



The Grove School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123580
LEA Shropshire
Inspection number 281512
Inspection dates 19 January 2006 to 20 January 2006
Reporting inspector John Evans HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Newcastle Road
School category	Community		Market Drayton
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Shropshire TF9 1HF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01630 652121
Number on roll	1050	Fax number	01630 658980
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr P W Ingham
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Richard W Arrowsmith

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	19 January 2006 - 20 January 2006	281512

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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

The Grove is a large comprehensive school in Market Drayton, a market town at the north eastern extremity of Shropshire. It is the only secondary school in the town and a specialist language college. Of the 1,050 students currently on roll, 129 are in the sixth form. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students having special educational needs is slightly below national average. Eligibility for free school meals is also below average. Nevertheless, the school serves a community in which educational aspirations in many families remain low, not least because of the ready supply of low-skilled jobs in the food production industry. Around 25% of students, about three times the national level, go into employment at 16.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory, whereas the school judges it to be good. This is because although the school has an outstanding approach to inclusion, the progress students make and the standards they reach are only satisfactory. The headteacher, ably supported by key staff, has overseen the evolution of a truly comprehensive curriculum which is capable of meeting the needs and interests of all students. The extensive use of mentoring and the mixed-age tutor groups are outstanding aspects of the good care, guidance and support for students. Enrichment activities provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their horizons. Consequently, the aspirations of young people are raised and their personal development and well-being are good. These very positive aspects of the school have not yet had sufficient impact in increasing the progress made by students between 11 and 16 and thereby raising the standards achieved. Although there is much good teaching, more concerted action is needed to ensure that all teachers are capable of consistently providing lessons which engage and challenge all students. The responsibilities of subject heads and the use of data to target improvements and monitor progress towards their realisation are underdeveloped. The school has made much progress since its last inspection, although the underachievement of boys and aspects of the monitoring of teaching and students' progress, particularly at Key Stage 3, remain weaknesses. The school provides good value for money and has further capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Whereas the school judges the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be good, inspectors have found them to be satisfactory. Standards have been improving year on year and have now reached the national level for AS and A-level courses. The progress made by students is more mixed; in 2005 about half the students achieved in line with, or better than, the grades predicted from their GCSE scores and the other half achieved below expectation. The curriculum is quite broad, with a good range of vocational courses available alongside some 20 AS and A-level subjects. Support from a local college enables students to take a few subjects in which the school's teachers do not have expertise. Students feel well looked after, their academic progress is monitored effectively and their personal development is good. The large majority progress into higher education, where Grove students have an excellent record of completing their course successfully. The new head of sixth form has started to accelerate improvements, which have been slow to develop because quality assurance procedures do not target sixth form provision sufficiently.

What the school should do to improve further

Accelerate improvements in standards and achievement, particularly for boys, by:

- raising the standard and consistency of lessons so that students are more frequently provided with an inspiring, challenging and fun experience
- making more systematic

use of data to target and monitor improvements in teaching and learning and achievement and standards, particularly in Key Stage 3 • securing more consistent subject leadership which is more instrumental in raising standards • vigorously addressing the recent decline in standards in English at Key Stage 3.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average overall, with considerable variation between subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4, but this represents satisfactory progress. Students enter the school with standards slightly below average. After improving in the previous three years, standards in the 2005 national tests in Year 9 fell below the national average. There was a particularly sharp decline at Key Stage 3 in English, where more able students did not make the progress they should have and results were well below those attained in mathematics and science. Although gradually improving, results at GCSE have remained below the national average since 2002. Results in English, mathematics and science are now close to the national figures, but the poor performance of boys has significantly affected overall standards. Whilst the attainment of girls at GCSE is broadly in line with national averages, and in several subjects well above, boys' results are well below average, despite the good work some have done in statistics, drama, geography and modern foreign languages. This underachievement by boys has long been a concern of the school but is now being tackled successfully through curriculum diversification. The top 20% of students at the end of Key Stage 3, mostly girls, achieve very well at GCSE. Students tend to make more progress during Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, but it is satisfactory overall. Aspirations are being raised. The very large majority of students who choose a vocational pathway in Key Stage 4 successfully complete their NVQ or GNVQ course and their Key Skills. These initiatives are contributing steadily to the school's capacity to raise overall achievement at 16. Standards in the sixth form have improved year on year and have now reached the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of students is good. Students enjoy coming to school and this contributes to above average attendance. They especially appreciate the friendly atmosphere and the good relationships they have with teachers. Behaviour around the school is good but in some lessons, especially those with mixed ability, a minority of students cause low-level disruption. Although students are aware of occasional bullying, they are confident that teachers deal with it effectively and feel the school provides them with a safe environment. Most students adopt a healthy lifestyle. Meals are prepared on the premises using healthy ingredients, and healthy eating options are becoming popular. Students make the most of excellent opportunities for them to contribute to the school community, for example, as peer mentors, House officials and sports captains. A tutorial system based on mixed age groups allows older students to take more responsibility. The school council is especially active and in addition to

acting as a voice for the students, is involved, for example, in primary school liaison and the appointment of staff. Students are involved in policy decisions and with the community beyond the school through extensive activities such as charity events. The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 helps to provide outstanding opportunities for students to develop social and work-related skills. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as opportunities are woven very effectively into a vast number of school events and excursions. Most notable is an annual visit to South Africa that provides a number of students with an invaluable experience of black township life. International links provide students with a good understanding of other cultures but their awareness of diversity closer to home is insufficiently developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have responded well to curriculum innovation at Key Stage 3 and to the opportunities of the wider curriculum at Key Stage 4. Good lessons were seen in a range of subjects but overall teaching was less effective in Years 7 to 9 than in GCSE, vocational and sixth form lessons. Although learning objectives are usually clear, some subjects would benefit from better use of the Key Stage 3 strategies, with individual, group and plenary activities and expectations more clearly defined. Teachers have good relationships with students. Students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form were unanimous in their appreciation of the friendly and relaxed atmosphere in lessons and the support and care teachers give them. Where behaviour is an issue, teachers mostly manage it well and avoid confrontation. In the better lessons, students are keen and ready to learn. This element is missing in lessons where students are compliant or apathetic rather than animated or questioning in their response. The best lessons are characterised by the careful planning of appropriate work, a good pace being maintained as students switch between different activities, responsibility being taken by students themselves, and the evident enjoyment of the subject shared by teachers and students. More consistent monitoring of teaching and marking by all departments would help to identify and share good practice capable of improving standards and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is outstanding. At Key Stage 3 the school has taken the innovative step of introducing a competence-based approach for teaching students how to learn more independently and how to support each other's learning. This approach pervades the whole curriculum and has come to be highly valued by teachers and students. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 demonstrates that a committed school can provide an exciting

and genuinely inclusive curriculum. The school prioritises, at no little cost, individualised learning programmes which make very positive use of key skills. Excellent links with local colleges and other training providers enable a wide range of vocational qualifications, particularly NVQs, to be made available. About 40% of students in Years 10 and 11 choose a vocational pathway. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, which are enjoyed by many students. An extensive range of enrichment activities are organised by the school to raise students' aspirations and extend their horizons. The Birks outdoor centre in the Lake District, the range of international links and the activities week in June provide students with outstanding opportunities to gain new experiences, interests and increased self-awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support the school provides for students are good, with some outstanding features. The detailed and well-organised transition programme provides excellent preparation for students coming into Year 7. Their progress through the year groups is monitored carefully. However, the school rightly recognises a lack of consistency in target-setting and the tracking of individual students' progress across subjects, especially in Key Stage 3, and well-developed plans for improvement are now being implemented. In Years 10 to 13, students have a good understanding of their progress relative to their target grades. The introduction of a vertical tutorial system has been enormously successful in supporting relationships between different year groups. An extensive and brilliantly co-ordinated mentoring system provides personal support for many students in many ways, with the sixth form and local community providing rich sources of mentors. The school's responsiveness to the needs of individual students is excellent. Much attention is given to engaging challenging students and, as a result, exclusions are low. Vulnerable children are very well cared for and the needs of those students with special educational needs are well met. Health and safety procedures are clear and reliable. Child protection arrangements are securely in place. Advice and guidance on courses and careers is very thorough. All pupils develop their own career plan and the large, annual careers convention is highly valued by students and their parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully pursued his vision of raising aspirations through providing relevant and motivating opportunities for all students. This is helping to transform the attitudes and achievements of those young people, especially boys, previously disinterested in their education. A genuinely inclusive school is central to the aims shared by school managers, who are innovative in their approach to tackling the challenges presented by local circumstances. Whilst this effectively promotes high standards of care and a more inclusive curriculum, there has been less emphasis on raising standards more directly. The school is well managed

on a day-to-day basis and equal opportunities are well promoted. The school's specialist status is being used well to improve opportunities in modern foreign languages, both internally and across local primary schools, and develop an international dimension. This is beginning to improve standards, particularly in German. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. It draws on a wide range of information to judge its performance. However, judgements on standards and achievement and on teaching and learning are not well supported by relevant data and are over-generous. Good arrangements are in place for senior managers to assure the quality of the work of subject leaders and to agree priorities for improvement. Lesson observations are undertaken to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, but lessons are not graded and the approach is not consistent between subject leaders. The school's development plan identifies priorities for improvement, but provides insufficient information on how their implementation will be monitored and measured. Governors are more committed, supportive and involved than usual. They are well informed but do not yet use available data sufficiently to challenge the school's performance. Resources are deployed very efficiently and school managers are creative in gaining access to a range of external funding to supplement local authority funding.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

Dear students, A few weeks ago a small team of Ofsted inspectors visited your school. We met and talked with many of you and observed several of your lessons. We also met teachers and had many letters from parents. Throughout this process, you were helpful, friendly and open with us. We would like to thank you for that. Here are our main findings: What is good about your school: ?? The Grove School has some outstanding features. The most striking is the effort the school has made to provide courses, especially in Years 10 and 11, which enable you to study something that really interests you and in which you can be successful. This helps to give you all an equal chance of having a positive experience at school and gain skills which will serve you well in future life. ?? The school provides a good range of after-school clubs and a brilliant range of enrichment activities, most striking of which are the Birks Outdoor Centre, the international visits and the activities week in the summer term. These provide you with great opportunities to broaden your horizons and increase your awareness and confidence. ?? There are some good lessons (we would like there to be more) where teachers have planned a good variety of activities to match the abilities of all students and keep you interested and the lesson moves at a good pace. ?? The school provides a high standard of care, guidance and support for students. The mentoring system and organisation of tutorials are strong features. ?? We were impressed by how much you say you enjoy school and felt that your own personal development is good. We would like to see you make more progress so that you achieve better results at the end of Key Stage 3 and in your GCSEs. To help you do this: We have asked the school to make the following improvements: ?? Do more to improve the quality of lessons so that they much more regularly provide an inspiring, challenging and fun experience for students of all abilities. ?? Make better use of data to set targets for student, subject and school improvements; for example by improving the effectiveness of target-setting and reviews of progress in Key Stage 3. ?? Improve the consistency of subject leadership so that there is more focus on raising standards and achievement in every subject Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE T 0207 421 6800 F 0207 421 6707 www.ofsted.gov.uk ?? Urgently improve the standards achieved in English at Key Stage 3. We wish you well for the future and thank you again for your company during those two days. Yours sincerely, John Evans HMI