

Grasmere Academy

Grasmere Court, Killingworth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE12 6TS

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, well supported by governors, other leaders and staff, has addressed the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection and improved further other aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders' unwavering focus on improving the quality of teaching has made its mark. Pupils usually make good progress in their learning and this has accelerated in all year groups since the last inspection.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They use information they have about pupils' current abilities to plan activities that help them to learn successfully. Occasionally, activities do not stretch the most able pupils sufficiently.
- Disadvantaged pupils and the many pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who attend the additional resource provision (ARP), achieve well. This is because of the high-quality teaching, targeted support and pastoral care.
- Pupils thrive in this caring, inclusive and welcoming school. They behave well and are kind and caring to one another. They say they feel very safe. Pupils are keen to try their best. They value the school's golden rules, which they have taken to heart and live out each day.
- The curriculum is broad and enriched by visits out of school, visitors to school and after-school clubs. It is carefully planned to excite and entice pupils into learning. They study many customs and cultures from Europe and beyond. This broadens their horizons as well as their understanding of how to respect the views, faiths and values of others.
- Improvements in the early years have ensured that children get off to a great start in the happy and nurturing atmosphere. They make good gains in their learning and development and are now well prepared for key stage 1.
- Leaders' rigorous and regular review of the school's work has ensured that they have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be better. For example, although the early years is good, they want it to be even better and are continuing to improve the outdoor area so that it is as exciting and engaging as indoors.
- Governance is strong. Governors are well informed and provide high levels of challenge and support to the leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Parents and pupils are highly positive about the education and care provided at Grasmere.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers plan activities that present the most able pupils with a consistently high challenge from the start of the lesson.
- Implement plans to further develop the outdoor area of the early years provision, so that it is as stimulating and interesting as the indoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's passion to do the best for all of the pupils at Grasmere Academy is embraced by governors and staff alike. Since the last inspection, they have worked unstintingly to tackle the previous weaknesses and to improve other aspects of the school's work. They ensure that all pupils learn, flourish and achieve well, no matter how short their time at the school might be. The current school motto of 'going for gold' provides a tangible impetus and focus for staff and pupils alike. It underpins the continuing improvements being made.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve. This is because their arrangements to monitor the school's work and pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour are meticulous and regular. Changes are made quickly to tackle any emerging concerns, including any pupil at risk of underachieving.
- Staff are held to account fully for the quality of teaching and the impact of their work on pupils' learning and progress. Improved and strong arrangements to manage staff performance are in place. All staff welcome the raised accountability. Coupled with the training, coaching and support they receive from leaders and staff across the North Tyneside Learning Trust, all staff continue to hone their skills and improve their effectiveness.
- Standards are rising, especially at key stage 1, but remain below average by the end of key stage 2, as a result of the long tail of underachievement that leaders have been addressing. Nevertheless, observations of learning, reviews of pupils' recent work and information about pupils' achievements show that most pupils make good progress from often very low starting points. However, the most able pupils are not always stretched sufficiently from the start of their lessons, slowing their rates of progress. Leaders have recognised that, although the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth is rising in classes across the school, more pupils need to do so to ensure that everyone achieves their best. This is a current whole-school priority.
- Numbers of pupils in each year group are small. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in each class are much higher than those found nationally. Around 40% of pupils arrive in school at times other than the usual admission dates. Many arrive in the final two years and a few in the final term of Year 2 or Year 6. It is therefore difficult to assess trends in pupils' achievements compared with other pupils nationally over time. However, good-quality teaching and, where needed, targeted small-group work or one-to-one activities ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers. Such work ensures that the school uses its additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively.
- Special educational needs funding is used judiciously to make sure all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with carefully planned work and support to help them to achieve well. Pupils in the ARP work in small groups during the morning and are fully included in all the school has to offer.
- An interesting, broad curriculum, including visits and after-school clubs, ensures that pupils are energised to learn, make good progress and enjoy school. Pupils speak highly of the rich array of opportunities they can take part in during the school day and

beyond. These include visits to Safety Works in Newcastle, Alnwick Castle and local points of interest. Visitors to school, such as staff from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, help pupils to understand how to stay safe at home or in their local communities. Focused weeks such as the arts week, health and sports week, history/geography week, international week, e-safety and anti-bullying weeks add interesting and hands-on activities to enrich the curriculum further.

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the physical education and sporting activities. Leaders use additional sports funding successfully to enrich the range of activities on offer, to train staff and enable pupils to take part in competitive sports such as hoops for health, hockey festivals, and football and athletic tournaments in the local area. These activities and after-school classes such as football, multi-skills, zumba and the new outdoor gym help pupils to enjoy and succeed in sports and take regular exercise.
- Work to develop pupils' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is interwoven successfully across the curriculum, through personal, social, health and economic education, assemblies and class time.
- Pupils have reflected maturely on issues such as 'racism' and 'diversity' during their recent assemblies. Discussions with pupils demonstrate their strong understanding of these issues and of the values of respect for other faiths and cultures, care for one another and respecting the differences in others. As a result, pupils develop into well-rounded individuals who are well prepared for life in modern Britain today.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly ambitious for the pupils in the school. They are determined to continue to work with leaders to improve the school until it is the very best it can be. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and skills to their roles. This enables them to provide informed, helpful support and challenge to leaders. They are tenacious in their scrutiny of the use of the additional funding for pupils. Reviews of special educational needs, pupil premium and sport premium funding take place regularly and governors check and challenge leaders on their impact. For example, reports on the use of pupil premium identify every group of disadvantaged pupils across the school and their current rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They also identify any actions being taken to help any pupil identified as not achieving as well as they should.
- Governors' reviews of other subjects and pupils' topic books also check on the impact of the whole curriculum on all pupils' learning and progress, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Minutes of full governing body meetings and sub-committee meetings evidence the strong challenge governors bring to bear on the actions leaders are taking. This is to ensure that the school continues to improve and that resources are well spent.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The leadership team and governors ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding. They have developed a strong culture of safeguarding within the school which ensures that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. Systematic and detailed checks are made on all adults who apply to work in the school and any visitors. The school's website provides pupils and parents with a raft of guidance to help them understand

how to keep safe. All staff are trained in child protection and safeguarding and receive regular updates and whole-school training to ensure that they understand any new national guidance or local concerns.

- Staff are vigilant in referring any concerns about a pupil and leaders promptly involve the appropriate external agency when concerns are raised. Referrals are always followed up with any agency involved. Record-keeping for pupils at risk and those who require statutory intervention by social services are detailed and thorough. They show the proactive work that leaders carry out with other professionals, early help locality teams and families to support pupils at times of need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The significant training and development of teachers and teaching assistants since the last inspection has raised the quality of teaching successfully. Strong and trusting, respectful relationships between pupils and their teachers are a powerful feature of all lessons. Pupils willingly help and encourage each other. Adults' good use of praise builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, pupils are eager to learn and take a full part in activities, discussions and reflections on learning.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They implement the curriculum imaginatively to energise and motivate pupils. Teaching assistants are well deployed and know what they need to do with each of their groups. Staff use very carefully designed small-group activities for literacy and mathematics every morning, to ensure that pupils who are at risk of underachieving or who have specific difficulties in their learning are able catch up with their peers and achieve as well as others.
- Adults use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. They do not settle for one-word answers but instead probe responses so that pupils have to explain their thinking. Staff clarify and check pupils' responses in order to understand if the skills or knowledge have been understood and thus they deepen learning. This strategy also develops pupils' speaking, communication skills and confidence effectively.
- Mathematics lessons and pupils' books show an increasing focus on developing problem-solving and reasoning skills. Practical activities where needed give a boost to pupils' confidence which they then transfer effectively into their written tasks.
- Literacy lessons are planned carefully to build pupils' skills and knowledge progressively as they move through the school. Their skills are also further developed in subjects other than English, through topic work, where teachers have equally high expectations of pupils' application to tasks and the presentation of their writing and spelling.
- Changes to the way that phonics, spelling and reading are taught have ensured that pupils' reading skills are improving well. Staff are well-trained in the teaching of phonics so that pupils learn the sounds correctly. Pupils read at least once every day and, as a result, are becoming increasingly confident and interested readers. Teachers weave reading, writing and mathematics activities into other subjects and this helps pupils to consolidate these skills across the broader curriculum.
- Pupils are often competent in researching information on hand-held computers in a number of lessons. The pupil-run well-resourced library sessions at lunchtimes add to their enjoyment of reading for pleasure or for information.

- Progress in lessons is usually swift. Teachers generally use information they have about pupils' starting points to pitch activities so that learning builds on from what pupils already know and understand. Leaders are aware that, while all pupils make at least the progress expected in class, more could be working at greater depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school's high-quality and sensitive pastoral care and support provides the bedrock upon which strong relationships and pupils' good personal qualities are built.
- Many pupils arrive at school at different times in their school careers. They report how welcoming everyone is. This means they soon settle in and adopt the high expectations of conduct and positive attitudes to learning evident across the school. Many pupils arrive in school with additional, complex needs, including special educational needs and/or disabilities or social, emotional or mental health vulnerabilities. Significant efforts are made to identify needs quickly and then provide appropriate support.
- Pupils report that staff make sure they are safe and that they feel very safe in school. They are confident that, should any concerns arise, these will be sorted quickly and effectively by a member of staff. Pupils are extremely confident that 'bullying is just not tolerated'. This is because all pupils strive to follow the golden rules that include being kind and caring to everyone and showing respect for others, their property and opinions.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about staying safe online. Leaders are aware of the risks pupils face in the local community. They take proactive action with partner schools, parents and agencies to minimise risks to pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders have developed strong partnerships with child and adult mental health services, specialist services for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, early intervention locality workers and children's social care. As a result, whatever the need and support required, the school will make sure it is provided to pupils and their families.
- The diverse curriculum and activities such as the British Council's Erasmus project contribute to pupils' broadening understanding of faiths, cultures and customs beyond Britain. Pupils relish mixing with, and learning from, other pupils and teachers from countries as far afield as Finland and Latvia in northern Europe to Italy in the south. Their writing and beautiful displays across the school showcase the wide range of writing, art and craftwork and experiences they gain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and towards each other, adults and visitors. They grow into confident and self-assured members of the school community and take pride in their work. Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils are keen to listen and respond willingly to teachers' comments and questions. This is a harmonious, welcoming and inclusive school. Fixed-period exclusions are very rare and permanent exclusions non-existent.

- Pupils respond well to the improved, positive rewards-based behaviour policy that they were involved in developing. They report that all staff apply it consistently. They also report that the traffic light system works well, as does the new 'gold' standard, now above the 'green for good', that rewards pupils who are always well behaved. Pupils say they understand the value of the reflection time that occurs on the few occasions they might get a red warning, because it helps to avoid any more incidents. They like the letters home when they are good and the 'DoJo' rewards that translate into lovely prizes.
- Attendance rates have increased since the last inspection but they remain below those found nationally. Significant work is being undertaken by staff to improve attendance. Staff carefully identify and support pupils as soon as attendance starts to dip. Case files and records of pupils who are at risk show the impact of the individual work with pupils or their families in improving attendance. A small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also have complex medical needs. This impacts on their attendance rates. Staff work closely with these families to minimise the impact of long-term absence on their children's learning.
- Pupils relish the many different roles and responsibilities they undertake. These include elected members of the school parliament, play leaders, Grasmere guardians, breakfast club readers, digital leaders and librarians. Such opportunities build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Along with the strong transition work that is carried out with secondary schools and opportunities such as the recent careers and aspirations week, these activities are helping to prepare pupils well for their next steps in education.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Year groups are small. Over 40% of pupils arrive in the school at different times of their primary school careers, often in later years. A significant proportion of pupils who arrive have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The specialist ARP caters for up to six pupils with very complex special educational needs and/or disabilities from across North Tyneside. These factors make it difficult to make meaningful comparisons against national trends for different groups of pupils' achievements over time.
- Inspection evidence, including observations of learning of pupils currently in school, shows that pupils are making good progress in their learning. Reviews of current pupils' work, last year's books and the detailed assessment information about pupils' achievements also show that the majority of pupils make good progress, often from very low starting points and varied admission dates into school. This is particularly the case in mathematics, writing and science.
- Pupils' achievements from Year 1 to Year 4 last year were much stronger than that of previous years in reading, writing and mathematics. Virtually all pupils achieved in line with the age-related expectations of the national curriculum and a higher proportion achieved at greater depth. Leaders know that, while improving, the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth needs to increase. They are targeting this in their plans this year. Early indications show that more pupils are being challenged successfully to attempt harder work, but for some of the most able pupils, work is still too easy.
- Standards attained by Year 6 in summer 2017 national tests were not strong. This was in part due to the complex needs of many pupils. Half were late arrivals to the school.

There was also a history of underachievement among pupils who had been in the school since the start of their education when the predecessor school had been judged to have serious weaknesses in its inspection. Nevertheless, their books and school assessment information show that they too made good progress.

- Targeted small-group work or one-to-one activities ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. ARP pupils work in small groups during the morning, which allows very specific and carefully targeted work to be provided to help them overcome barriers to their learning. Consequently, they achieve well from their very low starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Nursery fluctuate year-on-year. This is because numbers entering are low and because the number of children who arrive with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies. It is therefore difficult to generalise about trends in children's achievements over time, or of different groups.
- Overall, the majority of children enter with skills and knowledge that are typically below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language development. Around half of the children in Reception last year were identified as requiring additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Early years staff visit all children in their home before they start school. This establishes productive relationships with parents and enables staff to find out about each child's needs, likes and interests before they arrive. Early assessments on entry to school identify children's varying abilities, needs and strengths. These are used effectively to plan activities and experiences and organise bespoke individual support that enables all children to thrive during their time in Nursery and Reception.
- Strong relationships between children and staff provide the springboard for the development of children's confidence and self-esteem and willingness to learn and try their best. Children quickly develop cooperative and constructive relationships with each other and the atmosphere is busy, harmonious and purposeful.
- A stimulating and well-organised array of activities and experiences entice children into learning and play successfully. Good teaching, perceptive and probing questioning and interventions by staff help children to think about what they are doing and then extend their thinking and understanding further. Adults are constantly observing children's learning and interests and use this information to plan their next steps to ensure that all children are making suitably swift progress.
- Every opportunity is taken to develop early numeracy, literacy and language skills alongside other areas of learning. For example, children delighted in exploring a tray of feathers, foil objects and stones while they tried to find and count the 'hidden numbers'. Adults' constant checking of children's discoveries helped to develop their speaking, listening and descriptive skills as well as their understanding of number. Leaders are currently working to ensure that the stimulating activities indoors extend more seamlessly to the large outdoor space.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. These aid the smooth transitions from home to school and help children settle in quickly. Even so early in the new term, Nursery

children were thoroughly engaged in all the activities the school had to offer; their behaviour was good and they were very accustomed to the routines and expectations of each day. Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in their children's learning, and are able to come into class regularly to take part in workshops and to see their children working and playing first hand.

- Meticulously kept learning journals and mathematics and literacy books show the broad and exciting curriculum and the careful and accurate assessments staff make of children's learning and development as they move through the early years.
- The proportion of children gaining a good level of development by the end of Reception in 2017 was disappointing. However, the school's detailed, regular assessments show that with the exception of moving and handling, and number, children made good gains in their learning and development from very low starting points into Nursery. Because entry points are often low into school, teachers rightly prioritise work on the prime and specific areas of learning associated with language development. As a result of the targeted work, children leaving Reception in summer 2017 achieved well in this area. These children have now made a successful transition into Year 1 and are proceeding at a pace in their learning.
- The proportion of children entitled to early years pupil premium funding who gained a good level of development fell in 2017. However, the school's tracking data shows that a significant proportion of these children had complex needs, and the progress from their very low starting points was good and similar to other children in Reception. Excellent care and support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that they too thrive and can take a full part in all that is on offer in Nursery and Reception.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138576 |
| Local authority | North Tyneside |
| Inspection number | 10036540 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 86 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Mrs Lynn Goossens |
| Headteacher | Mrs Kerry Lilico |
| Telephone number | 0191 200 8343 |
| Website | www.grasmereacademy.org.uk |
| Email address | kerry.lilico@ntlp.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 30 September–1 October 2015 |

Information about this school

- Grasmere is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The number of pupils attending the school has fallen since the last inspection.
- The school is a stand-alone academy and is sponsored by the North Tyneside Academy Foundation.
- The school provides part-time Nursery provision each morning. Provision in Reception is full time. The school runs its own breakfast club.
- Over half of the pupils are known to be entitled to the government's additional pupil premium funding. This is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and require additional support, at around 40%, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with an

education, health and care plan is also well above average. This is partly because the school has additionally resourced provision, the ARP, for up to six pupils with moderate learning difficulties, commissioned by the local authority. Pupils from across North Tyneside attend this provision. Pupils work in small groups in the morning and are fully integrated into school life.

- A high number of pupils join or leave the school during their primary education. The mobility of pupils currently runs at around 40%.
- In 2016 the school met the government's floor standards, the minimum standard expected for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 2. Provisional information indicates that they are likely to do so in 2017.
- 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 inspector observed learning in classes across the school. Some were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher. She also looked at records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching across the school.
- The inspector held meetings with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and a range of other school staff. The inspector also met with two school improvement officers from the local authority and one of the two directors of North Tyneside Academy Trust.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally at break and lunchtimes and in lessons. She also spoke formally to a group of key stage 2 pupils on day two of the inspection.
- Pupils' current work books were reviewed, as well as pupils' books retained from the previous academic year. These included English, mathematics and topic books.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents. These included information regarding the safeguarding of pupils, the school's curriculum and minutes of full governing body meetings and sub-committee meetings. She also reviewed the school's records of the progress individual pupils and groups of pupils made this year and last year, across the school and in a range of subjects.
- The inspector took account of the views of the 11 parents who completed Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and the seven parents who provided written comments. The views of the 10 staff who responded to the Ofsted staff survey were also considered along with the views of the six pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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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