

# The Grange Learning Centre

Low Willington, County Durham DL15 0TY

## Inspection dates

4–6 October 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and managers have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and continue to build on the outstanding practice identified at the last inspection.
- Leaders and managers work effectively with governors to ensure that pupils thrive socially and academically in a safe environment and make outstanding progress in a broad curriculum.
- Pupils' academic progress is accurately evaluated through the school's innovative assessment scheme.
- Teachers successfully use this information to plan activities that ensure that pupils make outstanding progress in both their social development and academic studies.
- All pupils make rapid and sustained improvement in their behaviour.
- Pupils make outstanding academic and social progress from low starting points and succeed at a level that prepares them well for the next stage in their lives.
- Personal development is driven by a highly successful programme of personal, social and health education which is carefully woven into the curriculum. This ensures pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching assistants support pupils to help them complete learning tasks, but a few do not routinely check pupils' understanding.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Ensure that the support provided by all teaching assistants helps all pupils make the optimum progress by checking their understanding of information given by the teachers as well as helping with set tasks.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Leaders and managers have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and governors have created a culture that enables pupils and staff to excel. They are committed unwaveringly to setting high expectations for the conduct of pupils and staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Leaders and managers ensure that the centre operates according to the comprehensive policies produced in partnership with the proprietor.
- Leaders are fully aware of the centre's strengths and have produced an accurate self-evaluation. They use this understanding effectively as a basis for planning to move the centre even further forward.
- Leaders fully understand the high quality of teaching in the centre, which is supported by their own observation and verified by visits from the proprietor's regional team. This supports outstanding practice in performance management and an extensive programme of continuing professional development. As a result of outstanding teaching, pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils' outstanding achievement is the result of a broad and balanced curriculum provision combined with outstanding teaching and learning. The extended curriculum reflects pupils' individual needs and interests by including motorcycle studies, Forest School and music. In these activities, pupils also make valuable gains in self-confidence and self-esteem. The opportunity to study a wide range of accreditation, including GCSE, BTEC, functional qualifications and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), ensures that pupils gain qualifications reflecting their interests and ability.
- The outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports pupils' appreciation of British values. Leaders and managers ensure that activities provide a balanced presentation of opposing views and pupils learn to challenge discriminatory behaviour.
- Pupils are elected as ambassadors by their peers and their opinions are taken into account in generating and improving aspects of the centre. For example, pupils wrote the centre's rules.
- Leaders strongly promote equality and ensure that the centre functions as a welcoming, multicultural community where mutual respect is clearly seen. The moral development of pupils is fostered through their understanding of consequences and the implementation of restorative processes.

### Governance

- Governance of the centre is outstanding. Governors and the proprietor's regional team ensure that leaders are challenged to maintain the highest standards.
- The relationship between leaders and governors is one of mutual respect and support. Governors are committed to the welfare of staff and pupils and focus their discussions with leaders on areas of success and concern.
- Governors know the centre well because they visit regularly, observe activities and teaching, and get to know the pupils.

- Governors regularly review and amend the effective policies that are the basis of the centre's work.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy takes account of all current government guidelines and is available on the school website. The school follows excellent practice in the suitability of proprietors and employees to work with children, including robust safer recruitment practices. All staff are fully aware of reporting procedures and the required response to a disclosure.
- All staff are trained to at least the appropriate level and have confirmed their reading of the latest version of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the centre. They know how to report concerns.
- Pupils are trained to keep themselves safe online in their free time. Restrictions are placed on accessing social media sites and unsuitable material on computers in the centre. The use of mobile phones is not permitted.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Outstanding**

- Outstanding, well-planned teaching is based on clear understanding of pupils' prior attainment and individual progress targets. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. In line with the policy, all lessons begin with activities that successfully remind pupils of their previous learning.
- The most able pupils are successfully encouraged to make outstanding progress and achieve the highest standards. In English, mathematics and science, they are inquisitive and thirsty for knowledge. Several pupils write fluently and imaginatively in English and other subjects. In the extended curriculum, such as music and outdoor pursuits, they relish the school's additional provision.
- Teachers successfully support the social development of their pupils, helping them to re-engage with the learning environment, as many pupils have been out of education for a long period of time. Teachers use appropriate individual levels of challenge.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their skills effectively to motivate their pupils. Many older pupils enjoy the opportunity to challenge opinions about their learning, and teachers respect their views.
- Marking in line with the school policy has improved significantly through the introduction of exercise books with a number of comment boxes that enable both teacher and pupil to comment on pupils' work.
- Pupils are enjoying success and making progress in overcoming their identified social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils who do not write fluently show their understanding orally or by actions and teachers value all communication equally.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well in their learning, especially in helping them to complete tasks. However, in a minority of lessons, the teaching assistant fails to help the pupil understand the teacher's explanation of the learning required. As a result, pupils need further clarification when a task is set.

- Teachers promote computing, literacy and numeracy in lessons and other skills to support learning, for example, in the use of photography to record outcomes in the Forest School.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is successfully integrated across the curriculum. In a history lesson, pupils learned about the Austro-Hungarian Empire and compared the recent issues in the European Union. In an English lesson, a pupil shared some very interesting views about the writing of Martin Luther King and his response to racism. In both cases, teachers encouraged pupils to express their opinions freely.
- Teachers effectively challenge inappropriate language without drawing attention to it.
- Parents and carers receive regular reports on pupils' progress.
- The centre has developed an outstanding group-based scheme of assessment without levels by evaluating pupils' performance against expectations, recorded as points. These points do not dwell too much on age-related outcomes, as many pupils in the school have starting points that fall below such a marker. Teachers and pupils are using this assessment together and points are referred to in written marking and oral feedback.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The centre's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding; it enables pupils to re-engage with learning despite previous barriers, and to make outstanding progress.
- The centre has robust policies and practice in place to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- Thorough procedures, including regular checking of all alarms and lighting and maintenance of firefighting equipment, ensure fire safety. Pupils regularly practise evacuating the building.
- Risk assessment procedures comply with a comprehensive policy and include procedures for off-site visits, areas of the practical curriculum and individual pupils.
- All staff and several pupils are trained in first aid. First-aid boxes are readily available and pupils understand how to ask for help.
- Rare instances of alleged bullying are taken seriously and resolved in accordance with the centre's policy.
- The centre involves pupils in the democratic process of electing ambassadors and consults them about matters that concern them. Pupils are encouraged to make suggestions and these are given serious consideration.
- Pupils respond to the support they receive from the school by attending regularly; attendance in the previous year, and so far this year, is high compared with the national average for all pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and respect the centre's robust safeguarding procedures. They display a high level of trust in the staff to keep them safe.

- Careers education is provided within the personal, social and health education curriculum. Impartial individual support is provided. This results in all pupils moving to the next stage of education or employment when they leave the school.
- Personal development and the welfare of pupils attending off-site activities and in alternative provision are excellent. They are ensured by specific risk assessment, supervision and the continuing impact of relevant school policies.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. It improves dramatically from when they join the school.
- Pupils who have challenging behaviour make outstanding progress in their social development because they are expected to take part in restorative practice. They acknowledge any instances of poor behaviour and apologise for their actions. Because of these effective strategies, pupils' behaviour improves consistently over time.
- Pupils respond well to the learning environment. They respect the rights of others to learn. If they feel that they may disturb others, they are able to leave the room under supervision and continue their work elsewhere.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Outstanding**

- From low starting points, pupils make outstanding progress in their social development, growing in self-confidence and self-esteem through problem-solving activities. This enables them to make outstanding progress in all areas of the curriculum and engage successfully with the wider community, for example, on work experience or at college.
- The centre's tracking system, where both pupils and teachers assess social development, shows that pupils make outstanding progress throughout and especially high levels of progress in areas of self-responsibility, social responsibility and readiness for learning.
- Pupils say that they are safe and proud of their achievements.
- All pupils enter the centre at below the age-related attainment levels, most of them significantly below. At the end of the previous year, the great majority of pupils had made good progress and most made outstanding progress across the curriculum. Outcomes were particularly strong in English, with two thirds of all pupils exceeding expectations of progress.
- Current pupils are matching these levels of progress as observed in the classroom and through scrutiny of their work.
- Pupils who have challenging behaviour make outstanding progress in concentration and taking pride in their achievements. They fully meet the centre's aims.
- Outstanding teaching meets pupils' individual learning needs. Pupils are challenged to achieve at the level of their personal best. Other pupils have shown gift and talent that are now being nourished, for example, in music.
- Pupils derive benefit from the breadth of the curriculum, which fully meets their needs. For example, the Forest School provision includes opportunities to improve standards in mathematics, English and photography.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. At the end of the last year, no leaver failed to progress to employment, education or training.

## School details

Unique reference number	135834
DfE registration number	840/6010
Inspection number	10020940

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Mike Barrow
Headteacher	John O'Neill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,435 to £79,167
Telephone number	08442 571282
Website	<a href="http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk">www.witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:John.oneill@witherslackgroup.co.uk">John.oneill@witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	22–24 October 2013

## Information about this school

- The Grange Learning Centre is an independent special school for pupils who have significant social and emotional disabilities that may result in challenging behaviours.
- It is registered for up to 14 pupils aged between eight and 19 years and currently has on roll 13 pupils aged 11 to 16 years.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- Pupils attend alternative provision at Forest School, Right Trax and the Kathryn Lowden Vocal Studio.
- The inspector was made aware during this inspection of a police investigation about restriction of liberty. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspector's judgements.
- The school was last inspected in October 2013.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- He viewed the school's policies and examined schemes of work and other relevant documentation. He considered pupils' records of both social and educational achievement, scrutinised a selection of pupils' work and heard two pupils read.
- The inspector observed learning in a range of curriculum areas and all age groups and spoke with pupils during these observations. He was accompanied by a different senior leader in each of three of these observations. He observed one senior leader feed back to the teacher concerned.
- The inspector met with the chair of the governing body, the headteacher, the clinical therapist and the school improvement adviser and had a telephone discussion with an off-site provider. He also visited an off-site provision.
- The inspector analysed staff questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, to generate a report.

## Inspection team

Peter McKenzie, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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