



Grange Comprehensive School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111401
LEA Halton
Inspection number 278680
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Gina White HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Latham Avenue
School category	Community		Runcorn
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Cheshire WA7 5DX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01928 578 115
Number on roll	1075	Fax number	01928 590 075
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr S Nelson
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr D Stanley

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Grange Comprehensive is a larger than average school serving a disadvantaged catchment area. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is around twice the national average. Small numbers of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and two speak English as an additional language. A special unit designated for the education of small numbers of pupils with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties is integrated within the school. A third of pupils receive support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities; this is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is also above average. The school has achieved Investors in People status, a school achievement award (2003) and has Sportsmark and Artsmark Gold accreditation. The school is part of the Excellence in Cities initiative (EiC) and hosts on its campus a City Learning Centre (CLC).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and progress in Key Stage 3 and the use of assessment to ensure pupils are challenged.

The overall effectiveness of the school has declined since its inspection in 1999 and is now inadequate. Inspectors do not support the school's own judgement of satisfactory. Actions to promote high standards and achievement are inadequate. Standards at Key Stage 3 have shown little overall improvement since the last inspection and the school has failed to meet challenging performance targets. Actions to tackle pupils' low literacy and numeracy skills have faltered and had little impact. Many pupils underachieved in end-of-key stage tests in 2005, and a significant number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are currently making unsatisfactory progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory because a more determined and clearly planned approach has emerged in the last 12 months. Standards and achievement by the time pupils leave the school in Year 11 are satisfactory. The use of data to evaluate the impact of the school's work and pupils' progress has been weak, but with the support of the local authority it is beginning to improve. Good practice in tracking and monitoring pupils' progress in years 7 to 9 is taking place in some subjects but it is not yet consistent enough. Work to establish good attendance has picked up pace but not enough to engage older pupils and it is inadequate overall. The school has identified clearly what it needs to do to secure improvement and it has the capacity to improve. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory but varies in the rigour and effectiveness with which it challenges pupils, uses a range of teaching strategies and manages the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils. Behaviour on the whole is satisfactory. The school has considerable support from parents and partnership work is good. Care, support for the vulnerable, and the personal development of pupils are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Secure improvements in attendance, particularly in Year 11 where it has a negative impact on achievement
- Ensure intervention work to improve literacy and numeracy levels is more sharply targeted and effective.
- Embed tracking systems and ensure all teachers are able quickly to identify where pupils' progress slows, and know how to intervene to secure improvements
- Ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management and the use of strategies in lessons to deal with the persistent disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average standards and almost a third have low levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Targeted work to tackle weaknesses in these basic skills is not applied consistently enough to raise pupils' performance. In addition, staffing difficulties in the last two years have disrupted learning for some pupils. Weaker literacy and numeracy skills continue to hinder pupils' attainment generally and depress the standards they reach at the end of Year 9, and by the time they leave school.

In 2004 and 2005, results in the national Key Stage 3 tests were significantly below average. Most pupils, and in particular average ability girls, did not do as well as the school expected them to. Pupils' achievement in English and mathematics is significantly low. The school has moved to tackle some of the weaknesses. Smaller teaching groups taught by specialist staff have been introduced to better support the pupils who are now in Year 10. Most pupils in Year 9 are on track to achieve their targets in mathematics, but significant numbers in English and science are making unsatisfactory progress.

The school's latest general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results in 2005 shows an upturn in performance compared to 2004. Pupils achieved well in art, design and technology and geography. When set against their starting points, their achievements are at least satisfactory, and some pupils make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. More pupils achieved qualifications in 2005 than did so in previous years. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils move successfully on to further education and training.

Performance in external tests and examinations shows an uneven trend over the last three years and the school has had little success in meeting its challenging targets, particularly at Key Stage 3.

The school's leadership team is embarking on a more focused approach to improving standards. Improvements to systems to track individual pupils' progress and that of groups of learners are developing but have not been in place long enough to establish consistent use by all teachers. Some staff are beginning to use data more sharply, to identify and target support to pupils who are falling behind but this too is at an early stage and a consistent approach throughout the school is not yet established.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory with many good features. Pupils feel safe, and most are happy and enjoy school. Awareness of, and preparation for, the world of work is good and pupils are well advised about career opportunities and interviews. Enterprise activities are strong features within an effective work-related learning programme. They benefit pupils in developing useful time-management skills to support their GCSE coursework.

Pupils' safety and well-being are high priorities and the school deals swiftly and effectively with the few incidents of bullying. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted, including a well-planned week of themed activities for Year 8 pupils. While this has heightened their awareness of the importance of healthy eating, some pupils have yet to apply what they have learned.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory although the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. Pupils' contribution to the school and local community is a strength and is enhanced by involvement in decision-making through the new school council. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of extracurricular opportunities.

Most pupils behave well and want to learn but a minority of pupils disrupt lessons. Attendance levels have improved since the last inspection but are still well below the national average, and the school has not got to grips with the very poor attendance in Year 11.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as satisfactory and inspectors agree. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and, because there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils, learning takes place in a purposeful atmosphere. In the best lessons, pupils are engaged well at the start and teachers use a variety of approaches that sustain their interest and concentration throughout. In these lessons, teaching is vibrant and the combination of teachers' enthusiasm, subject expertise and effective application of well-planned and challenging work results in pupils learning with understanding and they quickly make progress. In less effective lessons, because teachers do too much of the work, there is little challenge and limited scope for pupils to develop or apply independent learning skills. Consequently, learning becomes passive and the rate of progress slows. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not have sufficient skills to manage small numbers of poorly behaved pupils, and the work of the majority of the class is adversely affected.

A significant weakness in provision is the lack of rigour in monitoring individual pupils' progress to identify underachievement. Use of performance data for regular tracking and assessing of pupils' achievement is at an early stage.

Pupils' role in self-assessment is also in its infancy and varies in quality and rigour. In the best practice, pupils, sometimes working in pairs, assess their work using clearly understood criteria.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced in all years and meets statutory requirements. The range of subjects and arrangement of teaching groups mean that the match of work to pupils' needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is generally sound. However, intervention and support to develop and improve literacy and numeracy skills are currently targeted to some but not to all pupils who need it. Provision for small numbers of able pupils to enter examinations early and achieve GCSEs and advanced qualifications is good. Pupils value the preparation and support for examinations. Provision for information and communications technology (ICT) is good and is enhanced by the additional resources in the CLC. Effective collaborative arrangements with partner institutions provide pupils with a good grasp of work-related learning and the high number of pupils who continue their education after leaving school firmly demonstrates its success. Many pupils are involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school evaluates this aspect of its work to be satisfactory and the inspection team agrees. Good procedures and care are strong features of this school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare and safety are secure and procedures are robust. Staff give unstintingly of their time. Relationships are positive and most pupils act responsibly and care for each other. Pupils say, 'This is a happy school'. Collaboration with outside agencies is good, and vulnerable children and those in public care receive sensitive help. Pupils who receive this support describe it as 'kind, respectful and responsive'. Pupils are aware of their targets, and how well they are doing, in some subjects. But in most, they are unsure of what precisely they need to do to improve and this hinders their progress. Guidance is most effective in helping new pupils to settle quickly to school routines, and in enabling them to make informed decisions about options and confidently transfer on to further education and employment at age 16.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school evaluates leadership and management as satisfactory and inspectors agree. The senior leadership team is hardworking and committed and day-to-day management is good. A new vision for the school and a purposeful evaluative approach have brought a sharper focus to raising standards and achievement in the last year. The leadership aspires to meet challenging targets and this approach is shared by governors and middle managers. Workforce reform and restructuring have been tackled decisively and rigorously and have further emphasised this new focus. Staffing difficulties have stabilised, although their legacy is apparent in the low standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 in 2005, particularly in English. Attendance, a longstanding problem in

the school, has risen steadily but slowly since the last inspection and is improving further under new leadership. The school has the support of most parents: they value the work it is doing to support and care for their children.

The school recognises that the use of data is underdeveloped. This has hampered senior managers in rigorously evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of its intervention work with pupils and the impact of the many initiatives and activities under way in the school. Consequently, the steady decline in pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 has not been picked up swiftly enough over the last two years. Open and accurate self-evaluation demonstrates that the school now knows where the gaps are in its systems. Planning and actions to tackle weaknesses are firmly based upon what the school most needs to do to bring about improvements in the next 12 months. The capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Some middle managers are demonstrating good practice in monitoring and evaluating individual pupils' performance and have evolved their own rigorous systems. Senior managers have identified this best practice but it has yet to be shared widely and adopted as a whole-school approach.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive and involved in the day-to-day life of the school, and funding and resources are well managed. However, the school is not achieving satisfactory value for money because pupils are underachieving. Governors are effective in ensuring that learners are well cared for and support is in place. They are developing understanding of their role in monitoring the school's progress. A lack of robust measures has held them back from monitoring as effectively as they needed to. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views about your school. This is what we found:

- We know that you are proud of your achievements at school, but too many of you are not reaching the standards you are capable of in Year 7, 8 and 9. The headteacher and senior staff are concerned about this and they have already started to make improvements.
- Teaching across the school is very strong in places but not in others. You respond well to teachers' high expectations in some lessons and make good progress. But in others you are not challenged enough or given sufficient information to know what is expected of you and what you need to do to improve your work further.
- Many of you are working hard to improve your attendance, act responsibly and behave well in and around school. But we have listened to your concerns and have seen that a small number of pupils disrupt some lessons.
- We agree with you and your parents that relationships are good, and the care and support you receive are strengths of the school.
- Most of you enjoy school and the wide range of activities and opportunities it provides for you. We were impressed by the support and preparation you receive to learn about enterprise and work. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted but not always practised: the hot pastries are too tempting!

The school has been given a 'Notice to Improve' these things:

- to help teachers to develop ways of dealing with poor behaviour
- to make sure attendance improves further and older pupils attend more regularly
- to make sure systems are in place to help all teachers quickly to identify where pupils are finding work difficult and that they know how to help them make improvements
- to make sure the extra help for those of you who struggle with reading, writing and mathematics is more successful in helping to improve.

I have recommended that the school is re-inspected in about a year's time.

I wish you well for the future.