

Grafham Grange School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125482
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315246
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	10–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Mellor
Headteacher	Mr R Norman
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Grafham Bramley Guildford GU5 0LH
Telephone number	01483 892214
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Age group	10-17
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Grafham Grange is a non-maintained residential special school for 36 boys aged 11 - 16. Students older than this attend local colleges and are accommodated in the nearby residences. All have a statement of special educational needs, the vast majority of which relate to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and a minority have other difficulties on the autistic spectrum. The vast majority of pupils have experienced failure and permanent exclusion from a range of mainstream and special schools. The pupils are drawn from up to 27 local authorities from the south east of England. The majority of pupils are White British, over ten per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups including black African and Caribbean backgrounds. None have English as an additional language. The school has links with local schools and businesses and is in the early stages of seeking specialist schools status. It has received the FA Charter mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The quality of education at Grafham Grange is good. As a result of good teaching and good boarding provision the pupils' personal development and well-being are also good enabling them to make good progress and achieve a wide range of accreditation on leaving school.

Their behaviour is good overall, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They understand and respect the rewards system for good work and behaviour. Relationships with all staff, including boarding staff are good. The school makes extensive efforts to ensure that all pupils know about staying healthy. Most pupils respond positively although a few do not and are excluded from school which has an adverse effect upon their progress. The school seeks to continue to support these pupils and their families although the effectiveness of this has, until recently, been adversely affected by staff shortages.

Teachers' subject knowledge and experience in special education is good as is their use of assessment to plan relevant lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3, not all required subjects are currently available due to an inability to recruit suitable staff. Religious education has also not been taught this academic year. In Key Stage 4, the curriculum is good and suitably focussed on accreditation. Work related learning including work experience and attendance at local colleges of further education prepare older pupils very well for leaving school. The extra curricular activities, including the programme for boarders, are excellent.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is good. School procedures ensure their well-being is appropriately safeguarded. Pupils receive good therapies as well as medical and counselling support that are very effective in ensuring the pupils' welfare. Occasionally, exclusion procedures produce extended uncertainty about pupils' future placement at the school.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher and his team of senior managers have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The boarding provision is good and has effectively addressed the minor issues raised by its most recent CSCI inspection. (Commission for Social Care Inspectorate). The majority of parents support the school. The governing body and trustees give the school good support. The school is in the early stages of seeking specialist school's status.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The boarding provision is good and is very well led by the head of children's services and head of care. Good links are evident with the school's management and staff through comprehensive reporting and the twice daily handover meetings. The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. Two minor recommended actions following the most recent Commission for Social Care Inspection have been fully implemented. All care staff receive appropriate professional training which is extremely well monitored and co-ordinated.

The boarders are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and take regular exercise. The evident commitment from both the care and education staff to sport has resulted in regular success for the boys including county representation at football. A comprehensive programme of activities makes full use of school facilities and those in the local community. This provision makes an excellent contribution to the school's curriculum.

The school takes care to ensure that boarders receive a healthy diet that includes healthy options. All staff work very hard to promote the boarders' safety, for example, awareness of the dangers posed by substance abuse.

Through discussion with pupils and observation of them around the school during the day and in the early evening it is clear that they feel safe and enjoy being at school. They acknowledge trusted adults such as their key workers with whom they can share problems.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide all subjects of the National Curriculum as required for pupils at Key Stage 3 and religious education for all pupils.
- Review its policy and practice related to exclusions to ensure that pupils time out of education is kept to a minimum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' achievements are good because they receive good quality education, therapies, care and support. The standards attained are below average given the nature of the pupils' special educational needs. However, the vast majority of pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and this is reflected in the evidence of value added in national assessment data.

At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve passes in a range of GCSE subjects including, English, mathematics, science, ICT, history, geography, physical education and art. Success is also achieved in Entry Level Certificates in a number of the above subjects.

The pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans. The school's analysis of results shows no significant difference in achievement between any of the different groups other than for the minority who do not attend regularly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

By the time the pupils leave school they are well prepared for college or the world of work despite the extremely fragmented educational experience prior to admission. Their behaviour is good overall. Mealtimes and breaks are good opportunities for them to show manners and engage in casual conversation. They feel safe and know that any bullying is dealt with appropriately. One pupil, recently admitted after extended periods of not attending any school, reported that he had been helped greatly by staff and pupils to settle in. Other pupils had advised him what to do if he felt homesick. Attendance is satisfactory overall and this is a marked improvement. Pupils respond well to boarding staff's insistence on being punctual for lessons.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Different faiths are respected and art from different cultures is studied in the curriculum. Particular strengths are the pupils' abilities to reflect upon the behaviour and attitudes of others. The majority of pupils respond well to guidance about safety from substance abuse. A minority of pupils are resistant to the school's extensive work in this area and exclusions result that have an adverse effect upon their learning. All pupils take up many responsibilities, for example, escorting visitors

around the school, membership of the school council and keeping their bedrooms and residential areas tidy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of the pupils' needs and reflect this in their planning. Particular strengths include teachers' specialist subject knowledge, good relationships and the provision of specialist support for pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Suitable account is given to the pupils' knowledge and skills when they first start school when setting learning groups. An appropriate regard is given to national guidance for the structure of lessons and ways to involve learners in assessment. The teachers' use of assessment to plan lessons is good. The teamwork between teachers and other staff is a strong feature, notably in ensuring that all pupils are given equal access to the curriculum.

Pupils receive explicit praise for taking the time to compose their thoughts and phrase their answers. Levels of attainment are displayed in some classrooms although pupils do not always know which level applies to them. Displays of pupils' achievements in some classrooms is effective in giving pupils feedback about teachers' expectations although this is not commonplace throughout the school. The use of digital photography to record pupils' off-site experiences is very good. Increasingly appropriate and effective use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage the pupils.

Behaviour management in lessons is effective as a result of the close support from all staff. Sometimes pupils allow their learning to be disrupted and occasionally leave the room. Support is quickly provided to counsel the pupils' prompt return and resumption of learning. Some teachers provide additional classes after school, for example, mathematics, which has a positive impact on academic achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum and other activities are satisfactory overall. It is based on the national curriculum as required by pupils' statements of special educational need. There is a strong focus upon literacy and numeracy in all subjects in addition to personal, social, health and citizenship education. The Key Stage 3 curriculum does not currently provide design and technology, music or a modern foreign language. Religious education is not provided for any pupils.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum has a strong focus on accreditation to which most pupils respond very well. A well-planned vocational programme including work experience and attendance at local colleges of further education make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal and academic development and achievement.

The extra curricular provision is excellent. A wide range of activities including competitive sport and residential trips promote the pupils' academic and personal development. Good use is also made of the local community, for example, visits to local museums and places of interest.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good provision is made for the pupils' care, support and guidance. The school pays close attention to the pupils' individual special educational needs, personal development and well-being. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. The health and safety of the whole school community receives good attention. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken, child protection procedures are well understood.

Pupils are given good support and guidance to meet individual targets. Reviews of looked after pupils and annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs, involve all professionals and fully include parents and pupils. Subject reports are mostly good although a minority have too little information about progress and focus too much on attitudes and effort.

Relationships with the many external agencies are excellent as are those with in-house specialists, including the school nurse and consultants. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Several added comments via their pre-inspection questionnaires. These included, 'the dedication of staff is exceptional...this is the first school that has the ability to educate my son...a definite thumbs up!' A minority of parents felt that behaviour could be improved, as could communications between home and school. The school is proactive in working with parents whose children are at risk from drugs whilst at home. In most cases this is successful, although a minority continue to experience problems and exclusions result. The school's outreach provision typically serves pupils' families well. A recent and temporary reduction in staffing has had an adverse impact on its ability to support families. This can lead to protracted uncertainty about pupils' future at the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership, management and governance by trustees, governors and management is good. Subject leadership and management are good overall due to high levels of specialist knowledge that has a positive impact on the pupils' personal development and learning outcomes. This is reflected in the high numbers of pupils opting to go on to further education or training. The deployment of medical staff, therapists and teaching assistants, especially those with specialist roles, is particularly effective in meeting pupils' emotional and behavioural needs.

The school's management places a high priority on recruiting staff with relevant subject expertise who are also highly skilled in teaching pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Recent attempts to attract suitable staff have been unsuccessful resulting in weaknesses in the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3. Furthermore, the school has not been able to make any use of its significant investment in design and technology. However, additional staffing to support pupils' with specific learning difficulties has recently been secured which has strengthened the teaching further.

Teachers' planning and teaching is subject to recently improved procedures for performance management to give an accurate view of overall effectiveness. The recent re-organisation of the trustees, some of whom are governors provides a good range of expertise on relevant committees. The school's links with the community are strong and have a positive impact upon

this element of its bid for specialist school status. Financial matters are well managed and appropriately audited.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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
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

11 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grafham Grange School, Guildford, GU5 0LH

Thank you for helping me to get to know your school last week and for giving me such a warm welcome. I found that your school gives you a good education. One of the main strengths of the school is the good effect it has on your personal development and well-being. You are also able to leave with qualifications that will help you when you leave school.

The teaching you receive from the staff is good as is the additional support to help you improve your behaviour so that you can get on with everyone and your school work. It is clear you become more confident as you get older. I found your views on capital punishment very interesting and you put your points across very well. I enjoyed the discussion with you about how much you enjoyed school and you told me that you feel safe and know that the staff are there to help if you have problems.

The range of lessons for younger pupils is not as wide as it should be because some subjects are not taught as they have been in the past. You may also know that there are no lessons in religious education this year. Lessons for older pupils in Years 10 and 11 are good at preparing you for leaving school and going to college. The activities you have after school are excellent and I know how you enjoy sport and going on visits including the coast and abroad to Cyprus. These experiences and your time on work experience and at college prepare you well for leaving school. You get on well with the staff and mostly do your best to see that everyone can get on and learn in class. Even when you have problems, it is good to see you can reflect on it and look to improve in the future.

The school works hard to keep you fit and healthy. Most of you know about dangers from drugs and keep away from things that are harmful. For a few pupils this remains a problem and leads to them being excluded. Time out of school has a bad effect on the good progress you can make. In order to improve the school further, I am asking the headteacher to see that you get all the lessons that should be provided for you. I am also asking him to look at exclusions and to see what can be done to keep them to a minimum.

I wish you lots of luck in the future.

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector