

Grafham Grange School

Grafham, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LH

Inspection dates

23–24 May 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors and the trust have not ensured that leaders have high-quality professional development and training. As a result, leaders' understanding of their roles and responsibilities is not deep enough.
- Leaders do not have a clear overview of how well pupils are doing across all subjects. Leaders have not ensured that teaching staff have a sufficient understanding of how to assess pupils' progress in their subjects.
- The school's systems for managing staff's performance are underdeveloped. Staff's targets are superficial and not rooted in exactly what needs to improve in the school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and those subjects recently introduced to the curriculum.
- Although pupils are now catching up after a legacy of inadequate teaching, rates of progress are still low.
- Until very recently, the trust and governors did not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and were too slow to review their own performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Since his appointment, the headteacher has transformed the culture of the school. All senior leaders and staff are passionate and committed to ensuring that the school is a safe and secure place of learning.
- The school has a better reputation. Parents are positive and appreciate the difference that the school has made for their sons. One parent remarked that the staff 'care for pupils from the heart'.
- Teaching and learning have improved. Pupils respond well to the school's raised expectations and enjoy learning. They are proud of their work and know that the school has made a difference to their lives and dreams for the future.
- Pupils behave well. Their behaviour and conduct improve markedly over time because of the staff's commitment, nurture and positive attitude.

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?

- Ensure that all senior leaders acquire the skills and attributes to carry out their duties professionally, confidently and successfully.
- Establish an effective system for checking and evaluating the performance of the school in order to:
 - identify exactly what needs to be done to improve the school, using all the information available
 - ensure that the changes made are the right ones
 - measure improvements by their impact on pupils' progress.
- Provide staff with sufficient high-quality training so that they:
 - gain deep subject knowledge
 - understand progression through their subjects
 - assess pupils accurately and set them appropriate targets.
- Ensure that staff's performance management targets are precisely rooted in what is best for the school and that targets are backed up with appropriate training and monitoring.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Governors and trustees have not ensured that senior leaders build their existing knowledge, understanding and skills through effective use of performance management and professional development. As the school has steadily improved over time, there has not been enough attention given to supporting the headteacher and senior team to look beyond coming out of special measures.
- Leaders and staff are so passionate about their work in the school that they lose sight of the importance of having clear systems to evaluate the impact they are making on pupils. Leaders gather a wealth of information about behaviour and learning through monitoring. However, leaders do not make good enough use of their findings to push for further improvement, nor do they measure the success of their work by its impact on pupils' progress.
- The headteacher sensibly defined senior leadership roles and promoted relatively inexperienced staff to key positions of responsibility. These leaders have grasped the opportunity to take the lead. They have developed their skills and contributed strongly to the school's improvement. However, they have not had enough training or guidance to help them carry out their duties as leadership role models now that the school has improved.
- Senior leaders want more autonomy but are unclear about how accountable they are. There are not enough formal opportunities for leaders at all levels to stand back and discuss coolly, objectively and professionally what they have achieved and what they need to do next.
- The school's system for assessing pupils' progress is underdeveloped. Teachers know their pupils well and track their progress day to day. However, new or inexperienced teachers do not have sufficient understanding of how pupils progress through their subjects. As a result, pupils' targets are not always precise and leaders do not have a clear and concise overview of how pupils are doing.
- Nevertheless, the headteacher and senior leaders have succeeded in stabilising the school over the last two years. They have worked with impressive determination and within significant budgetary constraints to secure safety, improve pupils' behaviour and establish the school as an orderly place of learning.
- Leaders have made sure that staff nurture pupils and keep them safe. Over time, pupils acquire more self-discipline, cope well with setbacks and gain a sense of pride in themselves and their achievements.
- Communication and teamwork in the school are strong. Staff benefit from daily briefings and debriefings that are child-focused, and they are alert to any changes in pupils' circumstances or well-being.
- New and inexperienced teaching staff learn and develop through some sharing of good practice. They are mentored by experienced teachers and very much welcome the hands-on advice and guidance they receive on a regular basis.
- Pupils appreciate a broader curriculum than at the time of the last inspection. They

have the opportunity to study a range of different levels of qualifications, including GCSEs, and also subjects for enrichment and general interest. Staff expect pupils to read widely and tackle challenging texts in English. Together with appropriate functional skills courses, pupils' confidence in communication consequently improves. In addition, pupils are now able to experience specialist science teaching and they greatly enjoy well-planned and stimulating practical sessions.

- Art and physical education are threaded through pupils' programmes of study and contribute to their health and well-being as well as their knowledge and skills. Leaders and teachers do not avoid challenging pupils and make sure that they are gaining sufficient understanding of theory in physical education and in design and technology to bolster their understanding of the practical activities they enjoy.
- Leaders are keenly aware of the significant gaps in pupils' learning and check that programmes of study are helping them to catch up, for example, with an emphasis on number work in mathematics. The school has also recently introduced geography, history and music, all of which help pupils to see that their weekly timetable can stand comparison with that of their friends in mainstream schools.
- Students of sixth-form age and at key stage 4 are guided to take appropriate courses at local colleges and are supported with their studies at the school.
- Pupils' growth into adulthood and understanding of the wider world are enhanced by the school's active approach to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils value moments of reflection together, for example when commemorating historical events. Through the taught curriculum and their conversations with staff, pupils deepen their understanding of right and wrong and how to get along with each other. A pupil parliament enables pupils to have a voice and contribute their own ideas to school improvement, in addition to learning about democratic values and the British way of life.
- Pupils and staff are adamant that the school confronts any instances of discrimination or derogatory language head-on. As a result, pupils are tolerant and forgiving. Pupils learn about different cultures, in addition to profiting from the school's inspiring environment. They take part in regular sporting events. The recent introduction of music to the curriculum has also provided a new cultural outlet for the pupils who enjoy playing instruments and singing.
- Available pupil premium funding is used effectively to enhance pupils' development of literacy, numeracy and mental health.
- Until recently, the school worked too much in isolation and did not learn enough from other schools. Recently, staff attended training and observed the work of a similar school locally and have been able to apply some of their learning in their own classrooms. Leaders have also commissioned an advanced skills teacher to support unqualified teachers in the school with planning, subject knowledge and understanding of assessment. This support has been well received by teachers, but it is too early to assess the impact on pupils' progress.
- The school's reputation among parents has significantly improved since the last inspection. Parents are relieved at the care their sons receive and also pleased that they are at last staying in school and making academic progress. One parent commented that the school's work has been 'phenomenal'.

Governance of the school

- Until very recently, the impact of governors on the rate of school improvement was limited and disappointing. Following the previous inspection, governors and the trust were extremely slow to take effective action to review their own performance. They were in the past over-generous about the quality of leadership and teaching in the school and were also too remote from the challenges of leading and working in a special school.
- Governors and members of the trust fully acknowledge past failings; they eventually carried out a review and have taken the decision to seek out a change in trusteeship. In the meantime, with some new members and a newly appointed chair, they have acted with more energy and determination to push the school for further improvement.
- Governors now regularly visit the school, supporting leaders and staff and auditing safeguarding and spending, including any additional funding such as the pupil premium. Their greater understanding and realistic insight about the school are clearly evident through their evaluation of the school's improvement planning.
- Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in governors' oversight. They recognise that they did not challenge the headteacher firmly enough about the quality of performance management arrangements. In addition, governors and the trust have not ensured that the headteacher and senior leaders are provided with sufficient support, training and coaching.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Since the previous inspection, leaders for safeguarding have completely overhauled the record-keeping system, which is now meticulous. Communication with local authorities is strong and leaders are not afraid to push other agencies to provide support more promptly when there are child protection concerns.
- The relationship between children's services and the school is much more healthy and purposeful, although leaders are rightly troubled by the high thresholds for early help in some local authorities.
- Staff and leaders are well-trained and up to date in safeguarding practice and procedures. They are child-focused and sensitive to signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They also understand that changes or deterioration in pupils' behaviour may be an indication that there is a child protection concern.
- Concerns or worries about pupils are reported and referred promptly within the school and to other agencies. Staff are vigilant and understand their responsibilities, including those related to child sexual exploitation. It is rare for any pupils to abscond, but prompt action is taken if a pupil tries to run away.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are trained and prepared to manage pupils' behaviour safely and proportionately while not placing themselves or other pupils at risk of harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good in all subjects. While major improvements have been made since the previous inspection, teaching is not yet leading to good progress for all pupils in all areas of the curriculum.
- Gaps in pupils' knowledge of mathematics have not been identified closely enough. As a result, tasks are sometimes too difficult for lower-ability pupils and they struggle to complete their work.
- Some teaching does not push pupils hard enough. Many pupils could complete work to a higher standard if they were given more to do on their own. In a few cases, pupils have become over-reliant on adults to do some of the work for them.
- Improvements to teaching in newly introduced subjects and subjects that now require more theoretical study have not had time to be fully established. Nevertheless, pupils respond very well to both practical learning in science and also theory sessions in physical education and design and technology.
- Most teachers prepare sequences of lessons making good use of pupils' targets from the education, health and care reviews and their personal learning plans. Most planning for learning demonstrates a realistic expectation of what pupils will be able to accomplish over time. However, teachers' grasp of how pupils might progress through their subject is at an early stage in some curriculum areas.
- Teachers' use of assessment is strongest in English, art and physical education. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve and teachers are responsive to their needs. In these subjects, teachers are adept at thinking on their feet and changing tack when needed in order to go back over some learning, to press a particular learning point or push a pupil to the next challenge.
- Teachers use questions well in lessons and pupils enjoy contributing answers and asking questions themselves. Teaching assistants and other adults also make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning through their questions and explanations. As a result, although still impulsive, pupils are able to discuss topics in a mature and respectful way.
- Pupils take their studies seriously and make the most of revision sessions when near to examinations. Leaders have recently introduced an approach to homework in response to pupils' own requests for additional work to help them catch up.
- Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and other adults. They know that adults are there to help them learn. Pupils are keen to make progress, gain knowledge and improve their skills. They are proud of their work and keen to show visitors what they have produced.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils quickly settle in when new to the school and form bonds with each other and staff. They develop better social skills and are confident when speaking to adults and reflecting on themselves.
- Pupils are tolerant of each other and value their different personalities and backgrounds. They appreciate the family atmosphere and feel safe and secure. The school has a happy mood that is, in the main, generated by the pupils themselves. They are friendly and usually approach their day with humour and cheerful confidence.
- Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that if they have a concern they will be heard and action will be taken. Pupils have learned about how to keep safe and avoid risk. For older pupils, including those of sixth-form age, regular contact with their key workers helps them to talk through and understand the challenges they will face in the outside world.
- Over time, pupils become less driven by their emotions and impulses. Because staff support them consistently, warmly and fairly, pupils learn that making mistakes is human and that breaking a rule or a moment of inappropriate behaviour is not necessarily a catastrophe that cannot be put right. In this way, pupils develop more resilience and ability to manage their feelings and behaviour. As one pupil said, 'this school got me on the straight and narrow.'
- Pupils are proud of their work and keep their books and folders neat and tidy. They look after the school environment and make the most of the resources and enrichment activities on offer.
- Pupils, including those in the sixth form, benefit from useful careers advice and guidance, which also includes support for independent living and future employment. As a result, they are able to continue their education and gain apprenticeships or employment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' behaviour has improved markedly. During their time in the school, rates of serious incidents decline. Pupils respond well to the school reward system. Over time, leaders have developed the system in order to help pupils look forward to delayed gratification for positive behaviour, rather than just responding to instant incentives. In this way, pupils become more intrinsically motivated to do well.
- Low-level disruption to lessons is rare because pupils want to learn. Occasionally, pupils interrupt adults and each other. Some pupils are easily distracted or preoccupied. However, adults adroitly get them back on track with either a firm reminder or some gentle humour. Pupils therefore learn to focus on their work with more sustained concentration.
- Although pupils sometimes forget themselves and speak out of turn or use offensive language, their misdemeanours are rarely meant maliciously. Staff use effective

methods to defuse conflicts when emotions run high.

- The school is admitting pupils who have an increasing range of complex needs and difficulties. Occasional increases in the need for physical intervention or exclusion are often as a result of the admission of new pupils, who may take longer to settle into the school's routines and expectations.
- Pupils' attendance is below that found nationally in mainstream schools. However, nearly all pupils attend school whenever they can. There is a very small number of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. School leaders are working closely with local authorities to find the best solution for non-attendance but are rightly frustrated by the length of time it takes for suitable placements to be agreed.
- Attendance and behaviour at college placements and alternative provision, including for those students in the sixth form, are good.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not good in all subjects. Although there has been improvement in pupils' progress since the last inspection, the legacy of inadequate teaching, together with wide gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, means that pupils have a lot of catching up to do.
- While all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieved the results they needed to go on to the next stage of their education in 2016, they did not reach their potential.
- Following some staff turbulence, pupils' progress in mathematics has been slower than that in English, particularly for the least able pupils.
- Pupils' growing confidence in extended writing in English, which at its most challenging covers topics outside pupils' own experiences and interests, is not transferred to other subjects. Some examples of pupils' writing and recording are minimal when they could be more productive and exploratory.
- There is little difference in the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged compared with those who are not. Overall improvements to teaching and learning have benefited all pupils and are signs of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- School leaders are rightly ensuring that pupils have the chance to gain accredited courses. It was heartening during the inspection to see how pleased pupils were to receive their functional skills certificates. Their pride in their achievement attests to the value pupils place on education and qualifications.
- It is clear that pupils are acquiring more knowledge and skills through the introduction of subjects such as geography and also because of better science teaching.
- Pupils make strong progress in art. The work of younger pupils and older pupils at GCSE compares well with any work seen in mainstream schools. Even the most reluctant pupils are amazed at their own progress in art, often from very low starting points and limited experience.
- Students of sixth-form age make good progress in their courses at college and are sometimes able to progress to level 3 courses. They are able to pursue work

experience, which also helps to prepare them well for their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	125482
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10033967

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Gimson
Headteacher	Martin Sanders
Telephone number	01483 892214
Website	www.grafham-grange.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@grafham-grange.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 May 2015

Information about this school

- Grafham Grange is a special school catering for boys who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have associated complex special educational needs, including autistic spectrum conditions. Typically, pupils will have missed education in their previous schools because of absence and exclusions.
- All pupils are supported through education, health and care plans. Several local authorities place pupils at the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than in most schools, as is the proportion of pupils looked after by the local authority. Some placing local authorities retain the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school is part of the Radius Trust group of schools. An agreement has been reached for the Aurora Group of schools to take over the trusteeship of the school,

with a provisional date set for the end of June 2017.

- A very small number of pupils, including those in the sixth form, attend Brooklands College, Brinsbury College and Merrist Wood College to pursue vocational and level 2 courses. A small number of pupils attend alternative provision for one day a week at the Godalming Air Training Corps and through vocational programmes offered by Skills Way.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection began as the fifth special measures monitoring visit. On the second day, the inspection was deemed an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 because inspectors judged that the school no longer required special measures.
- Inspectors visited nine lessons to observe pupils learning. They spoke to pupils who talked about their work and their targets. Inspectors also reviewed a separate sample of pupils' work in all subjects.
- The school does not provide separate provision for students of sixth-form age. A very small number of these students attend full time at local colleges. The quality of the school's provision for students of this age has been incorporated into the main findings and judgements outlined in this report.
- An inspector met with one parent. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire Parent View to consider, but inspectors noted parents' views gathered during previous monitoring inspections.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, other staff and a group of pupils.
- Information about pupils' progress, the curriculum and pupils' behaviour over time was reviewed. Arrangements for safeguarding were checked, including checks on adults appointed to work in the school.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and the trust, including the chair of governors.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Edwards

Ofsted Inspector

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