

Dale Grove School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106278
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	336649
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Clare

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Clayton
Headteacher	Mr Robin Elms
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons involving 10 teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair of Governors, staff, groups of students and partners from other organisations. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including data on students' progress, teachers' planning, curricular documents, students' files and the school's self-evaluation. Questionnaires were received from seven parents and carers and the inspectors also read questionnaire responses from students and from the school's staff.

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

- achievement at all key stages
- students' attendance and behaviour, given the school's efforts to improve them
- the curriculum and how well it meets students' needs
- the school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its work
- the school's effectiveness in meeting its duty to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

Dale Grove provides for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs and the majority of students are boys. Most students are of White British heritage, with much smaller numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. Most students come from the Tameside area. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A minority of students are looked after by a local authority.

The school operates on two sites. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are taught in the primary centre, while the secondary centre is for students in Key Stages 3 and 4. After the next academic year, Dale Grove is to be relocated next to a local high school and serve pupils and students in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

The school has gained Sportsmark and Activemark awards and Healthy Schools status. It has also achieved Financial Management Systems in Schools standard.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Dale Grove School provides good-quality education and good care, guidance and support for its students. All staff know students very well and are keenly aware of students' individual needs and circumstances. The primary centre is a calm and supportive environment which helps students to build confidence and in which they learn to manage their behaviour appropriately. The secondary centre focuses on raising self-esteem, developing maturity and preparation for the future. An ethos which promotes reflection, self-responsibility and positive choice is the key to the rapid progress that students make in many aspects of their personal development. Students learn to overcome social, emotional and other difficulties as a result of the trust and quality relationships they develop. This helps them to make good progress from their individual starting points and explains why achievement is good.

Careful matching of accreditation with students' skills and abilities has resulted in strong improvement, year on year, in the number of students completing and gaining national awards at GCSE or entry level. By the end of Key Stage 4, all students entered achieve external accreditation in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education. These subjects and a range of vocational qualifications equip students well for the future and represent good progress and broadly average attainment. Students say they feel safe, secure and valued. They have total confidence that staff will resolve any problems. The school's determined efforts to improve each student's attendance have secured significant advances and, by the end of Key Stage 2, attendance is above average. At Key Stage 4, despite good progress in raising levels of engagement for previously non-attending students, attendance remains low. Good teaching, positive reinforcement and well-structured activities capture students' interest in most lessons. There is less consistency in the quality of teaching and in the tracking and expectations of students' progress at Key Stage 3 than in other key stages. The curriculum is well managed and responsive to individuals' needs.

The headteacher is supported effectively by the two senior management teams and, together, they have perceptive insight into the many needs of students. The school is accurate in its self-evaluation, with good systems in place to monitor its performance. Rigorous use of assessment data is effective in highlighting where future improvements are needed. The school has a good capacity to improve further. Community cohesion is promoted successfully at a local level, but there is less focus on extending it beyond the school's immediate community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise students' attainment and improve progress by:
 - sharing existing good practice to improve teaching and learning further at Key Stage 3
 - establishing greater consistency across the school in the tracking and setting of individuals' targets to further the progress of older students
 - extending work in partnership with other agencies, parents and carers and with pupils to ensure that the good progress made in raising attendance at the primary centre is maintained when pupils reach the secondary centre.
- Strengthen the school's contribution to community cohesion by ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural, social and religious traditions in modern Britain and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The good levels of individual support students receive promote a willingness to contribute to activities and students do so with increasing confidence. This is seen particularly in practical sessions, which result in improved interest in learning and greater enjoyment. For example, in the primary centre, all pupils sang and played drums and instruments with genuine enthusiasm in a lively performance of samba music. Their excellent cooperation and pride in one another's achievements highlighted both their learning and behavioural progress very effectively. By Key Stage 4, students show greater levels of insight in their work, providing thoughtful answers to challenging topics such as the debate held on suffering, beliefs and the existence of God. Behaviour is generally good and students learn to reflect on how their actions impact on their lives and those of other people. Students acquire a range of work-related skills, learn how to follow instructions and work cooperatively with others. Good relationships ensure that students respond well and disruptions are kept to a minimum. At both centres, individuals are mostly punctual to their lessons and show pride in their work and particularly in the primary classes.

Students generally achieve well from their individual starting points. The school recognised that students' progress in English was not as strong as in science and mathematics last year and a whole-school focus on reading was implemented. This focus has improved reading levels this year and is ongoing. Tracking indicates greater numbers of students entered for a wider range of GCSE subjects, entry level courses and skills-based external accreditation this year than in the last three years. Students with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because staff know them well and work is planned appropriately for them. The very small group of girls receive focused support, as do students looked after by the local authority, and this helps them to make similar progress to their peers.

Students' good understanding of healthy lifestyles is supported well through gym lessons and 'Fit Bod' sessions, healthy menu options, and a good life-skills programme. A good proportion of older students achieve physical education awards at GCSE level.

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The school council decided that making planters would enhance the school's grounds on the primary site and enterprise schemes in the secondary centre help to develop community links. Support for charities and a range of visits contribute to broadening students' spiritual and cultural awareness. Students' understanding of the wider cultural and religious traditions in modern Britain and beyond is less well developed. Students are generally respectful of each other's needs, difficulties and opinions. Low but strongly improving attendance, together with good academic progress and positive attitudes, mean that students are prepared satisfactorily for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

In the better lessons planning is good and builds systematically on what students have learned. Teachers and support staff work together well and marking is timely. However, information collected is not always used to provide consistently challenging targets for individuals, particularly in the secondary centre. Staff have an increasingly clear view of what constitutes good progress and much good practice could be shared. In most lessons, behaviour is managed calmly and efficiently. In a very small number of lessons

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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observed, students' behaviour was insufficiently well managed and this adversely affected the progress of the whole group. Students on accredited courses show good levels of engagement and interest, for example in Year 10 when using Newton meters for scientific experiments to measure force. ICT is used well in most lessons to support learning. Students are made aware of their learning targets and what they should do next to improve their work. A consistently applied points system reinforces appropriate effort, attitude and progress in learning. Through this system, students learn how consequences apply to their actions.

The curriculum is well managed, flexible and carefully planned to meet the varied needs of different groups. In the primary centre, the thematic curriculum works very well. Older students follow courses which appropriately include academic, vocational and creative elements, combined with sporting opportunities, ICT and the development of personal skills. The curriculum is underpinned by a growing range of accreditation.

Care, guidance and support are good in all aspects. Individual support and confidential advice is available and students value their named mentors. Transition from the primary to the secondary centre is managed well, as is the provision and support for the school's off-site programmes and link courses. Attendance is monitored closely and rising strongly, particularly in the primary centre, as a result of strengthened links with families through key workers and family liaison officers. Students' achievements are celebrated through assemblies and Fantastic Fridays, which offer rewards for positive attitude and progress. All adults associated with the school, including external careers officers, contribute to the good standard of care and guidance provided.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's calm, considered approach to driving the school forward promotes positive responses from staff. Morale is good and close teamwork has ensured good progress since the last inspection. Senior managers have clearly defined roles and provide good direction. Teachers feel encouraged to extend their professional knowledge and teamwork is especially strong.

The school knows itself well. Development planning focuses on improving key aspects of the existing provision and preparation for the proposed new school. The school's leaders, accurately, recognise that, of these aspects, the priority is to accelerate the development and quality of the provision it offers currently, particularly for older

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students. Governors understand the challenges that the school faces and, while new in post, provide satisfactory support and challenge.

The school tackles equality of opportunity well and is pro-active in ensuring that there is no discrimination or harassment. This is illustrated well by the developing range of alternative curriculum opportunities to promote re-engagement with education for a small number of students. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments, are good and there is a good level of trust in the school and its staff. Detailed checks are in place to ensure the suitability of all staff and child protection procedures are thorough. Effective links with external agencies are firmly established. Partnerships with other schools and the local community are good and help to promote cohesion in the school and its immediate vicinity. This work does not as yet extend sufficiently to wider community links to prepare students better for life in a diverse society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

Where given, the views of parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about Dale Grove School. A small number of responses included appreciative comments, which recognised and valued the good level of care, support and encouragement provided by the school. The inspection evidence also supports this view as students' outcomes are good, the school's partnership work with parents and carers is satisfactory and pastoral support systems are good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dale Grove 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 7 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 69 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	14	4	57	1	14	1	14
The school keeps my child safe	5	71	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	29	5	71	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	29	5	71	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
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)	3	43	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	43	2	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	43	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



06 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Dale Grove School, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL7 9RF

Thank you for talking to us and for your help during our visit to your centre. We found what you had to say and your questionnaires very helpful. Dale Grove is a good school and we could see why your parents and carers are pleased with how much it helps you. The good levels of care provided by all of the adults at the centres help to keep you safe and support you well. Your behaviour is generally good and you are making good progress in your work. The samba drumming in the primary centre was excellent and we really enjoyed your singing of 'The Bare Necessities of Life'.

You told us that you found your teachers to be helpful and most make your lessons interesting by involving you actively in your learning. We agreed and thought the quality of teaching to be good overall. The curriculum is good and, for older students, it provides vocational work and a good range of qualifications for the future.

Your headteacher and the other managers are good leaders and they are always trying to improve the school for you. We have asked them to help you achieve better results by:

- making sure that every lesson you go to helps you to make good progress
- setting targets that are not too easy for you
- making sure that you all attend your centre regularly.

We have also asked them to make sure that you develop an understanding of the different cultural, social and religious groups of people in Britain and globally. You can help everyone by attending regularly, enjoying your time at the school and continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Linda Clare

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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