

Inspection of The Grange School

Latham Avenue, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 5DX

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
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?

Pupils are proud to be part of this respectful community. They told inspectors that the school community is 'accepting of anyone' and that they can be themselves without fear of prejudice. For example, those pupils who are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community can be open about their sexuality and gender identity.

The trusting relationships that pupils, including children in the early years, have with staff help them to feel happy and safe in school. Pupils are confident that staff will help them if they have any concerns.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are eager to live up to the high expectations that staff have for them. In particular, older pupils value highly the improvements secured in pupils' behaviour and pastoral care since the school opened. During lessons, pupils focus closely on their learning. They are supported appropriately by staff to behave well and to be successful learners. Those pupils who attend the specially resourced provision benefit from effective support from highly skilled staff.

At social times, corridors and social spaces are calm. Pupils are assured that staff will deal with any incidents of poor behaviour quickly and appropriately. Pupils are clear that bullying of any sort will not be tolerated and would be taken seriously by staff.

Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities to further their talents and interests. For example, Year 7 pupils recently enjoyed competing in their first basketball match. Pupils across year groups enjoy weekly clubs such as netball, dance, rugby, cooking and quidditch.

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

Leaders have designed a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum to ensure that children and pupils, irrespective of the challenges they may face, achieve as well as they should. For example, an increasing proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects at key stage 4. Leaders' timely and precise identification of children and pupils' needs, coupled with knowledgeable support from staff, ensures that pupils with SEND progress through the curriculum well. This includes children in the early years. Pupils in the specially resourced provision achieve particularly well.

Children begin learning letters and sounds in the Nursery Year as soon as they are ready. Leaders ensure that staff support parents and carers to help their children to practise reading at home. The early reading programme sets out clearly what leaders want pupils, including children in the early years, to know and when it should be taught. Staff have received the training that they need to deliver this

programme consistently well. Mostly, pupils practise their reading with books that are matched closely to their phonics knowledge. This helps pupils to develop their reading fluency over time and to become confident readers.

Pupils who fall behind with reading receive the support that they need to catch up. At each key stage, leaders ensure that pupils who struggle with reading are identified quickly. These pupils benefit from carefully planned support from knowledgeable staff. For example, pupils who arrive in key stages 3 and 4 who have fallen behind in reading have sufficient opportunities to practise reading to a member of staff. This helps these pupils to improve their reading accuracy, further develop their comprehension skills and access the full curriculum.

In other subjects, leaders make it clear to teachers what pupils, including children in the early years, should be learning and when they should learn it. This helps teachers to design learning that builds on what pupils know already. For the most part, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions. Pupils' learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Mostly, leaders ensure that staff benefit from suitable training to deliver subject curriculums with confidence. This supports pupils to deepen their understanding of subjects over time and to achieve well. However, on occasion, some teachers lack the confidence and expertise to deliver some aspects of the curriculum well, including in the early years.

Leaders have designed assessment systems to support teachers to check that pupils have learned the intended curriculum. Mostly, teachers use these systems well to check that pupils know and remember earlier learning. This helps to ensure that pupils' knowledge is secure and they embark on any new learning with confidence. That said, there are occasions when some teachers do not use assessment systems sufficiently well to pinpoint pupils' misconceptions.

Through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum, pupils learn how to become thoughtful and successful citizens. Pupils in key stage 1 develop their understanding of why rules are needed and how these relate to choices and consequences. In key stage 2, pupils learn about children's lives in other parts of the world and compare their own circumstances with those who are less fortunate. For instance, in recent weeks, school prefects have organised a collection in support of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. In key stage 3, pupils learn about the importance of tolerance and gender equality. Pupils in key stage 4 are clear about their next steps. They benefit from a well-planned programme of careers education. Staff provide a range of opportunities to further pupils' interests, such as art exhibitions, 'animal meet and greets' and computer coding activities.

Those responsible for governance are highly knowledgeable, and, collectively, they have an appropriate range of expertise to challenge and support leaders. This has helped to ensure that, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have been successful in securing the necessary improvements since the school opened.

Staff, including those in the early stages of their teaching careers, are extremely proud to work at the school. They feel that they are supported well by leaders and value the steps that leaders have taken to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that staff receive appropriate and regular safeguarding training. This helps staff to remain vigilant to the signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. For example, staff are alert to the signals that might show that a pupil is suffering neglect. Staff are clear about the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil.

Leaders have formed strong links with external agencies, including the local authority and the police. Leaders strive to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Through an age-appropriate curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For instance, pupils in key stage 4 learn about consent, how to look after their mental health and the dangers of gang-related violence. Pupils in key stage 2 learn how to form and sustain good friendships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, some teachers, including in the early years, lack the subject-specific expertise and confidence to select the most appropriate pedagogical approaches to deliver certain aspects of curriculum. This hinders some children and pupils in learning the intended curriculum and progressing as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the support necessary to design learning that supports the intent of the subject curriculums.
- Although leaders have designed systems to identify and address pupils' misconceptions, from time to time, some teachers do not use these systems sufficiently well to single out pupils' missing component knowledge. This hampers these teachers in their efforts to help pupils to overcome some of their misunderstandings. Leaders should ensure that assessment systems are used consistently well by teachers to check on pupils' learning and inform teaching so that pupils can embed and use their knowledge fluently.

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	144617
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10212327
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1082
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Fowler
Principal	Ian Critchley
Website	www.thegrangeacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Wade Deacon multi-academy trust. The school opened in January 2018 and the current principal was subsequently appointed in September 2018.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education and apprenticeships.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. This provision caters for 32 pupils with autism spectrum disorder in key stages 1, 2, 3 and 4.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, a representative of the trust board, two representatives from the multi-academy trust and five members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, science and physical education. Inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with children and pupils from the early years to Year 11. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors checked on safeguarding procedures, including recruitment checks made on new staff. Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation documents and leaders' behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and pupils. Inspectors also considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments received via Ofsted's free-text facility.

Inspection team

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