

Inspection of The Grange School

Wendover Way, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 7NH

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values of 'equality, equity and solidarity' underpin daily life at The Grange. Pupils enjoy school and feel happy and safe here. They learn to be respectful and considerate of others and diversity is celebrated. Older pupils and staff value the many positive changes to the school since the last full inspection in 2018.

The school offers a wide range of subjects. Many pupils achieve well because subject leaders have raised expectations by setting out more clearly what pupils should learn and when. However, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. This is because there are differences in how well teachers implement these plans to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able. Standards in the sixth form are higher; teachers ensure sixth-formers are challenged and supported well in their chosen subjects.

Pupils understand and respect the school's behaviour system of consequences and rewards. Good relationships between staff and pupils have helped to improve behaviour. Bullying happens much less now than it did in the past. Pupils say that there are trusted adults whom they can turn to should they have any concerns.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders have raised expectations across the school. They have brought about significant improvements to behaviour and the quality of provision for vulnerable pupils. They have also made some noteworthy improvements to the quality of education.

The Grange offers a broad academic curriculum, which leaders are currently making more ambitious for all pupils. Curriculum plans have been improved across most subjects and are particularly strong in art and modern foreign languages. Here, subject leaders know just what they want pupils to learn and in what order, and teachers explain subject matter and check pupils' understanding well. Typically, similar practice in the sixth form enables most students to progress well in their chosen subjects.

In some subjects, such as history, recent staffing changes mean the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development. In others, including English, mathematics and science, teachers' delivery of what has been planned is variable. Not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what all pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve. Too often, teachers do not check that pupils can confidently remember important knowledge and skills before introducing new information. When this occurs, some pupils are not sufficiently stretched and can chatter or become passive, while others find the work too hard.

Leaders are prioritising improving pupils' reading skills and have invested in new resources and approaches to support this. The impact of this work has been

adversely affected by the pandemic. However, work is ongoing and leaders have clear plans to achieve their aims. Leaders are aware of the need to ensure robust quality assurance of the new reading schemes and approaches being implemented across the school.

Leaders have improved provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Better information is now shared with teachers to support pupils' learning in the classroom. Teachers work well with the team of skilled teaching assistants to meet pupils' needs.

The provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of The Grange. A team of staff have been trained to deliver personal, social and health education across the school. There is a genuine commitment across the school to promote diversity and equality. Pupils benefit from careers fairs and events and regular opportunities for careers education, advice and guidance. Pupils and sixth-formers are well prepared for their next steps beyond school. However, the school is not meeting its statutory requirement to provide opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Year 8.

While a minority of pupils' conduct and adherence to the school rules could be improved, behaviour is typically good across the school. In classrooms, pupils are typically keen to learn and actively engage with the tasks set by their teachers. Better communication and sharing of information between the leaders of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding have clearly led to improvements in all three areas.

The Grange's committed team of governors has a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the further improvements required. The governors are seeking support to fine-tune their level of challenge to leaders to raise the quality of education. Leaders have fostered a real sense of teamwork at the school. Morale is high and staff are justly proud of the improvements made during this particularly challenging last year.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular and appropriate training on safeguarding. There is a culture of vigilance at The Grange and staff are aware of the warning signs that a pupil might be being harmed or in danger. There are clear school systems to record and share any concern that staff may have about pupils. The records kept by safeguarding leaders demonstrate how the school responds in an appropriate and timely way. Leaders proactively seek support from external agencies when necessary to ensure pupils get the help they need. Pupils say they feel safe here and parents confirm this.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Increased leadership capacity and new initiatives have boosted curriculum planning. However, in many subjects, these new plans are not yet sufficiently well embedded, and some teachers do not understand and adhere to leaders' expectations. Consequently, pupils' experiences in lessons and the pace of curriculum improvement across and within subjects is too variable. More accurate monitoring and evaluation by leaders is required to diagnose, and then act upon, the specific issues affecting each different subject.
- Too often, the level of verbal and written challenge offered by teachers is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Where this happens, pupils either are insufficiently challenged, or they struggle to understand and retain new information. Training is required to ensure all teachers make better use of assessment to deliver lessons that more accurately meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	110488
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10200868
Type of school	Secondary Modern
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1404
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Zena Sutcliffe
Headteacher	Vince Murray
Website	www.grange.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been no significant changes to the structure of the school since the last monitoring inspection of the school that took place in June 2021.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils from Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Deep dives were conducted in English, mathematics, science, art, history and modern foreign languages. As part of these, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and met with teaching staff to talk about their approach to designing and delivering the curriculum.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, special educational needs coordinator and other members of teaching and support staff.
- Remote meetings were held with three members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and an external consultant used by the school.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and sixth-formers to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school. Inspectors also held informal conversations with pupils at break and lunchtime.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff represented in meetings and the responses to Ofsted's surveys were considered.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's policies and practices and met with safeguarding leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. Records of safeguarding incidents were scrutinised and discussed. Inspectors also reviewed the school records of the recruitment checks made on adults working in the school.

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Kearsley	Ofsted Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Culling	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nicholas Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector

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