

Inspection of Grafham Grange School

Grafham, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LH

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires Improvement

The headteacher of this school is John Reilly. This school is part of Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT) which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, John Prior, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jay Mercer.

What is it like to attend this school?

For those pupils who attend school regularly, school is an increasingly positive experience in some respects. They talk enthusiastically about the facilities available to them, such as 'the hub' and the gym. The recent focus on their personal development, combined with staff who get to know them and support their future aspirations, helps these pupils to be more positive about school. Pupils are comfortable talking to staff. Pupils feel that staff take them seriously if they need to raise any worries.

However, pupils' experiences in lessons are poor because they do not learn what they need to. Lessons are not productive places of learning as learning activities are not matched to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Too many pupils miss lessons or do not attend school at all. They are not enthused about learning or accessing what the school has to offer.

In spite of these challenges, pupils, parents and carers, and staff are positive about the recent changes to the school leadership team. They recognise that they are already starting to see a difference in their daily experiences, particularly in regard to how dysregulated behaviour is managed. For example, there are now less frequent incidents of physically challenging behaviour from pupils. However, all parties recognise that there is still a lot more to do to improve the overall culture of the school.

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

Pupils do not learn well across the school because lessons are not adapted well enough to their SEND. Planned activities do not take enough note of pupils' current understanding or knowledge.

Curriculum thinking is muddled. In many areas, staff have produced ambitious routes through various subjects. However, they admit themselves that these routes are not suitable for many pupils because they do not take account of their SEND. The new school leaders have identified the need to re-think the whole approach to the curriculum, based on pupils' SEND rather than historical ways of doing things. However, this work is still at the planning stage and so the negative impact on pupils remains.

Too often, staff have to adapt planned activities as they go. Pupils' SEND and their past attendance are not taken into account until the lessons are underway, if at all. This is exhausting for staff and ineffective for pupils who do not learn well. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not being filled effectively and they lack the foundations for new learning to be successful.

There is currently no effective way of supporting pupils who struggle with their reading. The trust has recognised this and provided support from a partner school,

but this work is in its infancy. At the moment, the specific needs of pupils are not clear and therefore not able to be properly addressed.

Alongside all this is a stronger personal development curriculum and a group of staff across the school who care deeply for pupils. They get to know pupils well and relationships across the school are mostly productive. Pupils learn about the wider world and enjoy the rich variety of extra-curricular activities they take part in. The football team was proud to win an important match during the inspection. Pupils spoke of their visit to Parliament with interest, reflecting on the debate about climate change that they had seen. They are supported to consider options for careers through a range of activities such as a careers fair. However, this is only the case for those who attend school and far too many do not.

Most pupils are frequently absent from school or lessons. The school's support for pupils to attend regularly is not effective. Additionally, when they are in school, pupils' absence from lessons is too easily accepted. Staff try to work with pupils when they leave or truant from lessons. However, staff struggle to return pupils to lessons because there are so many pupils out and around the school at one time. For some pupils, this is an opportunity for a social gathering. School information suggests that recent actions to address this issue are starting to have an impact, but it is still early days.

Many pupils access alternative provision. This has recently been reviewed and new leaders are starting to adapt the packages of provision that pupils access. They aim to ensure these arrangements meet pupils' needs and give them the best chance of success. However, this has not yet been undertaken for all the pupils accessing this wider offer. A number of pupils currently have a reduced timetable, and these are only now being reviewed by the school.

The school has been part of the OHCAT multi-academy trust since 2018. Concerns about provision for pupils' SEND, attendance and behaviour were raised at their monitoring inspection in 2022. Trust leaders have provided more expertise and tried different strategies since that time, but these have not worked. A new leadership team joined the school in January 2024. Current identified priorities appear to be showing an initial positive impact. For example, the number of physical interventions has dropped substantially, as have the incidents of challenging behaviour.

While these are encouraging developments, they are not yet having the needed impact for pupils, their families or staff, all of whom know that the current provision is not effective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The current school curriculum is not sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils. Most pupils struggle to access the planned curriculum. For others, the curriculum is not matched well enough to their SEND. The school needs to rapidly review its curriculum to ensure that it is fit for purpose and to support all pupils to achieve well.
- Delivery of lessons is impeded by pupils' absence from school. Pupils frequently miss sections of learning and are left to catch up at a later date. There is currently little oversight of whether they do this or not. The school needs to develop a systematic process for understanding the specific barriers for pupils' attendance in order to support them in overcoming these, so that more pupils attend school more regularly.
- Pupils who struggle to be confident and fluent readers are not adequately supported. As a result, some pupils cannot access the curriculum effectively. The school needs to rapidly identify the pupils who need specific and targeted support and put this in place so that they can gain these essential skills.
- New leaders are starting to address many areas of need in the school. They, and the trust, need a more robust overview and evaluation of these steps to ensure that these important actions are having the impact they intend.
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint any early career teachers.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	145383
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296445
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jay Mercer
CEO of trust	John Prior
Principal	John Reilly (executive principal)
Website	www.grafham-grange.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Grafham Grange is a special school catering for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently uses seven alternative providers, a combination of registered and unregistered provision.
- The school has been part of the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT) since January 2018.
- There have been many staffing changes since the last inspection, including a new headteacher and leadership team.
- The school does not currently have a sixth form.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, teachers, other staff and pupils. The lead inspector met online with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also held a meeting online with representatives from the Trust board, including the chair of trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), mathematics, science and humanities. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor and trustee minutes.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They took account of parent and carer and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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