



Grappenhall Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111501
Local Authority Warrington
Inspection number 288975
Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Adrian Simm

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Church Lane
School category	Community special		Grappenhall, Warrington
Age range of pupils	5–19		Cheshire WA4 3EU
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01925 263895
Number on roll (school)	100	Fax number	01925 860487
Number on roll (6th form)	4		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Walker
		Headteacher	Mrs Angela Findlay
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2001		

Age group 5–19	Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006	Inspection number 288975
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Grappenhall Hall provides for boys with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties which are recognised in their statements of special educational need. Many have additional learning needs such as communication, speech, language and mental health issues. The complexity of the needs of the boys who join the school has grown significantly since the last inspection. Over 90% of the boys have contact with other support services such as the Youth Offending Team, Social Services and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The school offers day education and a very small number of boarding places to pupils from throughout the local authority area. A small number of boys attend from neighbouring authorities. Most come from socially disadvantaged areas. Boys are mostly White British, with a very small minority from British Asian families. None is at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. Fourteen per cent are in the care of a local authority. There is a recent history of up to one in five lessons being taught by supply teachers, some of whom subsequently take up full-time posts in the school. The school has achieved an award for being a healthy school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Grappenhall Hall is in the midst of changing how it supports and educates boys who have far more complex needs than past pupils. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory and improving. The school gives satisfactory value for money. Good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team show in the accuracy of their knowledge of the school's strengths and what else needs to be done. They have planned for, researched and introduced well the changes they know need making. They have taken the right steps in the right order. The positive impact of this work shows that they have a good capacity to move the school on.

Managers have tackled the issues that had resulted in boys' behaviour having become poor and which was having a detrimental effect upon their personal development and achievement. This was particularly the case for boys in care of a local authority. In relation to the boys' needs, behaviour is now satisfactory and improving well. Staff and governors recognise this because of the reduction in serious incidents resulting in boys' exclusion from school for short periods and an increasing level of calmness in school. Because the school places individual boys' needs at the core of its work, and these are now more complex, there have been changes in the content of the curriculum. Recent high quality support in communication, speech and language therapy is having a marked improvement in boys' ability to converse and deal with their concerns in more acceptable ways. Pupils have a clear voice in how the school improves.

Opportunities for boys to have breakfast on arrival, time to settle into the day and to discuss how they are feeling, are paying off well. Boys have a good understanding of how their lifestyles can become more healthy; they know their contributions to their school as a community are improving. However, the overall level of attendance remains stubbornly low despite recent efforts to improve it. A few boys have very poor attendance. Overall, boys' personal development is good as a direct result of the effective care, guidance and support they are offered. Parents recognise the good impact the school has on their children's personal development and praise the school's efforts in constantly helping boys to 'make the right choices'.

The headteacher and the senior management team recognise clearly where they are up to in their well planned developments. Overall, boys' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. In each, the strengths are in those aspects that support boys' personal development. More now needs to be done to ensure that their academic achievement flourishes as well. The school has a good track record of boys moving on at the end of Year 11 to vocational training or further education but they could do even better if their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills were stronger.

One barrier the school has not yet overcome is being able to attract a full complement of permanent teaching staff. This places great pressure on senior managers to teach more than they otherwise would, to support the temporary staff and to fit their management responsibilities around this work. Senior managers and all staff with

management responsibilities are doing well to have moved the school on under these difficult circumstances.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Work with the very small number of more vulnerable students who decide to stay on in the sixth form is effective. Their achievement is good. The individual nature of students' needs is met effectively because of good teaching. Individual packages are put together well for students such as a combination of school, college and vocational work, and this matches their needs. They are supported and prepared well for adult life. Because of this extra support, the school knows that students make a smoother transition into further training than they otherwise would.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 8

The residential provision is a good quality resource. Through attending the 'Link Club', a small minority of boys who attend in the day have the opportunity to benefit from this good provision up to four evenings a week. The care and welfare aspect of the school is inspected annually by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). The last report in November 2005 indicated that in a large majority of respects the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools were met. The unit aims to complement the school day by offering opportunities for pupils to extend what they learn in school, especially in the areas of social and emotional development, independence and self-care skills. These aims are met well. The care provided is on a par with that during the school day because of the direct involvement of the headteacher and senior staff. Recommended improvements from the last inspection have largely been implemented. Residential provision is highly valued by the school and enjoyed by boys.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with parents and carers to improve attendance of those with a poor track record.
- Ensure teaching time is used progressively to boost boys' achievement.
- Increase and safeguard the time the headteacher and senior managers have to raise standards and improve boys' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Boys' starting points are well below national expectations for their ages. Their attainment has been affected detrimentally by erratic school attendance and disrupted

learning at previous schools. Although this was a continuing issue for the school in the months leading up to June 2006, the new ways of working that are taking hold means that absence from school through fixed-term exclusions is showing a downward trend. Poor attendance continues to impact detrimentally on the achievement of a small minority. Despite this, school data show that a good number of boys, once settled, achieve satisfactorily. For example, from their attainment on entry, a majority of pupils show satisfactory progress in their reading and numeracy skills. Also, a large majority of Year 11 pupils in 2006 gained the equivalent of at least one General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or entry level qualification pass. Five boys gained GCSE grades A to C. Art and design featured prominently in this, which is an example of how boys' talents are channelled well to help them succeed. Boys' communication skills now feature strongly in the school's work and this is beginning to progress well. Early indications are that there is a good pay-off in terms of improvement in boys' behaviour. Achievement in ICT is satisfactory and strengthening, which is a good improvement on the last inspection. The school's Learning Support Centre (Phoenix Centre) recently introduced a programme focused on rebuilding relationships and social skills. Although in its early stages of showing impact on pupils' academic progress, this is having a positive effect.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Boys' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They are offered choices and asked to reflect both on how they behave as individuals and on how their school is improved. School data shows that following reflection, a growing number of pupils are beginning to make the right choices in how they behave, which is resulting in the falling number of serious incidents of misbehaviour. Discussion with pupils shows a mature understanding of what else needs to be done. Whilst attendance overall is inadequate, once settled, a good number of boys attend well, especially given their previous track records. The support for improvement in healthy lifestyles is strong. Boys know about eating healthily as a result of the good role models set by staff at breakfast, lunchtime and, for the resident and Link Club pupils, in afternoon tea. Boys enjoy these times in particular. They go off-site into the community whenever possible, including participation in courses at the local college. They also work together towards fundraising events. Community projects such as Forest Skills Courses supported by the Woodland Trust and residential camps help build boys' understanding of being better citizens. Members of the school council speak positively about their last trip to London when they visited Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. All of this prepares pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are good role models for the boys and, where there are permanent staff teams such as in Key Stage 2, the stability of routines, staff's detailed knowledge of the boys and established relationships help boys to progress well and enjoy their learning. This is not restricted to Key Stage 2 but the effectiveness of learning is not as strong where supply staff are teaching or, on occasions, when teachers do not have the support in class of experienced teaching assistants. Nonetheless, throughout school, staff use the reward system consistently, which helps boys settle to learn more often than not. In good lessons it is clear that staff are effective in encouraging boys to use strategies to better manage their own behaviour. On the occasions when boys play up, staff 'walking about' or staff on call are effective support to the staff with current responsibility. Together they deal with incidents appropriately. The use of ICT in lessons is becoming a strength of the school and is much more effective than at the last inspection. Although not fully in place, the use of small-step assessment is gathering pace and contributing to a more detailed understanding of boys' strengths and weaknesses in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The recently changed curriculum is settling down well. Staff are enthusiastic about the opportunities it offers to extend boys' practical learning. Work on upgrading the English curriculum is beginning to bear fruit. Slightly further advanced are the major initiatives of 'nurturing' sessions, 'emotional literacy' and improving boys' skills in communication, all designed to reduce the stress boys feel and to support their emotional well-being. Alternative options are well planned and successful for those at risk of becoming disillusioned with the basic school curriculum. Mini-enterprises are part of the boys' vocational and work-related learning. Developments in provision for a modern foreign language have contributed well to the school's improving curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school cares for its pupils well. All adults have high expectations of boys' attitudes and behaviour and are becoming increasingly proficient at encouraging boys to have the same expectations of themselves. Staff vetting procedures meet current government requirements and child protection procedures are in place. Health and safety systems

are effective. Support from other professionals such as speech and language therapy and personal advisors from Connexions contributes well to the guidance the school offers its boys. Because of the small number of boys in classes, permanent staff teams know their boys well. They support and care for them effectively. In parts of school where supply staff work or where teaching assistants change between classes, support is not as strong. The more perceptive boys can exploit this. Whilst the school has a satisfactory approach to tracking boys' progress in their work, this is being upgraded appropriately to fit in with the new curriculum. It is designed to be more precise in knowing how well boys are doing in learning a broad range of skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and senior management team work closely and have accurately identified the main priorities for improvement. Action has been swift since it became clear that previous approaches were not working well enough. There are measurable improvements in boys' attitudes and behaviour and early signs of these having a positive effect on their academic progress. Staffing changes result in some discontinuity in teaching, learning and subject leadership, although senior managers work very hard to keep disruption to a minimum. As a result, their own responsibilities have to be fitted around their pupil and staff support work, which is far from ideal. Monitoring of subject quality and the impact of teaching and learning is gathering momentum well. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations and demonstrate their commitment to the school's work through monitoring visits and attendance at meetings.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	2	2

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?	3	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we visited you recently to find out how well your teachers are helping you with your learning. Thank you for being willing to talk to us. It was very useful to know what you think about your school. A special thank you to the Head Boy and colleague for showing us around on the first day. There are some of the things that are really good about your school.

- Your headteacher, teachers and other staff want you to do well. You are at the centre of everything the school does and are the reason staff want to improve how the school helps you.
- You are given lots of support and different ways to help improve your attitudes to school; but it is much better when you decide for yourselves how to control your own behaviour.
- Teachers plan an interesting range of activities to help you enjoy your learning and these are getting better. Some of you told us how much you like the breakfast session each morning.
- Staff set out to help you understand and achieve everything you need to be successful when you reach age 16. You need to play your part in this.

If those of you who do not come to school each day and those who get angry frequently made the right choice and gradually let staff help you more, you could make even better progress. I have asked the school to help you improve in these things.

Also, I have asked the school to find ways of making sure your headteacher and her senior managers have more time to do all of the various jobs they have which you don't see, rather than spending quite as much time helping your teachers when you get angry. This is for you to help with as well.