

Grange Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117122
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338954
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Taylor
Headteacher	Janet Sandell
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven teachers in 14 classroom visits. Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher and a number of staff responsible for key areas of the school's work. Inspectors looked at planning, minutes of meetings and other documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and pupils' learning and progress. Several informal discussions were held with parents and carers. Questionnaires returned by 39 parents and carers, 24 members of staff and 167 pupils were analysed.

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

- how well are pupils attaining in English and mathematics
- the extent to which any group of pupils are falling behind in their learning
- if the decline in attendance been reversed
- the degree to which past inconsistencies in teaching been fully addressed.

Information about the school

Most pupils live close to where the school is situated and are of White British heritage. The proportion from other ethnic backgrounds is lower than average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little above average with a few having complex learning needs. The most common needs are behavioural, emotional or social problems, speech and language difficulties and other specific learning difficulties. The number of pupils who join or leave during the school year is higher than average. The school has gained Healthy Schools Status and the Science Quality Mark.

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

Pupils feel safe in this good school and enjoy their learning. Several pupils, representative of many others, said 'We learn loads and our teachers are nice.' Pupils' personal development is good because of the good care they receive and an effective curriculum which gives them plenty of opportunities to develop their social skills. Pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is consistently good and sometimes outstanding in lessons. Attendance, although average and improving, is adversely affected by some lateness and the persistence absence of a small number of pupils. This is slowing their progress and hence affecting their life chances. While pupils develop their work place skills satisfactorily through initiatives such as developing the school allotment and learning financial skills in 'Money Week', their enterprise skills are more limited.

Pupils' academic progress has improved and the vast majority of pupils are now making good progress, including most of those who have a special educational need and/or disability. This is because teaching is consistently good and past inconsistencies in pace have been rectified. Pupils understand how well they are doing in their work and they are fully involved in drawing up their own targets in literacy, numeracy and science. These factors are leading to a steady rise in the average attainment reached in Year 6. Reading is a strength and attainment here is above average. The high focus given to stories stimulates many pupils to read widely and write creatively in their fiction work. While pupils are keen and enthusiastic about their learning in a range of subjects, not enough opportunities are provided for them to work independently.

The school is good at identifying and providing support to pupils who are not on track to meet their challenging targets. While numbers of such pupils are greatly reduced compared with recent years, two small pockets remain. The first group consists of a small number of middle and higher attaining pupils who are capable of the higher level 5 but are not reaching it. Their targets are not sharp enough nor closely matched to their needs. In addition, they do not always get enough support in class and opportunities are missed to develop their non-fiction writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. A second group consists of a few pupils with complex learning and emotional needs. Their provision, including individual education plans and support from teaching assistants and external agencies, is not finely tailored to their complex personal or academic needs and so is not fully effective.

The school has improved its effectiveness due to the concerted actions taken by the headteacher, governing body and leaders and managers at all levels. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school development plan well focused on remaining weaknesses. The acceleration evident in pupil's academic progress and the developments in the quality of

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teaching and the curriculum illustrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of the small number of underachieving pupils so that they meet their challenging academic or personal targets by:
 - refining the learning targets of identified middle and higher attaining pupils and providing them with carefully matched work and additional support in class
 - improving pupils' non-fiction writing skills in subjects other than literacy
 - reviewing and providing fully tailored support to those pupils with complex learning needs
 - improving the attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent.
- Improve pupils' preparation for the workplace by:
 - improving punctuality
 - providing more curriculum opportunities for pupils to develop their enterprise skills
 - giving pupils more chances to develop their independence in core lessons and thematic work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Over the past three years average attainment in English and mathematics has been sustained against a backdrop of falling attainment on entry and more pupils joining the school, often in Year 5 and 6, with gaps in their understanding. The attainment of the current Year 6 pupils is considerably better than last year and is likely to be the highest for many years. Attainment of other years is also showing improvement. The school's data shows that there is little difference in the progress of boys and girls regardless of their ethnic background and that many pupils who join part way through the year quickly adapt to the school's challenging expectations and make good progress.

Pupils enjoy their learning and work at a good pace in lessons. In two Year 4 lessons they diligently went about rewriting the story of the magical tree 'Awongaleema', replacing the characters in the original story with those of their own. In a Year 5 lesson, all groups of pupils sustained a good pace in their learning when tackling a wide range of problems relating to the number of different coloured sweets in a box. Work in books shows they are interested in the things they study across many different subjects and they are keen to present what they have done. Attainment in science is average and considerably improved.

Pupils value the school community and readily take on responsibilities such as representing their peers on the school council. Good action has stemmed from this, such as pupils being involved in updating the behaviour policy. Exclusions are much reduced and there have been none in the past year. At break and lunchtimes a few pupils

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occasionally get overexcited and a little boisterous and, although closely supervised, upsets have to be settled. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good which reflects the school's caring ethos. For example, they engage well with pupils from backgrounds different to their own and have a good understanding of how people live their lives abroad. Pupils keenly support a range of charities and they have made contact with and supported orphans in Peru.

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	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The clear framework for behaviour and learning is consistently applied. This ensures that pupils benefit from a calm and purposeful learning environment. Lessons are well planned and provide good challenge to the wide range of abilities and needs in each class, although the tasks and support given to the pockets of pupils who are not on target are not always finely tuned. The pupils know what they are expected to learn and are given every opportunity to evaluate their own performance. This is helped by their evaluating their own progress against a list of learning targets called a 'Learning Journey', with the teacher then helping them to set challenging next steps for

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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themselves. This process is supported well by regular marking in books which also pinpoints areas of strength and development.

Although the curriculum offers limited opportunities for enterprise and independence, it has much strength in other areas. For example, the introduction of very effective themed weeks covering areas such as money, art and writing and improved provision in English, mathematics and science. In science, there is now a good balance between developing pupils' understanding of ideas and their becoming good investigators. Pupils enjoy the many clubs on offer; those relating to sport are particularly popular and are helped by the good partnerships with other schools.

The good care, guidance and pastoral support that the pupils receive underpin the positive atmosphere within the school. Those joining the school, whether in Year 3 or later, are nurtured and helped to settle quickly. Although steps to promote good attendance are not fully effective for a small minority, the children and families worker provides good support to pupils and their parents or carers. The school can point to several examples of the very effective support they have provided to help pupils overcome barriers to learning and make the best of the opportunities available.

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?

Staff share the leaders' and managers' commitment to raising standards. Teaching has improved as a result of good training and the effective monitoring of lessons which gives teachers a clear idea of where to improve. The good school development plan contains clear success criteria, though the implications of these for the very different needs in each year group are not explicit. Termly progress meetings are used constructively to identify any pupils who are falling behind and ensure the right support is put in place for them and to help in the school's own self-evaluation. This has helped boost pupils' achievement and has closed the gap between different groups so that progress is now good in all classes. The few remaining pockets of underperformance are being robustly tackled. Good links with most groups of parents and other partners make a positive contribution to the school.

The governing body is effective and is increasingly influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. Governors' good knowledge of the school, gained through a thorough understanding of performance data and first hand discussions and observations with staff, means they can play a pivotal role in helping to draw up the

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school development plan and hold the school to account. The governors' very good understanding of the requirements to safeguard pupils mean all essential elements are implemented very well, although a few administrative matters are not as tight. Their good plan for community cohesion is being effectively implemented and is building on the pupils' already good contribution to the local and global communities.

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	2
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

The large majority of questionnaire returns and the discussions held during the inspection with parents and carers showed they are very satisfied with the school. However, some questionnaires received from parents and carers showed a degree of dissatisfaction in specific areas. These were followed up. A small minority of parents and carers who responded did not think the school met their child's particular needs. The inspectors found that in nearly all cases the school effectively caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but there is a small pocket of pupils who have complex needs where current provision is not fully effective. A small minority of questionnaires indicated that behaviour was a concern, that the school did not take account of parents' and carers' suggestions and that the school was not well led and managed. The inspectors found behaviour to be good except for pupils occasionally falling out at lunchtime. The evidence seen showed that the school takes effective action about any concerns when they are raised and appropriate procedures are followed. The inspectors judged that the school is well led. This is seen in the commitment of staff and in the good improvements made in recent years.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grange Junior 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	31	19	49	3	8	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	13	33	23	59	1	3	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	21	22	56	5	13	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	26	21	54	4	10	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	11	28	22	56	6	15	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	21	20	51	9	23	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	26	27	69	1	3	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)	5	13	24	62	4	10	2	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	18	22	56	9	23	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	8	22	56	6	15	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	10	19	49	11	28	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	8	21	13	33	12	31	4	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	28	18	46	7	18	2	5

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.



16 July 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Grange Junior School, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4PY

Thank you for making us so welcome to your school. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and seeing you learning in your classes. We found out that you go to a good school; here is a list of some of the things we liked best.

At the end of Year 6 attainment is average and starting to rise.

You do best in your reading, where your attainment is above average.

You told us 'You learn lots' in lessons and we can see that it is because of the good teaching you receive and your good behaviour. However, sometimes on the playground and on the 'Mound' some of you need to play more carefully.

You know how to keep fit and healthy and particularly enjoy sports.

All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after, especially those of you who need that extra bit of help and support.

Your headteacher, governing body and staff have worked hard to improve the school a lot since the last inspection and are very keen to make it even better.

Every school has some things that could be improved. These are the areas we want your school to concentrate on now:

- to give clearer targets and better matched work to those of you who need a bit of a push to reach the higher level 5 in your writing and mathematics
- to provide fully tailored support to the few pupils whose complex learning needs are not fully met
- to improve attendance for a few who should be coming to school more and improve punctuality - you can help by aiming for a perfect attendance record
- to give you more opportunities to develop your enterprise skills and become confident about tackling things for yourselves.

I wish you great success in the future. It was a pleasure to meet you all.

Yours sincerely

Alan Jarvis

Lead inspector

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