

The Grange School

Wendover Way, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 7NH

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

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

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not been effective in addressing the decline in the progress of pupils since the last inspection.
- In 2017, pupils did not do as well as they should in GCSE examinations. In particular, most-able pupils had not made enough progress.
- Governors have not challenged leaders well enough to ensure that pupils make better progress.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school has not been precise enough to ensure that the decline in pupils' achievement is reversed rapidly enough.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is not yet accurate enough in key stage 3 to ensure that pupils are supported and challenged enough.
- The poor behaviour of a small number of pupils hinders their progress in lessons.
- Leaders' use of funding to support disadvantaged pupils has not helped to improve their achievement in GCSE examinations well enough.
- While the quality of teaching is improving, it is too variable to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Most-able pupils are not reliably given work that will challenge them to make good progress.
- Some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not attend as well as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' achievement in the sixth form is good. They value the range of academic and vocational courses offered.
- Subject leaders are taking effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning further.
- Teaching and learning are improving. It is particularly strong in English, modern foreign languages and technology.
- Governance has been strengthened by recent appointments to the governing body. Governors are better placed to hold leaders to account for improved performance.
- Pupils receive good care, support and guidance. The large majority feel safe and enjoy school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - ensuring that leaders and governors evaluate more accurately the areas for improvement to identify the precise actions that are necessary to improve pupils' outcomes
 - reviewing and improving the overall provision for disadvantaged pupils so that they make at least good progress
 - ensuring that governors have a clear understanding of how to challenge leaders to improve the progress of pupils, especially that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able
 - making sure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities come to school more regularly than in the past, so that their attendance becomes at least in line with the national average for all secondary school pupils.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of teaching and learning by:
 - checking that work set for pupils, particularly the most able, is not too easy for them and, when necessary, that more challenging work is provided for those who are ready to move on
 - setting challenging tasks that engage and interest all pupils, so that low-level disruption in lessons is reduced
 - ensuring that teachers are able to more accurately assess pupils' work to support them well
 - extending the sharing of successful teaching and learning that already exists across the school to all subjects.

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

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding 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

- Leaders' plans to improve the school have not secured consistently good progress for pupils. While leaders are clear on the key priorities for improvement, they have not been precise and sharp enough in implementing specific plans. Leaders recognise that there is still much work to do to secure consistent improvement for all pupils.
- Senior leaders have been overly generous in their self-evaluation of the school. Their ambitions for what pupils can achieve have not been high enough compared with pupils with similar starting points nationally. Leaders have not responded rapidly enough to the underperformance of pupils.
- Leaders have introduced an assessment system that is working well in key stage 4. However, in key stage 3, teachers are not yet accurate enough in making judgements on the standard of pupils' work. Leaders recognise that further staff training is needed to ensure that teachers are able to provide clearer guidance to pupils to improve their work.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance have not been effective. Attendance continues to be too low and leaders recognise that swift action is needed to redress the decline. There has been a slight improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils but it remains low.
- Leaders do not analyse the school's data precisely enough to know whether the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively.
- Since the last inspection, the school has received effective specialist advice and support from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and the local authority. School leaders and governors have valued this provision, especially in the support of middle leaders. However, the work has been less effective in enabling leaders to accurately evaluate the school.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened. Middle leaders are clear on the priorities that will lead to improved outcomes for pupils. Subject leaders accurately identify the strengths in teaching and learning, and those areas where improvement is needed. Leaders have ensured that staff are more accountable for the impact of their work than in the past. There are now better systems for monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. However, these systems are not as yet fully implemented by staff.
- Middle leaders welcome greater involvement in whole-school planning and the professional development opportunities they have been offered. Teachers feel supported well in their own professional development, feel valued and enjoy working at the school.
- The headteacher is passionate in ensuring that the school is highly inclusive. Leaders adopting the school motto of 'We can' is helping to raise the aspirations of everyone.
- Leaders have fostered an atmosphere of respect from pupils as seen in their positive attitudes around the school. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They are aware of fundamental British values and they show a keen interest in other cultural

traditions. For example, pupils were thoughtfully engaged in a Year 7 assembly on New Year traditions around the world.

- Leaders have made effective adaptations to the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and balanced. There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 7 and 8. Pupils who need further support take additional literacy and numeracy classes that help to develop their basic skills further. The additional funding provided for these pupils is used effectively to help them catch up with other pupils.
- Pupils take advantage of a good range of enrichment opportunities within the curriculum. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed the trip to the First World War battlefields in Belgium and the outdoor activity week to Cornwall. Groups of pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 visit Buckinghamshire and Oxford universities, which is helping to raise their aspirations.
- A few parents are not yet confident that the school provides good enough opportunities for their children. However, most parents are supportive of the school. For example, one parent commented: 'This is a fantastic school with very strong leadership from the headmaster. My daughter's confidence has grown exponentially since being at the school.'

Governance of the school

- Governors have failed to challenge leaders well enough to ensure that pupils make rapid progress. Governors did not recognise the importance of progress over attainment. While attainment in GCSE English and mathematics improved, the progress pupils made from their starting points declined. Governors' monitoring and evaluation of leaders' actions in whole-school planning has been weak.
- The recent appointments of new co-opted governors, including experienced educational professionals, have brought a sharp focus on the areas the school needs to improve. These new appointees have a clear understanding of the challenges ahead.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties, for example regarding safeguarding, effectively. They undertake regular training relating to aspects of safeguarding and safer recruitment, and oversee the school's work to keep pupils safe effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a strong feature of the school. Staff receive regular and effective training and they are fully aware of their role in keeping children safe. Leaders responsible for overseeing safeguarding are vigilant and thorough. They work well with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe through the well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, tutor time and assemblies. For example, pupils valued the opportunity to listen to the play 'Chelsea's choice' on child sexual exploitation.
- Leaders carefully monitor vulnerable pupils and put in place appropriate actions to ensure that they are safe. Pupils feel safe and they are confident in being able to go to

an adult in school who will help them and listen to their concerns when they arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains too variable, both within and across subjects. Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of pupils effectively. In some lessons, the slow pace of learning hinders pupils' progress so that they do not develop a deep understanding of their work.
- Most-able pupils are not reliably provided with work that enables them to be challenged and stretched. This is particularly the case in art, mathematics and physical education lessons, especially in key stage 3.
- Leaders have developed a clear assessment system across all years, but not all teachers are accurate in judging the standard of work that pupils are working at, especially in key stage 3. This leads to pupils not knowing accurately enough how well they are doing and how to improve their work further.
- Teachers' questioning does not always challenge pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding well. Where teaching is stronger, such as in English and modern foreign languages, teachers' questioning helps pupils to develop their explanations and analyses further. For example, in English, pupils studying 'Oliver Twist' were able to develop effective arguments from their ability to analyse the text well. In modern foreign languages, pupils are keen to speak the language and are highly respectful of each other.
- In other subjects, expectations of what pupils can achieve, both academically and in their attitudes to learning, are not as high. Teachers do not consistently insist that pupils concentrate and focus on their work. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Similarly, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not provided consistently with appropriate tasks. The planning for disadvantaged pupils is improving, so improving the teaching they receive.
- In mathematics, most teachers use the school's assessment system particularly well, which leads to pupils learning from their successes and mistakes, and knowing how to improve their work further. Pupils said they value the opportunity to reflect on and improve their work.
- Teachers in most subjects routinely set homework which reinforces pupils' learning well.
- Leaders and teachers promote reading strongly throughout the school. Most pupils read confidently and enjoy books. The focus on 'drop everything and read', coupled with staff sharing publicly their favourite books, is creating a helpful reading culture, especially with key stage 3 pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are confident and polite and show respect to adults and others around the school. For example, pupils held doors open for inspectors and readily engaged in conversation.
- Pupils are encouraging and supportive of each other. They listen respectfully and attentively to others' views and opinions. This was seen particularly well in assemblies.
- Pupils benefit from regular advice and guidance during their personal development sessions and assemblies. Pupils demonstrate tolerance. They are alert to wrongful discrimination and will not accept homophobic bullying. The school's work to promote fundamental British values contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders know that further work is needed so that all pupils are aware of the risks of extreme views.
- The school's PSHE education programme is well planned and promotes healthy lifestyles. Pupils respect the rights of others and celebrate differences. These values are reflected in the positive way in which most pupils interact with each other in and out of lessons. The school is friendly and very inclusive.
- Pupils are very aware of the risks from the misuse of mobile phones and from social media because of regular discussions, for example in tutor time, PSHE and assemblies. Most pupils, especially in key stage 3, also expressed confidence that bullying would always be dealt with quickly and effectively. For example, the 'friends against bullying' initiative is valued by pupils.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are delivered effectively. Pupils gain a good understanding of the range of options available to them for the next stages in their education, employment or training.
- Many pupils engage well in school life. The wide range of sporting opportunities is particularly valued by pupils. Other activities, such as the 'war hammer club' which is run by two ex-students, are popular. Here, pupils are proud of their success in national competitions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While behaviour around the school is generally good, there is too much low-level disruption in lessons where teaching is less effective. Some pupils chatter when they should be working. A small number of pupils ignore the teacher when attention is requested. Staff do not use the behaviour management system consistently well.
- Most pupils behave sensibly and warmly to each other and adults during breaktime and lunchtime. However, a small number of pupils are unnecessarily loud and boisterous.
- School leaders are taking a firm line with unacceptable behaviour and, as a result, internal exclusions, although reducing, remain high. However, the school is excluding pupils less frequently than before, although the numbers remain above the national average. Pupils removed to the internal inclusion room work in a calm and orderly manner.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance have only had a limited success so far.

Attendance remains below the national average, especially for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Although persistent absence for these groups remains too high, there has been a slight improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils this year. Attendance and behaviour of those pupils attending alternative provision are good.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Provisional GCSE results in 2017 indicate that pupils' progress has declined from 2015 and 2016. Pupils have not made as much progress as other pupils nationally from similar starting points in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The most able pupils do not achieve what they are capable of because expectations are not high enough in all subjects. Most-able pupils achieved almost a whole grade lower than similar pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations.
- The provisional results in 2017 show that the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged is well below that of other pupils both within the school and compared with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations has improved since the last inspection, especially in English and mathematics, but remains well below that of similar pupils nationally.
- Current pupils are making better progress in many subjects but there are still inconsistencies, especially in work that challenges the most able. Inspectors agreed that teachers are accurately assessing pupils' work in key stage 4. Teachers in key stage 3 are less secure in the accuracy of their assessments of work.
- Inspectors found that current pupils in all year groups make stronger progress in English, modern foreign languages and technology. In these subjects, for example, the most able pupils achieve more challenging tasks.
- There are clear signs that disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make better progress in many subjects. The gap between their achievement and that of their peers is diminishing. The use of pupil premium funding is becoming more focused and is having some influence on reducing the barriers to success.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who joined the school with lower levels of literacy are making good progress in catching up with their peers. They are supported well to enable them to access the learning and make good progress.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision at Aspire, the local authority pupil referral unit, are supported well and are making good progress in their chosen subjects.
- Pupils value the comprehensive careers education and guidance they receive, which leads to very few pupils not moving on into education, training or employment. For example, Year 9 pupils valued the options fair in helping them to choose appropriate courses for GCSE.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is led and managed well. Students follow appropriate courses. As a

result, retention is good. Leaders have introduced more effective tracking systems that enable them to monitor progress of students well. Through this monitoring, leaders swiftly identify students who are at risk of falling behind, and middle leaders then put in place appropriate support.

- Students' attainment and progress are good. In 2017, students taking academic subjects achieved outcomes similar to those of students nationally, and those taking vocational applied qualifications achieved well above the national average. This represents a significant improvement from 2016. The school's data show that current pupils are performing equally well.
- Those students who did not achieve A* to C GCSE grades in English and/or mathematics at key stage 4 do better than other students nationally in achieving these qualifications in the sixth form. In some cases, however, insufficient challenge means that a minority of students following these courses do not make rapid enough progress.
- Teaching is strong in the sixth form. Teachers use skilful questioning to challenge the most able. This fosters good progress in meeting or exceeding targets. This was seen, for example, in a Year 13 religious studies lesson where effective questioning encouraged students' higher-level evaluative thinking.
- Students benefit from a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities, including charity fundraising and debating. They also enjoy the volunteering opportunities, such as supporting the Sue Ryder Foundation.
- As in the rest of the school, safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Students understand how to keep themselves safe and how to live healthy lifestyles. Student leaders in the sixth form talk about a positive culture in the school and strong relationships with teachers. Equally, they recognise that there are further actions needed to improve the school further.
- Work-based learning programmes are available and valued by students. The well-planned PSHE programme in the sixth form has a strong focus on careers and work skills. Students are prepared well for their next stage of education. Increased numbers of students are going on to higher education. All students progress to either further study or enter the world of work. However, students are not always made fully aware of the opportunities offered by apprenticeships.
- The attendance of students in Year 12 is above the national average. Leaders are aware that attendance declines in Year 13 and are putting further actions in place to support students more effectively as a priority.

School details

Unique reference number	110488
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10040929

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

Type of school	Secondary modern
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,330
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Sherwell
Headteacher	Mr Vincent Murray
Telephone number	01296 390 900
Website	www.grange.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	vmurray@grange.buck.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 December 2015

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school is part of the Aylesbury Learning Partnership, a cooperative trust.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A fifth speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- Currently, 14 pupils attend off-site provision at Aspire Pupil Referral Unit, Aylesbury, through the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 52 lessons, including a number of short visits to five tutor rooms. Several lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors also examined a selection of pupils' work from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, including newly qualified teachers, academic senior and middle leaders, and pastoral leaders. Inspectors also met governors, including the chair of the governing body, and had telephone conversations with two external advisers working with the school.
- Inspectors took account of 93 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 38 parents. Inspectors had a telephone conversation with one parent and spoke to one parent in person.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups from Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form, and from responses to Ofsted's student questionnaire. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school site.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluations of the school's performance, the self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, information about standards and pupils' progress, the school's website, records of behaviour and attendance, external reviews, governors' minutes, and a range of policies and information, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Catherine Davies	Ofsted Inspector
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Lizzie Jeanes	Ofsted Inspector

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