

Grange Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119051
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291298
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Farrell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	50
6th form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Davis
Headteacher	Mark Robson
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Birling Road Leybourne West Malling ME19 5QA
Telephone number	01732 842144
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Grange Park School educates students with autistic spectrum disorders all of whom have a statement of special educational need. There are four girls and 56 boys on roll. One student is from an ethnic minority background, the others are White British and there are no students for whom English is an additional language. One student is in local authority care. The attainment levels of students are well below national averages as a result of their special educational needs. The sixth form shares a site with a secondary technical college three miles from the rest of Grange Park School. In recent years, the school has been through a process of considerable change gradually extending from its original provision for students aged 16 to 19 to its present provision for students aged 11 to 19.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Grange Park School provides a satisfactory education with good outcomes for personal development underpinned by good care, guidance and support. The great majority of parents appreciate what the school offers. Typical comments are, 'Grange Park is a lovely school' and 'The level of care and understanding has been excellent.'

The good care, guidance and support begin with the carefully planned induction arrangements for students at Year 7 and continue with the good support for behaviour and development throughout the school. This leads to pupils' good personal development and well-being including good spiritual, social and moral development and satisfactory cultural development. Robust procedures for health and safety contribute to students feeling safe and enjoying their education. Students try hard.

Students eat healthily and take exercise because the school places emphasis on this, for example providing healthy snacks and a range of opportunities for physical activity. Students have a good awareness of the local community through planned visits and contributions to the curriculum from visitors. They develop satisfactory economic and workplace skills supported by satisfactory provision for literacy and numeracy and satisfactory, though improving, opportunities for work experience. The success of the school in enabling students to feel accepted is typified by a student who said, the school 'took to me like a brother'.

Although students' standards of attainment are well below national expectations because of their special educational needs, their progress and achievement are satisfactory. This is because of satisfactory teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team. Behaviour is well managed and relationships between students and staff are good. Lessons are carefully planned but opportunities are missed to encourage students to use computers across different subjects, and lessons are not always designed so that they are as practical as possible and everybody can take part. The satisfactory curriculum is broadly based and includes suitable accredited courses but sometimes does not place enough emphasis on activities that are matched well enough to the students' learning needs.

The satisfactory leadership and management and the strong team working of staff successfully support and encourage good behaviour and a happy atmosphere. Student progress is assessed and monitored satisfactorily and action is taken to try to improve slow progress but the assessment data are not used as well as they should be to precisely identify areas in which students should improve and relate this to very specific foci for teaching. Partnership with parents is good and links with other services and schools satisfactory.

Governors provide satisfactory support but their contribution is constrained by progress data not being as sharply focused as they could be. The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection in a period of considerable change and is satisfactorily placed and strongly committed to improving further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form provision is satisfactory. Students' attainment is well below national expectations because of their special educational needs but they achieve satisfactorily, making steady progress in their learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there is a sound curriculum which provides a suitable range of activities. Accreditation through the Assessment and

Qualifications Alliance (AQA) supports satisfactory academic progress and, in social and life skills, good progress. Personal development is good because of the school's good ethos and the sensitive support of staff. Students enjoy their activities and behave safely with consideration for others. Community participation is effectively encouraged, for example by involvement with Age Concern. The successful enterprise scheme contributes to satisfactory economic awareness. Good pastoral support for students and satisfactory tracking of academic progress help students move on successfully to work or further study. The satisfactory leadership and management of the sixth form have led to a calm, happy environment but opportunities have been missed to develop the curriculum further, for example by extending work experience opportunities and analysing student progress over time in sufficient detail.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment data to more precisely monitor students' progress and use this information as a focus to further improve teaching.
- Ensure that curriculum activities are more practical and that they encourage students to join in more.
- Extend opportunities for work experience to broaden the sixth form curriculum.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

While students' standards of attainment are well below age typical levels because of their special educational needs, students' achievement and progress are satisfactory. This progress is sustained for all students including those of different ages and different levels of ability, and for boys and girls. Students also make satisfactory progress in achieving their challenging individual targets. The range of accreditation for older students is suitable. Such students achieve satisfactorily in their examinations and assessments. In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in the acquisition of social and life skills such as cooking and shopping, gaining nationally accredited awards through the AQA scheme. Satisfactory progress is made against clear targets set on individual education plans developed in conjunction with the pupils and parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' good personal development is evident in lessons and outside. Students are courteous and behave well with consideration for others. Attendance is good. Students enjoy their education and are keen to state subjects and activities they like. They enthusiastically participate in physical activities including, for students aged 11 to 16, the early morning 'energise' sessions. They know about the benefits of healthy eating, acting accordingly. They are aware of others less fortunate than themselves and contribute well to the community for example raising funds for charities. Students' skills for economic well-being are satisfactorily developed, for example by satisfactory provision for literacy and numeracy. In the sixth form, while opportunities for

participation in the mainstream school with which it shares a campus are currently limited, the successful enterprise scheme, which includes catering, has had a positive impact on healthy eating and preparation for the future. Overall, spiritual, moral and social development is good. Although the curriculum for students aged 11 to 16 includes recently well developed provision for religious education with a range of multicultural elements, these have not yet had enough impact on students' cultural development, which is satisfactory. In the sixth form too, limited opportunities to learn about life in a multicultural society lead to satisfactory cultural development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

While there are examples of good teaching, overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. Among common strengths are the close partnership of teachers and teaching assistants, well structured and planned lessons, the good management of behaviour and parental involvement in developing individual education plans. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in some individual lessons. Relationships are positive, teaching assistants are highly effective and students work hard. However, throughout the school, opportunities are missed for individual students to use computers and to ensure activities are as practical and involving as they can be. Progress over time is not tracked precisely enough, and this slows progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The broad curriculum meets the varied learning needs of students satisfactorily. Many subjects are taught by specialists and the schemes of work cover the necessary areas for learning including and personal, social and health education contributing well to students' feelings of safety. While transport needs constrain activities before and after school a wide range of enrichment activities is offered at lunchtimes which students enjoy. Although the school has regularly adapted the curriculum to try to make activities relevant to daily life, this has not yet been fully achieved. However, the structure of the day, including for students aged 11 to 16, the morning periods of registration, energise sessions and class assemblies, works well. Provision for work experience, while satisfactory, is not as wide or varied as it should be. In the satisfactory sixth form curriculum, students have good opportunities to acquire practical and life skills but too few chances for varied physical and cultural activities or acquiring skills in numeracy and information and communication technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good care, guidance and support is particularly strong in pastoral aspects. The very thorough transition programme for students joining in Year 7 draws together observations in the students' previous school and parents' views to build a profile of the students' learning needs which

contributes very well to a successful start at Grange Park. Staff know individual students and their needs very well and through this students feel valued, as reflected for example in their good attendance. Child protection procedures are robust and procedures relating to health and safety are carefully carried out and known by staff. Partnership with parents and the communication between home and school are good. Links with other services are satisfactory and improving. In the sixth form, students know who to turn to if they have a problem. They feel safe and are fully involved in target setting and in reviews and well prepared for life after school, for example, by supported visits to a range of providers. Throughout the school, academic support is satisfactory. Students know the areas they have to improve upon but better progress is limited by the school's insufficiently precise use of achievement and progress data.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher, senior managers and staff are a close-knit team, hard working and deeply committed to the school. Administrative staff contribute strongly to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The headteacher and senior staff have set a clear direction to ensure that the school has adapted to the gradual change of age range as younger students have been admitted, developing the curriculum and ensuring staff skills are in place through a commitment to suitable training. This has led to a satisfactory allocation of staff into subject posts and the employment of a full time speech and language therapist as a member of the senior management team. There is a strong commitment to tackling any form of discrimination including bullying, which contributes to students' feelings of safety.

The school's satisfactory self-evaluation identifies areas that need improving and provides an accurate view of the quality of students' personal development and care, while being too generous in judgements in other areas. Although the school has worked hard to develop accurate assessments, it does not manage to use them as well as it should do to gain a precise enough picture of the progress of students. Consequently, teaching observations, although carried out regularly and carefully, are not fully supported by precise expectations of students' progress and tend to be graded too generously. The school recognises these as areas for improvement and has taken some early steps to address them, which are beginning to have an impact.

In the sixth form, leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of sixth form leads a calm, happy and united unit and has the confidence of staff, parents and students. However, opportunities have been missed to further develop the curriculum and, while students' achievement is regularly reviewed, their progress over time is not analysed sufficiently.

Governors provide satisfactory support and recognise the need for more precise data to enable them to carry out their duties even better.

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Annex A

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?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
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	4	4
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	2	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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.

Annex A

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	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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	3	
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

2 July 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Grange Park School, West Malling, ME19 5QA

Thank you for your help when we visited to inspect your school.

We found that Grange Park provides you with a satisfactory education with good aspects.

Among the good things about your school are that staff care for you and support you well.

You enjoy school and there are many activities and subjects you say you like. You feel safe in school and attend regularly. You also work hard and behave well.

- But there are some things that need improving. I have therefore asked the staff to:
- use assessment data better to monitor your progress and use this information to improve teaching and learning further
- ensure curriculum activities are more practical and enable you to take part more
- extend opportunities for your work experience.

Thank you again for your kind help.

Every good wish for the future.

Lead inspector