

Grindon Hall Christian School

Nookside, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 8PG

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

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
Early years provision	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently strong enough over time to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Some pupils supported by pupil premium funding do not make enough progress to move closer to the attainment of other pupils nationally.
- Assessment in the early years requires further improvement. As a result, teaching does not fully match children's needs and their progress is variable.
- Students' progress in the sixth form broadly matches that found nationally. However, leaders do not have a focused drive for improvement in the sixth form, which restricts further development.
- Until the recent appointment of the interim principal, leaders had not taken sufficient action to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Leaders do not systematically check the impact of their actions to drive school improvement. This makes it difficult to evaluate fully the success of their initiatives.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare, including impartial careers guidance, are not fully developed. Absence levels are too high for some disadvantaged pupils.
- The governing body does not fully check and challenge aspects of the school's work, including the impact of pupil premium spending and the Year 7 catch-up funding.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim principal provides effective leadership. His actions are improving the quality of teaching and strengthening leadership capacity.
- Pupils' and students' attainment by the end of key stage 2, key stage 4 and the sixth form compares well with national averages.
- Effective leadership for safeguarding ensures that the school's systems, training and safeguarding culture are strong.
- Middle leaders are motivated to drive improvements and they are beginning to take relevant actions in their areas of responsibility.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good in order to improve progress for all groups of pupils by:
 - planning and delivering teaching that is well matched to pupils' needs and ensures that they make good progress
 - further developing the accuracy of assessments by moderating the quality of pupils' work alongside other schools
 - using the recently introduced pupils' assessment and progress tracking systems so that pupils' progress, including disadvantaged pupils' progress, is checked carefully
 - developing the use of teachers' questioning to identify gaps in pupils' learning or misconceptions
 - increasing the expectations for the quality of handwriting and presentation across the school
 - sharing the effective teaching practice found within the school
 - improving the teaching of phonics and grammar, punctuation and spelling so that pupils' outcomes, including disadvantaged pupils' outcomes, improve to at least the standards found nationally
 - ensuring that the teaching of modern foreign languages enables secondary pupils to make progress which at least matches that found nationally.
- Improve the impact of leadership and accelerate the rate at which the school improves by:
 - increasing the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of school performance by leaders, including leaders of the early years and sixth form
 - embedding the use of the recently introduced staff performance management systems to further increase the accountability for the quality of teaching and leadership and to identify appropriate training for staff
 - further developing the roles of middle leaders including providing them with opportunities to check for the impact of their actions
 - further developing the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum on offer, including the information, advice and careers guidance provided for secondary pupils
 - making sharper use of available information about behaviour, including attendance, to address areas where behaviour requires improvement.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years by:
 - further refining the recent changes to assessment approaches to sharpen the consistency of assessments of children's progress

- improving the quality of learning opportunities where children are choosing activities for themselves to deepen their learning, particularly in the outdoor environment
- raising expectations for children’s responses to the routines of the early years so that children improve their levels of independence.

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, leaders, including governors, have not been effective enough in securing consistently good teaching and good progress for pupils. However, the interim principal has established systems and a leadership structure which have a clearer focus on driving improvement in these areas.
- The interim principal, school leaders and governors are now using the emerging findings from monitoring and evaluation to identify the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Leaders' plans link effectively to these priorities with appropriate actions in place. However, their approaches to checking the impact of these actions is not sharp enough.
- Middle leaders are new to their roles. Generally, they are taking appropriate actions linked to the school's priorities. For example, middle leaders have introduced policies and systems to develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, improve attendance and improve outcomes for the most able pupils. However, opportunities for middle leaders to check for the impact of these actions have been too limited and this restricts their ability to measure the success of their actions.
- Systems to check the performance of teachers have improved. This supports leaders to identify relevant training and support for staff. However, this work is at an early stage so while some staff can readily identify how professional development is improving their practice, others are not as positive about the training opportunities provided.
- Pupil premium spending has a variable impact on accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, the overall progress of these pupils was broadly in line with that found nationally in key stage 2 and key stage 4. However, some disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 did not make sufficient progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average. Similarly, in key stage 2, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling was below the national average. Levels of absence for some disadvantaged pupils are too high and require further improvement.
- The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has promptly audited the quality of provision for these pupils. An appropriate plan is in place to drive improvement based on the audit's findings. Previous use of special educational needs funding has had a variable impact. In 2016, the progress of some of these pupils in key stage 2 was below that found nationally.
- Additional funding has had a positive impact on accelerating the learning for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their peers in English and mathematics. The majority of pupils on these 'catch-up' programmes have shown accelerated progress and the differences in attainment with other pupils are diminishing. However, leaders, including governors, have not kept a close eye on the impact of these programmes in the past.
- Leaders make appropriate use of the additional funding for sport and physical

education (PE) in primary schools to provide specialist teaching of PE. Gymnastics teaching both in lessons and as part of the extra-curricular offer enables pupils to work at a high standard.

- Leaders have established a generally well-planned curriculum based around the national curriculum subjects and largely designed to meet pupils' needs. Primary phase pupils benefit from specialist teaching in French, music and PE. Pupils have access to a good range of after-school clubs, which enrich the curriculum. While opportunities for secondary pupils' PSHE development have increased, this aspect of the curriculum is less well developed.
- The breadth of opportunities to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness has widened. Pupils have an understanding of the different world faiths and cultures. They have a clear understanding of equalities and what constitutes discrimination. Aspects of school life, such as the school council and the debating society, provide pupils with an understanding of democracy and the need to consider the views of others. As a result, leaders and staff prepare pupils suitably for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have recently introduced a more comprehensive programme for providing secondary pupils with information, advice and guidance about education, training and the world of work. Discussions with pupils show that not all year groups have fully benefited from this programme to date.
- Leaders carefully record incidents where pupils' behaviour and attendance do not meet the school's expectations. However, analysis of this information is not always thorough enough. As a result, leaders do not fully act on the available information, and behaviour overall requires further improvement in order to become good.

Governance

- Governors have worked effectively with leaders to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Some governors visit the school regularly to increase their understanding of the quality of teaching, interventions to support pupils and safeguarding arrangements. Governors have successfully secured the stability of leadership with the deployment of the interim principal while taking steps to appoint a substantive principal. However, the governing body has not provided sufficient challenge to leaders about the impact of additional available resources such as the Year 7 catch-up funding, pupil premium funding and funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff implement a thorough and determined approach to keeping pupils safe. The safeguarding policy meets the current national requirements and staff understand the procedures and their own responsibilities. The vice-principal with responsibility for leading safeguarding and the safeguarding team know the needs of vulnerable pupils well. They demonstrate a determined and resilient approach to seeking support for pupils and their families. Effective engagement with parents and other agencies is in place. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training, for example training to recognise the signs of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and, as a result, over time not enough pupils make good progress.
- Some teachers do not plan work that is well matched to pupils' abilities. Consequently, some least able pupils do not fully understand the work and some of the most able pupils do not progress quickly enough.
- Teachers do not set high enough expectations for presentation and handwriting. Teachers too often readily accept poor-quality work. For example, inspectors found there to be limited evidence in books or lessons of teachers intervening to model correct letter formation for younger pupils.
- Teachers sometimes do not identify misconceptions and their use of questioning is variable. As a result, pupils continue to make the same errors throughout the lesson when an intervention by the teacher could steer the pupils' learning in the right direction.
- In the secondary phase, some teachers do not always make the most effective use of time. Occasionally, staff present pupils with copying activities which do little to move pupils' learning forward. Sometimes activities are not sufficiently engaging and so pupils' concentration wanes.
- Leaders have taken steps to raise the profile of reading. The recently developed primary phase library provides a good resource to motivate an interest in literature and research. Consequently, primary phase pupils display a curiosity in reading and read books from school regularly at home.
- Despite the improvements in reading resources and pupils' interest in books, pupils' progress in reading and phonics is still not good enough. Nevertheless, leaders' actions to accelerate pupils' reading skills are showing early promise in helping primary pupils to catch up where there are gaps in their reading skills.
- Where some teachers make effective use of questioning, this deepens pupils' learning. Similarly, where teachers model learning well, this leads to success when pupils start to work independently on tasks. In these circumstances, pupils are engaged well and learning excites and motivates them.
- In the primary phase, teachers are working hard to improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' learning. Checking the accuracy of assessments with other staff in school and with other schools is helping to establish a better understanding of national curriculum expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improvements to the secondary and primary phase tracking systems along with regular pupils' progress meetings are beginning to help leaders and staff to identify where pupils need help to catch up and support to accelerate their progress from their starting points.

- In the secondary phase, there are some strengths evident in the quality of teaching

over time. For example, teaching in business studies is ensuring that pupils make progress which is above that found nationally by the end of key stage 4. Improvements in the teaching of French are engaging younger secondary pupils well. Consequently, pupils are keen to practise and improve their spoken French and their books show clear progress over time.

- Leaders and staff keep parents well informed about pupils' progress. This includes the termly reports and the well-attended parents' evening noted during the inspection.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying. They report that incidents of bullying are rare and they acknowledge that most staff address these well. Staff record any forms of poor behaviour, including bullying, diligently and the vice-principal with responsibility for monitoring these incidents maintains detailed records. However, lack of a more comprehensive analysis of behaviour trends over time limits the use of this information and leaders' actions.
- Leaders' introduction of an online reporting system has provided pupils with another avenue for reporting their concerns or anxieties. This is helping staff to better support pupils with their physical and emotional needs, and to access other agencies if necessary.
- The recently appointed leader for PSHE has audited provision and taken steps to improve personal development and welfare for pupils. This has improved both the coverage and time available for this area of the curriculum. However, developing the PSHE curriculum is still a work in progress.
- Leaders have recently developed the policy for providing pupils with a range of information, guidance and advice to help them select appropriate examination choices for future careers and education routes. However, this programme is not yet fully in place for all pupils. As a result, some secondary pupils are not provided with enough guidance when making their examination choices.
- The school's assemblies encourage pupils to reflect on different viewpoints. For example, secondary phase pupils considered how a piece of poetry could have different meanings depending on your perspective. Similarly, primary phase pupils were encouraged to consider the needs of others in communities abroad as they explored the theme of friendship.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Overall, most pupils behave well in lessons. However, when teachers' expectations are not high enough, or where pupils receive work not well matched to their needs, some low-level, off-task behaviour by a few pupils does occur.
- The overall levels of attendance are very close to those found nationally. However, the absence of some disadvantaged pupils is too high. Leaders are monitoring the

attendance of pupils closely and there is some evidence that the attendance levels of these pupils are moving in the right direction. Even so, their absence levels remain high and therefore require improvement.

- Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion and demonstrate good manners. At lunchtimes and breaktimes, pupils socialise appropriately or are involved in active, friendly games.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 4 generally make progress which is broadly in line with that found nationally in most subjects. However, pupils' progress in key stage 1 and the progress of some disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been below national averages. Furthermore, in 2016, pupils did not make sufficient progress in modern foreign languages by the end of key stage 4. Therefore, outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- The numbers of disadvantaged pupils within school are small. Overall, by the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4, these pupils make progress broadly in line with other pupils nationally. However, not enough of these pupils are achieving the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6. Disadvantaged pupils do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics across key stage 1. Leaders, including governors, have in the past not checked sharply enough on the progress of these pupils across the school.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 fell below that found nationally in 2016. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard has been low for the past two years. Leaders have recently revised their approaches to the teaching of phonics. Those pupils who need additional support to close gaps in their phonics knowledge now appear to be catching up across the primary phase.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable. In 2016, progress for these pupils was below that of other pupils in reading and writing by the end of Year 6. Previous leadership of the progress of these pupils has not focused sufficiently on the progress of primary-aged pupils. The recently appointed leader for special educational needs has a much more complete overview of the progress of these pupils across the school.
- The progress of the most able pupils is variable. By the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4, these pupils have made progress broadly in line with that found nationally. However, by the end of key stage 1, not enough of the most able pupils are working at greater depth in reading and writing. This is because teaching does not always provide sufficient challenge for these pupils.
- Appropriate programmes are in place to support those pupils who need to catch up with their English and mathematics in Year 7. As a result, the majority of these pupils accelerate their progress in these subjects and the difference in their attainment compared with others diminishes.
- By the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4, pupils' attainment compares well with national averages. In this respect, leaders and staff prepare pupils well for the next

stage of their education, training or employment.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children start in Reception with skills and abilities that are generally typical for their age. From their starting points, many children make steady progress rather than good progress. Consequently, not enough children attain beyond the expectations for the early years. Therefore, outcomes require improvement.
- While the majority of children are ready to start Year 1, they are not as well prepared as they would be if they had made good progress.
- Teachers' previous assessments for children's outcomes at the end of Reception have been too generous. Pupils' records for the current Year 1 pupils support leaders' views that assessment has previously not been accurate enough. Leaders have taken steps to improve the accuracy and recording of children's progress. While this is beginning to provide a more realistic view, assessment practice is still evolving.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Sometimes teachers' expectations for how promptly children respond to class routines are not high enough. As a result, valuable learning time is wasted. During adult-led learning activities, once engaged, children's key skills in reading, writing and number are effectively developed. However, where children choose activities to deepen their learning in both the classroom and the outside learning environment, opportunities to improve these key skills are less well established.
- The leader of the early years is relatively new to the role. She has a reasonable view of the priorities for improving the quality of provision, teaching and assessment in the early years. While she has completed some checking of the quality of teaching and accuracy of assessment, this has not been systematic enough to provide a detailed evaluation of the impact of actions taken to improve early years practice.
- Leaders have targeted additional funding for disadvantaged children on additional resources to improve children's progress in phonics, reading and mathematics. However, checking the impact of this funding has not been sharp enough to ensure that it accelerates the learning of this group of children. The leaders' recent analysis indicates that not enough children are making the accelerated progress to diminish the differences in their outcomes compared with other children.
- Systems to involve parents in their child's learning and assessment are in place. For example, at the start of the year, parents contribute to progress records known as 'learning journals' and have regular communication with staff through the home communication book and children's reading record.
- Children are happy and they feel safe and secure in the Reception classes. Safeguarding is effective and the school meets welfare requirements.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The number of students in the sixth form is small. Nevertheless, leaders strive to ensure that a range of academic study programmes are available to meet the needs of students. However, there are no opportunities for students to follow more vocational programmes.
- Generally, students receive effective and sometimes strong teaching which is well planned and often sets high expectations for students. As a result, most students make progress which is broadly in line with that found nationally, and their overall attainment levels match national averages.
- Students receive useful feedback, which enables them to improve their work further. Combined with well-targeted questioning, this assists students in improving their knowledge and deepening their thinking.
- The vast majority of students have successfully achieved GCSEs at A* to C grade in mathematics and English prior to entering the sixth form. Appropriate development of English and mathematical skills is in place to support those who have not achieved these qualifications. As a result, most students gain these qualifications before leaving the sixth form.
- Sixth form students receive regular lessons which provide them with clear guidance and information to make choices about careers and the next stage in their education. The overwhelming majority of students go on to higher education with many securing places at their first-choice universities. Leaders organise a range of work experience opportunities linked to students' career plans. However, not all students take these up.
- Students have access to a variety of non-qualification activities and increasing opportunities for developing leadership skills. Activities such as the debating society enable them to consider the views of others on a wide range of topical subjects. However, similar to the other areas of the school, the curriculum offer for students' personal development and welfare is not fully established.
- Retention of students at the school between Year 12 and Year 13 has been low. In 2016, approximately half of the school's Year 12 students moved to another post-16 provider to continue their studies. Leaders have monitored carefully the destinations of these students to ensure that they have sustained their education or training on appropriate programmes.
- Leaders and governors review the impact of the sixth form in relation to the outcomes and destinations of Year 13 students. However, the systems to check for improvement, such as monitoring the quality of teaching, are not rigorous enough.

School details

Unique reference number	138567
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10023790

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

Type of school	All through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	558
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Kell
Interim Principal	Trevor Swann
Telephone number	0191 534 4444
Website	www.grindonhall.com
Email address	info@grindonhall.com
Date of previous inspection	26–27 November 2014

Information about this school

- Grindon Hall Christian School is smaller than the average-sized school. It caters for pupils aged 4 to 18. The number of pupils on roll in the primary and secondary phases is smaller than for equivalent schools nationally.
- The school opened as a free school in September 2012, having previously been an independent school since 1988. The school is currently planning to join the Bright Tribe Trust within the current academic year.
- The interim principal has been in post since January 2016.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small minority of pupils come from minority

ethnic groups.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities support is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is well below that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 and by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a range of 27 lessons and part-lessons. The interim principal joined the lead inspector for three of the observations of lessons.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around school and reviewed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtime.
- The inspectors held meetings with the interim principal, the two vice-principals, the school's middle leaders and the leader for the early years, as well as the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Three groups of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with the inspectors. An inspector listened to four pupils selected from key stage 1 and key stage 2 read.
- Inspectors took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and held discussions with parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors considered the 40 responses to staff questionnaires and the three responses to the pupils' questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, information about pupils' achievement, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plans. Reviews were made of behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding. The inspectors scrutinised some pupils' work in their books.

Inspection team

Michael Reeves, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Downs	Ofsted Inspector
Olie Flitcroft	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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