

Grange Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102202
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	335858
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Elliott
Headteacher	Nicky Rosewell
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
School address	Welbeck Road South Harrow London HA2 0RJ
Telephone number	020 8422 5070
Fax number	020 8422 9439
Email address	head@grangemiddle.harrow.sch.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, analysed 54 questionnaire responses from parents, looked at the data collected by the school about the pupils' progress, the records of the quality of the monitoring of teaching, and sampled pupils' work.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the school's efforts to raise the pupils' performance, particularly in mathematics and writing
- teachers' use of assessment information to support pupils' progress, a current school focus
- how well the school caters for those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and those with Black African heritages
- the impact of the school's efforts to engage parents in their children's education.

Information about the school

Grange Middle School serves a very diverse community. Eight out of ten pupils, much higher than average, are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The largest of these groups are Black African and Asian. Around three quarters of the pupils have a home language other than English. Just under a half of the school population requires support in the acquisition of English. The proportion of the pupils eligible for free school meals is double that found nationally as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These special needs relate to a range of barriers to learning, mainly behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as well as moderate learning difficulties. Many more pupils join or leave the school throughout the year than is found in schools nationally. The school is trialling one-to-one tuition to help pupils catch up. It has Healthy School Status but has no kitchen or dining facilities to offer the pupils hot meals. The school has faced challenges in recruiting and retaining staff over past years. The plans to restructure education in the local authority in 2010 mean that, in the future, the school will recruit pupils from Years 3 to 6. The school provides both a breakfast club and an after-school club for its pupils.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Grange Middle School has faced, and continues to face, a range of challenging circumstances. Not least is the high mobility of the pupils and the high number at the early stages of learning English. Over the years this has had a significant impact on attainment. Nonetheless, Grange is a happy school that provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has recovered well from earlier staffing turbulence and is also well prepared for the imminent reorganisation of schools in the area. Both parents and pupils expressed really positive views about the school. 'We like it because we learn a lot' one pupil summed up, to vigorous nods from his companions. Another really important aspect of the school is its strong inclusive ethos. A parent reflected the views of many others: 'Grange Middle is like a big family. It respects all cultures and caters for all abilities.' The school's effort to make all families and pupils feel valued underpins its success in engaging parents in their children's education.

Since the last inspection, the school has had some success in raising the pupils' performance, especially by the end of Year 7. It has sustained the pupils' average performance in science and in reading. However, standards in writing are still too variable, particularly in the types of writing required for national tests in Year 6. Although boys' standards in mathematics have risen steeply, this has not been the case for girls, whose performance in some aspects of shape and space is particularly low. The school is ready to address this seriously through a review of the mathematics curriculum and the way pupils are grouped for mathematics. By the end of Year 7, standards are below average overall, but in other year groups they are generally low in writing and in mathematics. Despite this, all groups of pupils do make satisfactory progress by the time they leave school from often very low starting points. Progress accelerates the longer pupils are in the school and this partly accounts for the variation in performance of groups such as those pupils of Black African heritage, who tend to join the school later.

Teaching really does help all pupils to enjoy learning and is satisfactory. Staff have been particularly successful in engaging those pupils with previous behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and behaviour is good, as is the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are some classes in which the pupils make good progress, particularly in Year 7. In others, the focus on an individual's learning is not sharp enough. Teachers' questioning does not always probe deeply enough to ensure that pupils understand the language used, particularly for those just beyond the initial stages of learning English.

Grange is ready to sustain further improvement because of the collaborative working of senior leaders with the staff team. All are ambitious for the pupils and determined to

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take the necessary steps to build on the recent gains. The accomplishments of the past three years point to a solid capacity to improve further. The school evaluates the many steps it takes to bring about improvements and has a generally accurate assessment of its strengths and areas for development. Supported well by governors, the school understands the importance of channelling its energies efficiently to ensure that all pupils make the best progress they can.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' performance in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to experience all types of writing, particularly report writing.
- Work more intensively with girls to improve their attainment in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum balances effectively the time spent on number and other aspects, particularly shape and space
 - evaluating systematically the impact of new projects to improve the girls' performance in mathematics.
 - Ensure that teaching focuses sharply on how well pupils beyond the initial stages of acquiring English learn in class by:
 - a careful analysis of their responses to questioning
 - disseminating across all classes the good practice in some lessons on checking on pupils' day-to-day learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory overall but good in Year 7. Pupils' progress accelerates as they develop their English language skills. This is particularly so for the many who join with little knowledge of English. They quickly develop fluency in speaking because of the well-directed support both in and out of lessons. The cooperative behaviour and good attitudes to learning of pupils already in the school influences positively the high numbers of newcomers. This was very clear in a Year 7 English class where some with previously challenging behaviour were actively involved in developing good thinking and speaking skills. In a Year 5 lesson on measurement, pupils made steady progress because of opportunities to apply their skills to real situations such as amending recipes. Current progress and learning are improving securely as is the pupils' enjoyment of learning. Three quarters of the pupils in the current Year 6 are well on track to meet the school's targets, as are those in Year 7. Between 2006 and 2008, and despite year-on-year fluctuations in published test results caused by high numbers of casual entrants, there has been an underlying trend of improvement in the pupils' performance. The 2009 Year 7 progress tests continue to demonstrate that pupils catch up with their peers from often very low starting points although standards remain below average in each of English, mathematics and science

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by the end of school.

Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 7. There is, however, some variation in the achievement of different groups of students. Both boys and girls who complete Years 4 to 7 in the school ' just over 70% of each year group ' make at least satisfactory progress in most areas of their work. Girls' progress in mathematics, however, is less favourable than in other areas. This is partly because of the balance within the mathematics curriculum. There is not enough emphasis given to areas such as shape and space. Pupils from Asian backgrounds, particularly boys, regularly achieve well but those with Black African heritages generally make slower progress than others, often because they are relatively recent arrivals from overseas. Those pupils with other special educational needs also make steady progress. Pupils with little or no English on joining the school make rapid strides in speaking and listening although their success in tests and examinations is limited by the sometimes slower development of their writing skills. This is reflected in the report writing task in the 2009 English test results.

Pupils report their pride in the work of the school council in getting things done. For example, they have been influential in the way the playground is organised and in lunch arrangements. Pupils are happy to take on responsibilities such as catering for visitors to school events. They prepare satisfactorily for their future training, education and employment, improving their basic skills and attending regularly.

In discussions, pupils demonstrate that they are very clear about how to stay safe and that they feel safe in school. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate regularly in sporting and other activities. Just under 80% regularly participate in extended school activities. Many try to ensure their lunch boxes match the school's recommendations although there are some who give into the temptation of crisps and chocolate cake! Pupils gain self-confidence in taking part in public occasions such as assemblies and the 'ha2cando carnival'. Pupils behave well, including those with previously challenging behaviour. Both staff and pupils report much improved behaviour in recent months because the school has striven effectively to engage them in their responsibilities as Grange pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school has efficient systems to evaluate the quality of teaching. However, there has been more emphasis on teachers' performance than on the quality of pupils' learning. This is reflected in the overall pupils' rate of progress. All staff understand the expectations with regard to lesson planning and teaching is now satisfactory overall. There are pockets of good and better teaching. Pupils who have particular learning barriers are supported well because teaching assistants focus sharply on their needs. The majority of teachers strive to ensure work matches earlier learning and use searching questions regularly. However, recent training on this has not yet had a full impact on the pupils' progress. In a mathematics class, for example, pupils' development in problem solving, although satisfactory, was hindered by questioning that did not probe deeply enough their understanding of the work or of the language used. Nonetheless, there are real strengths in some classrooms in the way teachers check pupils' learning and in the way teachers use new technology to enrich lessons. Working relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.

The curriculum is related thoughtfully to the pupils' experiences and interests. The enrichment opportunities outside of the timetable are wide-ranging. Pupils enjoy visits and visitors that help them see themselves within the global and national community. There is a successful emphasis on promoting pupils' communication and technology skills. However, the school rightly recognises that there are anomalies in the balance within the mathematics curriculum and that groupings of pupils have not always served the best interests of girls in particular.

The most vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the school's strong links with external agencies and the generally good care, guidance and support. Arrangements for inducting pupils into the school at all stages are carefully thought out so that newcomers settle quickly. Those who have been absent are supported considerably to help them catch up with their work. Grange does its level best to support its many vulnerable pupils and their families. Its compassionate approach to their needs allows those with troubled histories to 'feel safe here' as one pupil said. Arrangements for pupils to move to the next stage of their education are managed effectively. Pupils are well cared for in

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the popular school clubs, including those before and after school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has experienced considerable turnover of staff over several years. This, together with the high mobility of the pupils and the very high proportion of non-English speakers, created a series of exceptional circumstances that to some extent have interrupted progress. Nevertheless, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have remained determined to improve the school and do the best for the pupils. Currently, the school's staffing is stable and there is a genuine window of opportunity to drive up standards and accelerate the pupils' progress. Senior leaders have very strong support from staff at all levels and there is a real sense of purpose throughout the school community and a resolve to do better. Staff development is a high priority and weaker classroom practice has been tackled robustly. The school has tried many avenues to promote learning but some past efforts have been wasted because underlying causes for low standards were not focused upon sharply enough. With improved systems for identifying underachievement and regular monitoring and moderation of pupils' work and teaching, the school is building a strong foundation from which to improve and to eliminate variations in the progress of different groups.

Self-evaluation is broadly accurate so that the school has an honest picture of its effectiveness. Whilst acknowledging the challenges facing many of the pupils, the school's leadership ensures that it does its level best to cater equally well for all. In this diverse school community, conflicts along social or racial lines are rare. The good pastoral care actively promotes equality and celebrates diversity. The school understands its place in the neighbourhood well and strives, often informally, to promote pupils' awareness of their relationship to national and global communities. Nevertheless, it has yet to fully analyse the impact of its actions to promote community cohesion.

There is a carefully orchestrated approach to managing the safety of pupils both within the school day and in the before- and after-school clubs. Systems to assure quality and assess risk are good. The school is very active in monitoring and amending its register of those pupils who are a cause for concern. Collaborative working with external agencies to support pupils and families is good. The school has been very successful in persuading considerable numbers of parents to attend meetings, language classes and

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other events. The governing body is committed to supporting the school and is gradually gaining expertise in challenging the school's performance. Governors are poised to do their best to ensure that under the local reorganisation of schools, facilities for a hot meal are available to the pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents who returned the questionnaires are very supportive of the school. A small proportion, however, have concerns about how well they are informed on the pupils' progress, particularly in Year 4. The inspectors agree with the school that this is likely because it has rearranged the cycle of meetings for parents to allow for a more social induction evening in the first half of the term rather than a progress meeting. Parents are, however, very welcome to the school at any time.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grange Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 222 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	57	22	41	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	25	46	28	52	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	44	19	35	6	11	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	50	24	44	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	23	43	29	54	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	48	25	46	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	41	24	44	4	7	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	41	27	50	1	2	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	43	25	46	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	41	24	44	6	11	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	32	28	52	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	20	37	25	46	4	7	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	50	25	46	1	2	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grange Middle School, Harrow HA2 0RJ

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us to your school and for taking the time from your breaks to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. We came to find out as much as we could about your school and now we would like to tell you what we said in the report we have written.

We found that you go to a happy school that provides you with a satisfactory education. You clearly enjoy your lessons. Staff provide you with many exciting opportunities to learn and lessons are never less than satisfactory. You are very lucky to be able to participate in the many clubs and events the school manages. Some of you choose to join the before- and after-school clubs which look after you well.

We were particularly impressed by the way you all get on together. We could see that you and your teachers share a culture of mutual respect and care for each other. Most of you behave very well. It was good to know that you all feel safe in school and that you take seriously the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Some of you, however, could make a little more effort not to include cakes and sweet snacks and crisps in your lunch boxes. We are really sorry that you cannot have hot dinners. We know that your governors are working at securing a kitchen and dining area for you. We hope they succeed.

By the time you reach the end of Year 7, many of you have caught up with your learning, especially those of you who have had to learn English from scratch. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you always fully understand questions in class and support you even more in developing your vocabulary. We have also asked your school to do more to improve some of your writing and girls' mathematics.

We wish you and the school all the best for the future and hope you continue to work hard with your teachers.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector

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