

Inspection of Grove Academy

Ladbrooke Road, Slough SL1 2SR

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Grove Academy is a rich and diverse school community with pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. Leaders recognise this, wanting all pupils and their families to feel welcome and supported. Specific provision is put in place for all new pupils who speak English as an additional language. Support begins in Reception where the children are taught specific words to communicate their feelings and emotions. Staff use a range of strategies to help pupils speak and read in English as they progress through the school. This helps pupils to access the learning on offer.

Younger pupils are positive about the support they receive from their teachers and know they can talk to a trusted adult about concerns they may have. However, some older pupils are not confident that there is always a member of staff they can speak to about their worries. Regular changes in staff have made this even more difficult. As a result, some pupils do not report incidents of bullying and harassment that they may experience. In addition, pupils are not clear on the expectations for learning and behaviour. Staff are also unsure because they have not had the support they need to apply these expectations consistently.

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

School leaders, trustees and governors are determined to realise their vision of a school that helps pupils to learn effectively from the very beginning to the very end of their formal education. Leaders want the local community to have a school that helps all pupils to achieve success. Significant disruption over time, caused by delayed building works and staff changes, has hampered this ambition. At times, the school is unsettled and pupils' behaviour can be dangerous. Staff are inconsistent in their expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. This is because the staff have not received the training and support required. Leaders from the multi-academy trust are formulating plans to strengthen staff training.

The school's curriculum requires further improvement to ensure pupils can secure knowledge in every subject as they move from Reception through to Year 11. Leaders understand how they want to achieve this through linking the learning throughout the primary and secondary phases. This vision is realised in science, where pupils secure their understanding of different scientific vocabulary, experiments and processes. However, coherent planning of the curriculum and effective checking on pupils' learning are not in place across many other subjects. Leaders have started to provide essential training to ensure teachers have the expertise to help pupils acquire knowledge in a logical order.

Children in Reception make a strong start to their schooling. There is a daily focus on communication and language. Leaders recognise the needs of the pupils who start school speaking very little English, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on

children's speech. Children are also taught to show each other kindness as well as the importance of having good manners.

Leaders have also prioritised reading. Pupils in Reception and throughout key stage 1 are taught to read by well-trained staff using a carefully ordered phonics programme. Pupils who find reading more difficult read to an adult daily to help them catch up quickly with their classmates.

Time is taken to get to know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Needs are identified carefully, with applications for education, health and care plans made to secure additional support for pupils who have more complex requirements. However, not all staff have the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of each and every pupil. This is particularly evident in the secondary phase of the school.

The schools' vision of pupils being 'responsible, fully active citizens who are kind to one another' is evident in the planning for careers information and guidance, and personal development. However, this provision has not been successfully implemented across the school. Personal, social and health education is not taught consistently. Older pupils also told inspectors that this curriculum does not reliably give them the knowledge they need. This includes age-appropriate information about relationships, sex and health education, as well as ensuring that pupils understand the importance of treating one other with mutual respect.

Many pupils come to school each day wanting to learn. In the primary phase, pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to their studies. However, in the secondary phase, learning is often disrupted. During break and lunch times, small but significant groups of pupils do not behave well. At times, this can be dangerous. Neither staff nor pupils are sufficiently clear about what is expected of them under these circumstances.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to access support when there are concerns about pupils' safety and well-being. Often, these actions are not recorded in detail. Leaders therefore do not have the full picture of the support given, meaning that they cannot readily identify the most appropriate next steps needed to keep pupils safe.

Not all pupils feel confident to report any worries or concerns that they may have to staff. Pupils also told inspectors that they can feel unsafe at school because of the unkind behaviour of some pupils. Examples of this include the use of derogatory comments linked to pupils' protected characteristics, such as their race, gender or sexual orientation. As a result, some pupils can feel very anxious and are unsure of what to do to get the help that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Secure safeguarding processes are not in place. Some record-keeping is incomplete because leaders are not consistently logging and analysing the actions taken to keep pupils safe. This means pupils who may be at risk of harm are not always getting the support that they need. Leaders must review all safeguarding roles, responsibilities and processes to ensure they are secure and compliant.
- Behaviour is, at times, chaotic and dangerous. Some pupils find this behaviour intimidating and unsettling. They do not always feel safe. Leaders must urgently review the behaviour systems and levels of supervision to ensure that behaviour is respectful and safe.
- The curriculum across the primary and secondary phases is not closely aligned. Pupils do not routinely build on their prior learning. Leaders should take action to ensure the curriculum planning builds pupils' knowledge carefully so that they know more and remember more as they progress through the school.
- While the needs of pupils are carefully identified, learning is not always adapted successfully to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to adapt the daily curriculum quickly to help pupils with SEND acquire the knowledge they need in readiness for the next stage of their education.
- Planning for pupils' personal development has not been fully implemented. This means that opportunities for pupils to explore the personal, social and health aspects of their education are not being consistently offered and delivered. Leaders must carefully monitor the implementation of this provision, ensuring that staff have the expertise they need to support pupils with their understanding of life in modern Britain.

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	144748
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10212123
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	902
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Debbie Richards
Principal	Natalie Wismayer
Website	www.groveacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the SASH Education Trust.
- The school opened in 2017. Pupils were taught in temporary accommodation until they moved into the new school building during the spring term of 2021.
- There have been significant changes in both the senior leadership team and the staff body of the school since it opened.
- The school has a designation for a sixth form. The opening of this has been deferred.
- The school has a resource-based unit for pupils with SEND aged 11 to 16.
- The school uses two registered and one unregistered alternative provider to provide education and support for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and staff, and spoke to pupils during lessons and social times. They also spoke with representatives from the multi-academy trust, the board of trustees and the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and geography. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 21 free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as gathering additional views throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with designated safeguarding leaders, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding, including checks carried out on adults working at the school, and spoke with governors.

Inspection team

Aimee Floyd, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Haynes	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dan Lambert	Her Majesty's Inspector

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