school is setting higher expectations for pupils' conduct and behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- In a short period of time, the headteacher, deputy headteachers and governors have galvanised the staff and brought about significant improvements to teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes.
- Teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes in the primary phase are consistently good.
- Good progress has been made in the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. There is now a real sense of unity across the primary and secondary phases and good practice is shared regularly. Transition arrangements are exemplary.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and this enables them to make good progress.
- The school provides first-rate pastoral care for pupils facing challenging circumstances. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe.
- Children make good, and sometimes excellent, progress in the early years. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is especially strong.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement for all pupils in the secondary phase, particularly in mathematics and science, by making sure that:
 - teaching is challenging and deepens pupils' thinking skills
 - teaching is consistently engaging, motivating and interesting
 - teachers have higher expectations for what pupils can and should achieve, especially in relation to the most able pupils
 - teachers set higher expectations of the quality of presentation in pupils' work, in line with the school's marking policy
 - the funding used to support disadvantaged pupils is spent more effectively to accelerate their progress.

- Improve the behaviour and attitudes to learning of pupils in the secondary phase, by:
 - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the school's agreed behaviour management policy
 - providing training for staff in a wider variety of approaches to prevent challenging behaviour from disturbing lessons
 - using tutor time effectively so that pupils are better prepared for learning
 - improving pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence and communication skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been pivotal in turning the school around. She is well supported by the new senior leadership team. Leaders know and understand their roles and responsibilities very well. They give clear and unequivocal messages about what can be achieved and how it is to be done. New leaders are well aware that there is much more to be done. The impact of leaders' work this year is evident in better teaching and rising standards.
- Leaders have set about improving teaching as the highest priority. A comprehensive programme of training is used to develop practice and improve teaching throughout the school. Good practice is shared across the primary and secondary phases. Teachers have improved their use of assessment information so that lessons are set at the right level.
- Assessment is much more accurate. Leaders know how well pupils are doing and which ones might be falling behind and are in need of additional support. Middle leaders check on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects effectively. They are rising to the greater challenge set by the headteacher and making a strong contribution to school improvement.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour policy. Not all staff have had training in this new system and some are still getting used to it. Teachers apply rewards and sanctions fairly. Behaviour is checked carefully and nearly all pupils spoken with say that behaviour is better, although they recognise some pupils are less motivated to learn. The pastoral teams are making rigorous efforts to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Leadership in the early years and primary phases is highly effective. Good provision has been maintained since the previous inspection and outcomes for pupils have improved.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. These pupils start their learning in the resource bases but move into their usual classes, with support, as soon as possible. The resource bases are used for specialist input for individual pupils and small groups when necessary. Staff are immensely experienced and carefully check on how well pupils are learning. They make sure that teaching is effective and that pupils are making good progress. Leaders ensure that there is strong engagement with parents and other professionals to support the progress of these pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported well and additional funding is now being used effectively. In the recent past, the funding was not leading to better progress for disadvantaged pupils. The gap between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally did not reduce. New leaders have evaluated what is working well and made changes. Catch-up funding is used to support pupils in Year 7 who have lower reading ages and are struggling with spelling, writing and mathematics. The recent review of how these funds are used concluded that they are being used effectively. All the recommendations made in the review have been implemented and the gaps in attainment and progress are narrowing in both the primary and secondary phases.
- The curriculum is well planned to provide a good range of courses for pupils of all abilities. In the primary phase, the focus is on developing reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils very much enjoy the access they have to the superb facilities in the secondary phase of the school and the specialist teaching they receive in science, physical education and computing, among other subjects. Secondary pupils are able to take different qualifications depending on their interests and abilities. Subjects are enhanced by many visits to places such as Jodrell Bank and special event days focusing on areas such as science, health and modern languages.
- Leaders have invested the primary physical education and sport funding in training for staff in the teaching of gymnastics. This has resulted in much improved staff confidence and wider opportunities for pupils to enjoy gymnastics and improve their skills and abilities. Funds have also been used to support outdoor activities such as canoeing and forest skills. After-school clubs are now oversubscribed as more pupils choose to attend.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding and appreciation of British values are fostered effectively through many subjects. For example, the school has hosted a recent Anne Frank exhibition. Another example was in Year 5. Pupils considered what to showcase at an Olympic opening ceremony to show the best of British values. Pupils understand and subscribe to the school's key values, summed up in the word 'aspire'.
- Transition arrangements between different phases of the school are excellent. The partnership between primary and secondary staff ensures that pupils' progress from one phase to another is well managed and effective. The school is sharing this expertise with other schools in the local area.

- School leaders carefully select alternative provision placements and check rigorously on the progress and attendance of pupils.
- Many parents praise the improvements they see in teaching and the progress their children make. A minority expressed concerns. Some parents suggest that arrangements for where the younger pupils enter and leave the building need to be improved. School leaders are aware of these concerns and are working with the local authority to address them as quickly as possible. Some parents felt that communication between home and school could be improved.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body sets the tone of the school and is setting a clear direction for the whole school community.
 - Governors are ambitious for the school and do not settle for mediocre performance. The governing body has an understanding of how well teaching is improving and how pupils' progress is accelerating. It checks on the achievement of disadvantaged and other groups of pupils, rates of attendance and behaviour at every meeting. Staff are held to account for their work and the governing body is developing a 'no excuses' culture.
 - The governing body ensures that funds are spent wisely and that the school receives value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has safeguarding procedures in place that meet all requirements. Staff have up-to-date training and the school has effective links with other agencies that enhance arrangements to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies. In the primary phase it is good.
- In the secondary phase, teachers do not expect enough of pupils. Some activities are not challenging so pupils do not work hard enough or quickly enough. The most able pupils sometimes have to do work at a lower level before they can move on to more demanding tasks. This slows their progress.
- Less effective teaching in the secondary phase results in the poor attitude of a minority of secondary pupils, which is not tackled successfully by staff.
- Teachers in the secondary phase do not promote pupils' literacy skills, including building their confidence in reading aloud and expressing their views clearly in class discussions.
- Pupils' learning is good in an increasing number of secondary subjects, including physical education and science. Teachers use high-quality questioning to probe pupils' understanding and plan challenging activities that capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
- Teaching assistants throughout the school are very well prepared for lessons and employ effective strategies to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils who are taught in the special educational needs classes make good progress because work is well suited to their needs.
- In the primary phase, pupils' good progress is underpinned by very positive relationships with each other and the excellent support of teachers and teaching assistants. For example, in Year 6 pupils identified the impact of human activity on the environment, offering impassioned arguments and identifying possible solutions. Pupils listened respectfully to each other's views throughout.
- The impact of teachers' marking and feedback has improved throughout the school and is good. All teachers are following the agreed marking policy. Teachers are providing helpful guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work. Many pupils in the secondary phase do not improve their work as a result of the feedback they receive.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils in the secondary phase do not have positive attitudes to learning. A minority of pupils show a lack of resilience and are unwilling to persevere when work is challenging. Tutor time at the start of the day is not used effectively to prepare pupils for learning.
- Pupils say that the school has become much more like one community rather than separate schools. They enjoy the new house system that enables primary and secondary pupils to work together.

- In the primary phase, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They work together well, sharing ideas and resources and listen to each other's views. They feel safe and well looked after and say that any problems with bullying are quickly sorted out by adults. They insist that there is no unkind behaviour and, as an example, talk about the play leaders who ensure that no one is left out at breaks and lunchtimes.
- In the secondary phase, pupils also feel safe and free from bullying. They indicate that homophobic and racist language, or any other kind of discrimination, is very rare and is tackled robustly. Pupils feel well informed about ways to keep themselves safe in different situations.
- Pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities and those who attend the specialist classes for part of the time are very positive about school. They appreciate the work of their teachers, enjoy their lessons and take part in many after-school activities. They have no concerns about their safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The school is in the process of developing a new behaviour management system. Staff, parents and pupils are still getting used to the new system which is not yet fully in place.
- In the secondary phase, behaviour requires improvement because some pupils have a less than positive attitude to learning, mainly because of the experiences they have had with weak teaching.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions increased in the current year because leaders have set much higher expectations of pupils. It is now starting to decrease because the school has established its own behaviour support base. Leaders have also established a reflection room which gives pupils time to reflect on their attitudes and conduct.
- Behaviour is consistently good in the primary phase. Teaching is good and pupils enjoy their learning.
- Leaders are making rigorous efforts to support and increase attendance. Attendance is just below average. It is lower in the secondary phase than in the primary phase.
- Arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision are rigorous. Their attendance and behaviour are checked daily, the coordinator visits weekly and the school checks the progress of these pupils every half term.
- Secondary pupils feel very well informed about careers and options for examination courses. They say that they have plenty of opportunities to plan their next steps after GCSE courses in Year 11.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils currently in key stage 4 have not had the benefit of the good teaching and leadership. Their achievement is not as good as it could be. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been slow to increase. However, work in books and current assessment data show a good improvement this year.
- Pupils in the secondary phase are making good progress in English because of improved teaching and better assessment systems. Their progress in English is at least in line with national figures. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved this year but is still catching up with national figures. Leaders have taken prompt action to improve weaker teaching and new leaders in both subject areas are making a rapid difference to pupils' learning and achievement.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the secondary phase widened last year. The new headteacher commissioned a review of the school's spending through the pupil premium and has implemented all recommendations. As a result, gaps have closed considerably this year in reading, writing and mathematics in the primary phase and in English and mathematics in the secondary phase.
- In the primary phase, the gap between the achievement of girls and boys is narrow.
- Pupils achieve consistently well in key stage 1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. A major strength is the quality of teaching in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) which results in pupils' high attainment and underpins their good progress in reading.
- Standards are rising at the end of Year 6 so that pupils reach at least average and often above average standards. Pupils build on their strong phonics skills and make good progress in reading. They also make good progress in mathematics and they especially relish the challenge of problem-solving tasks. Progress is a little slower in writing.
- The progress and achievement of pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities are good in both the primary and secondary phases. This is because they are extremely well supported by skilled teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils have learning plans tailored specifically to their individual needs and staff throughout the school are well trained to support them.

- The most able pupils make steady rather than good progress and not enough is being done to ensure that those who start key stage 4 with higher levels of attainment maintain this and achieve the highest grades in GCSE examinations. Boys lag behind girls in key stage 4, particularly in English.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision achieve well because they are following courses for which they are well equipped.
- Standards are rising in the secondary phase and more pupils are reaching national expectations. Secondary pupils value the advice they receive concerning their post-16 options and are guided and supported well as they make their decisions. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life beyond school and the next stage of their education or training.

Early years provision

is good

- Children in the early years make good progress from their different starting points. Most children begin in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age but all settle quickly and are keen to learn and explore.
- Teaching is good and so nearly all children are well prepared to enter Year 1. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is rising consistently each year. It is above the national average.
- Teachers have created a calm atmosphere where children are happy and work safely. The outdoors areas are safe and well equipped.
- Adults use skilful questioning to encourage children to extend their learning and develop stronger communication skills.
- No learning time is lost. This was seen in a morning registration session which moved seamlessly into mathematics as children counted how many were present in the class, before moving on to manipulate numbers and identify different kinds of shapes.
- Adults carefully assess how well children are learning. This means that they know their children well and can match new learning to children's needs.
- Leaders have ensured that all staff are well trained to deal with any medical or emotional problems that children might have. The welfare needs of children are met through good pastoral care and child protection policies are effective.
- Good links with parents are made through progress meetings, internet contact, open evenings, workshops and parent and toddler groups. These all help to develop the role of parents in supporting their children's education.
- Leaders have good plans to develop the early years by enhancing the outside learning areas so that they become more imaginative and exciting and by improving the entrance and exit arrangements at the start and end of the day.

School details

Unique reference number	111401
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10002257

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,086
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Hodgkinson
Headteacher	Janette Vincent
Telephone number	01928 562660
Website	thegrange.com
Email address	info@thegrange.com
Date of previous inspection	27–28 November 2013

Information about this school

- The Grange is an all-through 3–16 school.
- The school has three resource bases for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and pupils with speech and language difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is high and includes over half of the school. The pupil premium is funding to help overcome disadvantage and is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The very great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average.
- The school occasionally uses other providers for a very small number of pupils in the secondary phase. Currently the school is using Springboard Education and Riverside College.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and the senior leadership team has been reorganised.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in the early years, primary and secondary phases in most subjects. Two of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Pupils in Year 11 were on study leave because of their GCSE examinations and were not observed directly.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in many subjects across the school, either in lessons or as a separate activity. They listened to readers from Years 2 and 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, other members of staff and groups of pupils from the primary and secondary phases. Inspectors met governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, information about pupils' attainment and progress, records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, the school's safeguarding and other policies and records of checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- They observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes and attended several tutor sessions.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from the 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They also met and talked to parents bringing their children to school.
- The views of staff were gained from the 78 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire and from discussions with individual teachers.

Inspection team

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Steven Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Wall	Ofsted Inspector

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