

Grappenhall Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111501
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	337691
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Widdowson
Headteacher	Mr Michael Frost
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, breakfast club and the after-school club. Ten teachers and tutors were observed and discussions held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of students and parents. Inspectors looked at the school's work and scrutinised policies, improvement plans and four parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of teaching and assessment on students' achievements
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in improving the school
- the arrangements for breaktimes and how safe students feel.

Information about the school

Grappenhall educates students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many also experience communication challenges and autistic spectrum disorders. All have a statement of special educational needs. Students can enter school at any time in their secondary career but most arrive at age 11 and continue to 16. Most students are of White British heritage but a very small number come from minority ethnic groups. More than half are eligible for a free school meal and 9% are looked after by the local authority. Since the last inspection, the school no longer educates primary pupils and has ceased to offer post- 16 and boarding provision. Following a recent period of instability in leadership the local authority considered Grappenhall to be a school causing concern, but this arrangement has now ceased. Grappenhall has achieved the Healthy Schools award and has Activemark status.

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

2

Main findings

Grappenhall is a satisfactory school. It makes good academic provision for students and cares adequately for them. Students enjoy their lessons. Despite their learning difficulties they contribute extremely well in and out of school through the great range of exciting work-related learning and vocational experiences that are offered. Excellent opportunities are provided to study outside of school and to take part in holidays and visits. Attendance for most has recently improved from low to broadly average but some remain persistent absentees. The school works well with others to ensure that guidance and support for students is generally good. However, a few students are rightly concerned that more supervision should be provided at breaktimes to help them feel safer. The school's system for recording assessments demonstrates that, from low starting points, consistent academic gains are made throughout the school and all groups achieve well compared to others in similar schools. Students make good progress in lessons and the great majority are successful in gaining qualifications. Consequently, students develop skills in literacy and numeracy, prepare well for the future and show that they understand how to stay healthy. They develop good social skills that help them cope in the workplace and during school gatherings. Most begin to know about right and wrong, are largely successful in managing their own behaviour and observe the code of conduct. Students engage readily with sports and other events that take them outside of school and this encourages them to assist and support each other.

Teaching is good and has improved under the leadership of the headteacher. Most teachers now use assessment information successfully to understand students' attainment, but assessment strategies are not yet uniform throughout the school. Some lessons do not yet contain appropriate targets for students that are based upon their learning needs and matched to abilities. The good curriculum contains outstanding aspects that encourage the inclusion of all, particularly in Key Stage 4. It relates well to most students' needs and is effective in helping them to improve basic skills.

The school works hard to communicate with parents and carers and this has encouraged many students to attend more regularly. The headteacher and senior team have good vision for improving school life and are well supported by the skilled and experienced governing body. Thus, leaders have a strong determination to address Grappenhall's areas of weakness and they strive for improvement. Managers monitor the work of the school and have good ambition for it. Therefore, Grappenhall has good capacity to improve further.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By 2011, improve students' learning by ensuring that all teachers make use of assessments in their planning.
 - By 2011, improve students' attendance even further through working with parents and carers and the local authority.
 - Immediately improve the supervision of students outside of lessons so that they feel safer.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enjoy their learning and contribute well in lessons. They take pride in their achievements and complete tasks willingly. Most make good gains in literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Consequently, they gain accreditations in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Prince's Trust courses. Most successfully complete Entry Level Certificates and many gain GCSEs in school and through attendance elsewhere. Because of their learning difficulties, most students' attainments remain below the national average for all schools, but a few manage to reach the higher levels expected for their age. All groups make good progress from their low starting points and all are included in learning.

A few students reported that some areas of the school site were poorly supervised during breaktimes and that this occasionally resulted in them feeling less safe than they should. Their complaints were investigated and some aspects of this confirmed by inspectors. However, behaviour is largely well managed by staff and is consequently good overall. Students trust the adults to sort out any difficulties that might arise in relationships. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Regular exercise is prioritised as part of the curriculum and additional physical activities are offered such as outdoor education and regular football matches. Together with the healthy school meals, students are, therefore, encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students meet when required with the school health advisor and the school councillor. This helps to ensure that medical and emotional problems are dealt with swiftly and that students have opportunities to decrease their stress levels.

Students make excellent contributions to the life of the school. The school council is representative of their views and instrumental in bringing about changes such as to menus for school meals. Fund-raising occurs and students adopt responsibilities in classrooms. Regular and frequent trips out of school to support the curriculum and take part in residential visits help them to learn to interact with members of other communities; and they participate in projects such as helping with gardening at an elderly care home.

Older students undertake work experience and vocational education at placements outside of school. They participate in enterprise projects for which they have won an award. These experiences contribute to their good development of social and moral education. Visits to cultural centres and places of worship help them to become more

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familiar with people from different backgrounds and religions. Grappenhall welcomes people from different backgrounds into school for events such as musical workshops.

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	4
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	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching varies from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall. Teachers know students well and largely plan tasks to match their abilities. Most teachers engage classroom assistants effectively to help maintain students' interest in learning and they mainly record students' achievements accurately and then take note of their levels when planning lessons. Generally, students are challenged to meet their lesson targets while the adults ensure that they enjoy good quality shared experiences in classes. However, not all teachers are yet using the school's assessment systems effectively and students in these classes make less progress than they should.

Younger students follow courses linked to the National Curriculum. Many lessons are planned in an integrated project style that helps to maintain interest and encourages them to make good progress. The development of basic skills is a high priority. All students have nurturing activities starting with breakfast club each day. These include

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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aspects of personal, social and health education that are often revisited and reinforced during the after-school club. Through this they develop skills for living that help them to move on to the next stages of their lives. The excellent and wide ranging curriculum in Key Stage 4 provides opportunities for all to gain qualifications appropriate to their levels of ability. All undertake some aspects of the Prince's Trust course and gain from the work-related learning and outdoor pursuits that help learners to gain self-confidence and work cooperatively with others. For some, additional education provision is available through work placements and by attending lessons at other schools. A calendar of religious and cultural celebrations is maintained so that students are introduced to music and drama from other countries. Their learning about others is enhanced through aspects of the curriculum and by providing all with opportunities to experience residential visits in this country and abroad.

The guidance and support of students are strengths of Grappenhall. Staff work closely with therapists and others to ensure that students spend as much time as possible in school and in lessons. The guidance provided to older students ensures that they receive good advice about moving on to the next stages of their lives. However, care for students is inconsistent and ranges from very good in lessons to inadequate during some breaktimes where there is a lack of full supervision. Too many inappropriate, unsupervised places can be accessed by students on this large and ranging school site. Overall, the effectiveness of care, guidance and support is satisfactory.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher and senior team have improved learning by raising the status of assessments and encouraging teachers to use them effectively. They have instigated new curriculum pathways to ensure that all have opportunities to learn and succeed. This has led to a wider range of accreditations being available to students. Managers scrutinise teachers' work and ensure that all students have opportunities to progress and that none is discriminated against. Grappenhall has implemented anti-bullying strategies, and harassment in any form is not tolerated. Other improvements include the introduction of well-matched courses for older students that encourage high levels of engagement and the gaining of good quality accreditations. The governing body is enthusiastic and supportive. For example, it worked closely with the local authority to ensure stability at the school throughout the recent period of turbulence in the

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management of Grappenhall. Governors support the headteacher well and observe the work of the school closely through, for example, having members who visit the school regularly as partners and parents. All policies and procedures are in place to ensure that students are safeguarded and the required checks are carried out on staff. Designated safeguarding staff and governors have completed the necessary levels of training and some aspects of safeguarding matters are undertaken with great skill and awareness. Nevertheless, the school failed to notice some issues concerning supervision and the care of students. This contributed to them sometimes feeling less safe than they should. Once these were pointed out to managers they were corrected immediately.

Grappenhall places great importance on its contribution to the community and it considers and reviews this work regularly. Consequently, students come to understand about maintaining good relations with others, including people from different backgrounds and religions. Contacts are established with other organisations, such as the police and fire brigade, through the interesting work undertaken by all students in the Prince's Trust course. Students thus learn much about civic responsibilities and respecting the law. Parents and carers are engaged well with the school and are kept informed about the education and care undertaken with their children. Despite the shortcomings of the school buildings and the site, teachers generally make good use of resources including new technologies to help students to learn. Grappenhall therefore provides good value for money.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

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Four parents and carers returned questionnaires. Inspectors also spoke at length with three other parents and carers. All of these parents and carers who communicated agreed with the inspection team that the school offers good opportunities for their children to learn and make progress. One comment was, 'Grappenhall has given my son chances in life.'

Two parents and carers approached inspectors to express their concern that post-16 education has ceased at the school. They believe that the opportunities for further education for their children with special educational needs are now very limited. The inspection team agreed to some extent with parents and carers that these concerns were reasonable and passed them on to the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grappenhall Hall 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 four completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	50	1	25	1	25	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	25	2	50	0	0	1	25
The teaching is good at this school	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	25	3	75	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)	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	25	3	75	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 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.



26 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Grappenhall Hall School, Warrington, WA4 3EU

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you in the dining room, school council and watching you in lessons, during breakfast and at after-school club.

Grappenhall is a satisfactory school overall but you help to make it good in many ways. For example, you behave well during lessons. Your attendance is improving and the great majority of you gain qualifications that help you move on in life.

The adults give you appropriate guidance and support. They produce good lessons with many interesting things to do. The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors are working hard to make sure that you gain an even better education. You have many exciting opportunities outside of school and Grappenhall communicates well with the majority of your parents and carers.

The inspectors consider that the school could be better than it is. For example, by all teachers planning challenging lesson targets for you so that you make even better progress. We believe that some of you should improve your attendance and we have asked the school to work with others to help you to achieve this. Also, because of the nature of the school grounds and building we would like there to be better supervision and more for you to do at breaktimes. This, together with attending more regularly, will help some to feel safer and encourage all of you to make full use of the facilities available.

We wish you all the best for the future and once again thank you for your help and interest in the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Terry McKenzie

Lead inspector

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